Defining A Character Through Voice Quality: An Analysis Of The Character "george" In Sondheim And Lapine's Sunday In The Park With George Using The Estill Voice Model

Michael Swickard
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DEFINING A CHARACTER THROUGH VOICE QUALITY:
AN ANALYSIS OF THE CHARACTER “GEORGE”
IN SONDHEIM AND LAPINE’S SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE
USING THE ESTILL VOICE MODEL

by

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B.F.A. Emporia State University, 2004

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for the degree of Master of Fine Arts
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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the use of the Estill Voice Model, in particular six voice qualities (Speech, Twang, Falsetto, Cry/Sob, Belt and Opera) and their permutations, to define character, character traits and emotions. Traits and emotions that specific voice qualities can influence are, but are not limited to, location, age, background, socioeconomic status, genre, intelligence, nationality, class, culture, gender, promiscuity, disposition, pain and revelations. In particular, this thesis explores the use of voice qualities to show specific human qualities of the character “George” from Sondheim and Lapine’s Sunday in the Park with George and the people he imitates in his painting by letting the characters’ given circumstances (textual and subtextual), the way other actors portray the characters and the director’s and musical director’s input inform the choices in voice quality.

By using the specific technical aspects of the Estill Voice Training System™ and combining them with the limitless aesthetic aspects of theatrical character, this thesis shows that this new structural analysis does not pigeonhole an actor, but rather it makes one more aware, accessible, adept and flexible to the needs of the character and the spontaneity of each new performance.

This thesis provides a new paradigm of character analysis through voice.
This thesis is dedicated to my fiancée, Alissa Fox, whose constant patience, support, and encouragement helped me succeed with this project.
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I need to thank my outstanding Thesis Chair, Dr. Steven R. Chicurel. His mentorship and friendship is something that I will cherish for my whole life. I also need to thank John Bell for his direction and guidance during the process, Earl Weaver for his careful eye, Justin Fischer for his meticulousness and perfectionism, Mark Brotherton for his willingness and assistance, and Kerrie Obert for the scientific perspective. This thesis could not have succeeded without each and every one of these remarkable people.
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<tr>
<td>AES</td>
<td>Aryepiglottic Sphincter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVI</td>
<td>Estill Voice International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EVTSTM</td>
<td>Estill Voice Training System™</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FVF</td>
<td>False Vocal Folds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGE</td>
<td>The character George found in Act II of <em>Sunday in the Park with George</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KCACTF</td>
<td>Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SEURAT</td>
<td>Georges Seurat and the character George found in Act I of <em>Sunday in the Park with George</em></td>
</tr>
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<td>TVF</td>
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<td>VLS</td>
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CHAPTER 1 - STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Just as Georges Seurat attempted to bridge the gap between scientific findings about color and the artistic practice of painting, I will show that the scientific findings about vocal production as laid out in the Estill Voice Training System™ can be applied in an artistic way to create a character with the voice. Also, the inverse will be shown, that information can be taken from a director or musical director and applied to the character with EVTS™, even if the information was not given in EVTS™ terms.
CHAPTER 2 - RESEARCH AND ANALYSIS

Georges Seurat

Early Life

Figure 1: Georges Pierre Seurat

Before discussing any aspect of Seurat’s life, it is important to note that most of the facts surrounding his life and death are “sketchy” at best. The facts that follow are what most critics agree to be the truth.

Born 2 December 1859, Georges Pierre Seurat was the second child of Chrysostome-Antoine and Ernestine Faivre Seurat. Seurat’s father had already retired from being a legal officer in La Villette by the time of Georges’s birth. His father had saved a small fortune by this time and was able to provide for his family while living in the eastern-Parisian suburb of Le Raincy. Seurat’s mother was from the Veillards, an
established Parisian family, which had produced several sculptors and artists. She is credited by many to be the driving force behind Seurat’s early interest in the arts.

Seurat lived in Le Raincy with his older brother Émile and his younger sister Marie-Berthe. Another brother, Gabriel, died at the age of five. Seurat’s father lived a somewhat hermit-like life, which Seurat would do so himself later in his life. It was said that, due to an accident in which he lost an arm and his curious tastes (like creating a device to attach knives and forks to his amputated arm stub to carve a turkey), Seurat’s father was considered to be a bit of an odd fellow. Seurat’s father did not spend much time with his family and lived most of the time in a separate house about twelve kilometers away from the flat his family occupied. Due to his father’s absence, Seurat’s mother would be the largest influence on his childhood.

When Seurat showed interest in becoming an artist, he received a traditional training. He showed great promise and was admitted to the École des Beaux-Arts in 1878. At this school, Seurat was taught in the style of Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres which placed a great deal of emphasis on line as the fundamental constituent of art. Color was given a lesser importance and most of the studies Seurat created were drawings of plaster casts and living models.

During his free time, Seurat could be found in the school’s library, supplementing his own studies in art. It was during this time that Seurat rediscovered a book from his childhood that would start him on his journey towards a new style of painting. The book was *Grammaire des arts du dessin* (Grammar of the Arts of Drawing) by Charles Blanc. Blanc inspired Seurat to think about color in a whole new way. “In Blanc’s view, the secrets of colour, like those of music, were eminently decipherable – for Seurat, an
important thought which would have equally important consequences” (Düchting 10). Blanc also addressed the work of Eugéne Chevreul who created the laws of the contrast of complementary colors. Seurat would rely on these laws when creating his masterworks. It was actually Blanc who planted the seed in Seurat’s mind that small brushstrokes placed together would blend at a certain distance to create a stronger, more vibrant color mixture by the eye than the colors actually being mixed on the palette. Blanc pointed to the works of Eugéne Delacroix as outstanding examples of this technique. Seurat analyzed and copied nine of Delacroix’s works. “Blanc’s Grammaire thus offered Seurat a first confirmation that the principles of painting were rooted in objective laws” (Düchting 11).

In 1879 Seurat left the school and rented a small studio with two of his contemporaries, Ernest Laurent and Edmond Aman-Jean. That same year Seurat visited the fourth Impressionists exhibition and saw the works of Claude Monet and Paul Cézanne. After spending years studying the rigid form and rules of Classical art, Seurat’s eyes were opened to a new form of art that purposely broke all of the academic rules that supposedly applied to all “good art.” Many of the Impressionists used broad, rhythmic, crosshatched brushstrokes, as did Delacroix, and placed a much larger emphasis on color that catches the mood of the moment, rather than accurately depicting the subject. Seurat was drawn to the light effects achieved by the Impressionists. Seurat instantly began to incorporate these new influences into his studies and began the merger of these two worlds in his mind. After performing his obligatory year in the military service, he rented a small flat at 19, Rue de Charbrol and began his hermitage. In this small flat he would dedicate himself to drawing and creating small oil paintings.
Through practice, Seurat became a master draughtsman using Conté crayon and Ingres paper. Seurat utilized the Ingres paper’s graininess to create *chiaroscuro* shading, crosshatching, and gray tones that gave his drawing very fine distinctions. Once Seurat felt he had achieved a mastery of drawing, he submitted two drawings to the Salon of 1883. The drawing he created of his friend, Aman-Jean, was accepted by the Salon for showing. During this time, Seurat also created many small oil painting studies he called *croquetons*. Seurat would utilize these studies throughout his career. He would use the *croquetons* to put together, much like the pieces of a puzzle, a larger masterwork. Seurat lived in two artistic worlds: the rigid, academic classicalism of his drawings and the Impressionistic themes expressed in his *croquetons*.

Seurat typically chose middle class and rural subjects for his studies. Some critics point to this as Seurat’s views of the social system of France at the time, but many believe Seurat chose these subjects because of his lifestyle. Seurat was raised around the middle class and enjoyed the privacy that the rural setting provided. There is no real evidence to support a strong social or political view either way. Critics and contemporaries were so eager to lump artists into movements that Seurat is often mislabeled. Seurat was a movement unto himself.

**Works**

**BATHING AT ASNIÉRES**

By 1883, Seurat finally felt he was prepared enough to undertake a large work for submission to the public, artistic, and critical eyes. Since he was following his own artistic heart and not the principles that governed the salons of the time, he knew he had a difficult journey ahead of him. “In order to follow these precepts freely, [specifically
Delacroix’s], one had to abandon any hope of admission to the official Salon. Quite the opposite, it was imperative to create a base for a regular Salon des Indépendants” (Rewald 69).

Figure 2: Bathing at Asnières, 1883-84

Seurat began habitual patterns in his working process that he would continue to follow throughout his career. First, he found a subject that interested him and studied it completely. He found a position on the banks of the river Seine near Asnières he felt created the composition he wanted. It was a popular bathing place for men, boys, and horses. Seurat would come and sit in the same position every time and sketch or paint croquetons. Through these small studies, Seurat began piecing together his larger work that would be submitted for exhibition. This was his first masterwork, and the groundwork was set for his exploration of technique and color.
The painting was rejected by the Salon, but was still shown at a separate event without being judged by the jury. This was, in effect, the exhibition of the rejected. As an insult to injury, the painting was hung in the canteen, over the refreshment stand. This was not a place of honor, yet it was in this way that Seurat was first introduced to the world. It is a sure thing that Seurat did not explode onto the art scene – he slowly emerged from it. Even so, Seurat did not go unnoticed. There were a few critics, notably Edmond Jacques and Roger Marx, who did not ridicule the show and noted Seurat’s work with sympathetic interest and hopeful optimism. One critic, Félix Fénéon, even touted the work as something important and a step in a new direction for the art community. The most important aspect of this show was that Seurat met a new friend and colleague that would change his life and the face of art, Paul Signac.

On 11 June 1884, Seurat, along with Signac and others, founded the Société des Artistes Indépendants. This society stood for the suppression of juries and proposed to help artists present their work without restraints before the bar of public opinion. This society did not shun the work of the Impressionists, but rather met to discuss all forms of art. They felt all art forms had something to contribute to the arts community. They would analyze and incorporate techniques into their own work. Seurat would learn from Signac and Charles Angrand about the Impressionists and he began to use the simplified palette that dominated the Impressionistic technique. Ironically, the society was open to new ideas, even to those who would not accept their work in return.

In the first showing of the Société des Artistes Indépendants, Seurat submitted *Bathing at Asnières* and it was heartily accepted. He also submitted a landscape that would be the first study for his next major work, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La*
Grand Jatte. Coincidentally, the Island of La Grande Jatte is located just across the Seine from Asnières. One can imagine Seurat sitting, sketching for *Bathing at Asnières*, and then looking across the river and getting the idea for his next work, a work that many would regard as his masterpiece, and by far, the most recognizable.

A SUNDAY AFTERNOON ON THE ISLAND OF LA GRANDE JATTE

![Image of A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, 1884-85](image)

Figure 3: A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, 1884-85

After gaining recognition, be it good and bad, with *Bathing at Asnières*, Seurat decided to begin a large composition that he had considered for some time. This new work would represent the fully realized technique he felt was the next great step in painting. Seurat began the arduous process of creating numerous small sketches and
croquettes as studies for the large work. Seurat would spend the next two years of his life obsessing over and perfecting *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*.

La Grande Jatte, which translates into “the large bowl” (from its shape), is an island that lies in the middle of the Seine between Neuilly to the southwest and Asnières to the northeast. Seurat began by creating intricate landscapes of the island. He worked almost as a cartographer, mapping out each tree and mound. From his numerous sketches, one can see that Seurat eventually settled into one place he felt was the perfect location to create his painting. He continued to fine tune the isolated details. Sketches show that the tree located closest to the water on the left side of the painting is in reality two trees. As he found the perfect spot, one trunk covered the other completely. The shadow of the second tree can still be found in the painting though. Once he was satisfied with his perfectly positioned landscape, he needed subjects to fill it.

The island was known for attracting all kinds of citizens of Paris for recreation and relaxation. While popular for canoeing trips, which were very much in style at the time, and for strolls amid taverns and waffle bakers, La Grande Jatte had a darker side. La Grande Jatte also had a reputation as “a love island for rendezvous between city men and loose women” (Düchting 35). Seurat would capture a balanced cross-section of the population and place them all specifically and expertly into his painting. To assume that Seurat created this scene from an actual Sunday afternoon would be erroneous. Seurat’s composition was created from many different Sundays and many different subject studies. He would take the best of his studies and place them atop his already finished landscape. Just as Seurat placed different colored dabs next to each other to have the eye
fuse the colors optically, he placed different subjects from different studies into one painting to create a new painting altogether.

Many have noticed after studying the work that it appears that no one in the painting seems to be looking at each other. There is hardly any interaction. One could attribute this to the patchwork nature of the creation of his composition. On the other hand, it could be that Seurat was trying to create of frieze of sorts with his use of silhouettes and lack of motion. Art critics also have a tendency to criticize Seurat’s odd perspective in the work. The best example of this odd perspective is to look at the man wearing a top hat sitting on the left hand and the man wearing a top hat standing on the right hand side. These two men are close to the same depth within the painting, but the seated man seems to be much further away. If this painting were a photograph, either one man would have to be very tall or one man would have to be very short to create this odd perspective. This perspective was no accident. Seurat would obsess over perspective and how the eye would perceive the painting as a whole. This different point of view creates a flow to the painting that never really lets the eye settle on one spot. This creates the movement of the painting when the subjects are not really in motion themselves. This also lets the eye see the “mixed” colors from the different separate dabs of color. Seurat took the Impressionist style and feeling and created it in a very scientific and methodical way.

It seems extremely unfortunate that viewers will never see *La Grande Jatte* as it was intended by Seurat. Over the years, the colors have faded a great deal. Seurat was so interested in the use of sparkle and light that he used a vivid paint called zinc yellow. This paint was highly unstable and would dull over the years as would as any pigments
with which it was mixed. “As early as 1892, several critics noticed the tragic dulling of some colors” (Herbert 110). The bright vibrant yellow became a brownish yellow and, when mixed with other colors, the resulting colors faded as well. The bright orange created when Seurat mixed zinc yellow with vermilion became a dry ocher and the dazzling emerald green that Seurat intended faded to a dreary olive. “These form dark spots in the sunlit grass that are particularly disfiguring” (Herbert 110).

Even with this fading and dulling of colors, the effect of Seurat’s work is remarkable. Seurat paid special attention to his use of light and dark and his juxtaposition of light and cool colors. One of the most dramatic examples of this can be found right in the middle of the canvas. The woman standing with the small child is carrying a vivid red parasol that is placed directly over a shaded green of a tree. Red and green are directly across from each other on the “Diagram of Complementary Contrasts” created by Nicholas Ogden Rood in his book *Théorie scientifique des couleurs et leurs applications à l’art et à l’industrie*, which Seurat would have studied. These colors are also a great union of light and dark. Seurat’s canvas is full of examples just like this.

In the summer of 1885, Seurat took a break from *La Grande Jatte* and vacationed in Grandcamp, Normandy. There he painted five landscapes, the best of which was *Le Bec du Hoc*. It was in this painting that Seurat took pointillism to the next level. It is assumed that he experimented with the direction of the paint strokes to help create composition, light, and movement. It is also assumed that Seurat perfected the use of crosshatching underneath the painting, almost as a base coat, over which the paint strokes would then be placed atop. This also helps explain how none of the white canvas peaks
through the myriad brush strokes. Seurat would return from Grandcamp with an invigorated passion and a dedicated work habit.

Seurat’s strong work ethic can not be denied. Following his father’s example, he became a total recluse, obsessing about his painting and denying himself the social aspects of his life. Lunch dates and meetings became far less important to him. He began to even deny his closest friends, Signac and Pissarro, in order to have more time to work. Pissarro, sensing that Seurat was on the brink of discovery, sent his eldest son to study Seurat’s technique and to learn to utilize the technique within his own paintings. Soon, Seurat would communicate only with a model or with his canvas. His technique became his life.

Figure 4: Le Bec du Hoc, 1885
Seurat’s technique of pointillism is often described as painting with dots. This is a vague and narrow view of pointillism. Seurat used not just dots, but also dabs and strokes of paint. His point was that the eye fuses colors on the canvas and not on the palette. That is the true mission of Seurat’s pointillism. Seurat would look at his subject and figure out its main color. He would also experiment with colors that would complement it or contrast with it. Through these experimentations, Seurat could figure out what gave the illusion of shade, light, distance or movement. Colors would be placed next to other contrasting colors on the canvas as a whole to create the best vibrant look. After the whole painting was finished, Seurat created a frame or border around the entire painting that utilized contrasting colors of the subjects directly next to it. At a distance, this border becomes one uniform color, but creates a new dimension of perspective. It also creates a visual punctuation for the eye, allowing viewer’s gaze to move freely within the canvas, but never leave the space.

In May 1886, Seurat placed his nearly seven foot by ten foot canvas, *La Grande Jatte*, into its first showing at The Eighth Exhibition of Painting. Upon hearing that Seurat’s painting was accepted, Monet, Renoir, Sisley, and Caillebotte withdrew their submissions. Others Impressionists threatened to do the same. It was resolved that Seurat’s work, as well as Signac’s and Pissarro’s, would be exhibited in a different room. The room was so small that *La Grande Jatte* took up one entire wall. Once again, initial response to Seurat’s work was negative. The exhibition did not garner much attention from the critics or the public and Seurat’s work was generally ridiculed. One critic, George Moore, wrote that Seurat’s work looked “like a modern version of ancient Egypt” (Herbert 118). If Seurat was trying to create a frieze motif, then he was successful in
getting his point across to the art community. News quickly spread about Seurat’s work and soon he became the focus of the avant-garde population. It was not Seurat’s goal to impress any group of people or section of the art community. His behavior spoke loudly about that. Seurat was interested solely in improving and perfecting his technique. He wanted to be able to give the art form something in return. There is a bit of glory involved in an ambition such as his, and the glory would be late to come, but Seurat was not interested in playing any of the political or social games needed to achieve glory in his own time. There were few who understood his vision and the reigning art community would have nothing to do with him or his theories. Quick to set themselves apart from Seurat and his following, they dubbed themselves “Romantic Impressionists” and Seurat “Scientific Impressionists.”

While most critics of the day scoffed at Seurat’s La Grande Jatte, one had the courage to explore and analyze the work. Once again, it was Félix Fénéon, who devoted a long article in La Vogue to Seurat and La Grande Jatte. Fénéon wrote: “. . . the surface seems to flicker . . . the retina, expecting distinct rays of light to act on it, perceives in very rapid alternation both the disassociated colored elements and their resultant color” (Rewald 107). Finally, someone with some clout in the artistic community attempted to understand and analyze Seurat’s methods. Fénéon wrote further:

If you consider for example a few square inches of uniform tone in M. Seurat’s Grande Jatte, you will find on each inch of this surface, in a whirling host of tiny spots, all the elements that make up the tone. Take this grass plot in the shadow: most of the strokes render the local value of the grass; others, orange tinted and thinly scattered, express the scarcely felt action of the sun; bits of purple introduce the complement to green; a cyanic blue, provoked by the proximity of a plot of grass in the sunlight, accumulated its siftings toward the line of demarcation, and beyond that point progressively rarefies them. Only two elements come together to produce this grass plot in the sun, green and orange-tinted light, any interaction being impossible under the furious beat of the sun’s
rays. Black being a non-light, the black dog is colored by the reactions of the grass; its dominant color is therefore deep purple; but it is also attacked by the dark blue arising from neighboring spaces of light.

We can understand why the impressionists, in striving to express luminosities – as did Delacroix before them – wish to substitute optical mixture for mixing on the palette.

M. Seurat is the first to present a complete and systematic paradigm of this new technique. His immense canvas La Grande Jatte, whatever part of it you examine, unrolls a uniform and patient tapestry; here in truth the accidents of the brush are futile, trickery is impossible; there is no place for bravura – let the hand be numb, but let the eye be agile, perspicacious, cunning. (Rewald 107-108)

It was at this exhibition that the new true form of Pointillism was born. Seurat had finally succeeded in creating something new and the world began to take notice.

**LATER WORKS**

Now that the artistic world was giving Seurat a great deal of attention and wanted to hear from the artist himself, he refused to open up to the world and barely communicated with his associates. “His letters to Signac, for example, are written in a style that is almost telegraphic. They relate facts, give certain news, and speak as possible about painting” (Rewald 147). Many in the art community took offense to Seurat’s hermitic lifestyle and began to ridicule his work based solely on this fact. Instead of defending his paintings, Seurat became even more reclusive. He was tired of the politics of art and wanted to stop exhibiting altogether so no one could copy his technique. It was Pissarro who then became the “front man” for the Pointillism. He was always quick to point out that Seurat was the first person to initiate this new scientific movement. His friends became increasingly concerned for and almost scared of him. His silence made him extremely difficult to read, and he would react strongly at the slightest offense. His circle of friends, small though it was, was growing ever smaller.
As the art community started to understand and publish their own musing about Pointillism, any article that cited anyone other than Seurat as the leader and innovator would cause Seurat to take his frustration out, not on the author, but on his fellow artists. It did not take long for grudges and disagreements to form, but these offenses were soon forgotten when Seurat would reveal his next work to his associates. His next work was titled *The Models* and “they remained faithful in their admiration of his art” (Rewald 157).

![Figure 5: The Models, 1888](image-url)

As with his early works, Seurat created many sketches, studies, and drawings based loosely on the classical theme of the Three Graces. The painting did not garner
much attention, although the painting as a whole has a much more naturalistic look than *La Grande Jatte*, which is, interestingly, placed in the background of *The Models*. If Seurat’s fear was that someone would copy him, he removed any doubt that this was a Seurat original by placing a little bit of his previous work in this painting. Seurat used this painting to prove to the critics that Pointillism could be used in a realistic style as well as in the abbreviated style he employed in *La Grande Jatte*. The point was that it was not a question of technique, but a question of style. The critics more or less ignored Seurat and dismissed him as someone who was too obsessed with process and not enough with product.

Figure 6: The Sideshow, 1887-88

Seurat’s next work, *The Sideshow*, is by far his darkest work. In this depiction of the Cirque Corvi, Seurat returns to his “Egyptian,” frieze-like style. He was known to
frequent this and many other places of entertainment and these artistic venues would 
become his focus for two more major works. The Sideshow most clearly reveals Seurat’s 
use of what most mathematicians call the Golden Ratio, or the Golden Proportion. The 
Golden Ratio, \( \varphi \), can be expressed algebraically as:

\[
\frac{a + b}{a} = \frac{a}{b} = \varphi.
\]

**Figure 7: The Golden Ratio**

There is a definite line to the right of the trombone player that splits the painting 
into this Golden Ratio. The music stand splits the left half of the painting in another 
Golden Ratio. Then above the music stand, the decorations behind the musicians create 
yet another Golden Ratio. Seurat’s other works show examples of this Golden Ratio. 
His first work, *Bathers at Asnières*, is riddled with examples of the Golden Ratio.

*Figure 8: The Golden Ratio in Bathers at Asnières*

The Golden Ratio is something many other Classical artists, architects, and 
mathematicians have used for centuries. Seurat would have studied the effects and 
properties of using the proportion and utilized it to its fullest for the best aesthetic feeling.
This is yet one more example of Seurat making the most of a scientific finding and applying it directly to the aesthetic world of art.

Figure 9: The Chahut, 1889-90

In his next artistic endeavor, *La Chahut*, Seurat attempted to find a connection between the pop-culture art of the day and his own technique. At first glance, *La Chahut* seems to be an effort to recreate one of the many posters of the age by Jules Chéret or Toulouse Lautrec. Chéret would have most likely been the greatest influence on Seurat.
and he was always attracted to poster art of this kind. In this work, Seurat no longer seems afraid to overlap his subjects and he uses this overlapping to help create compositional patterns.

Once again, critics were puzzled by Seurat’s latest effort. “They felt the painting was too mechanical and lifeless, a feeling shared by the Dutch artist Vincent van Gough, who visited Seurat” (Düchting 67). Many started to interpret Seurat’s art from a political standpoint. Some saw this painting as a critique of the Parisian bourgeoisie by the juxtaposition of attractive dancers and unsightly onlookers. True to form, Seurat remained silent throughout the debate. “As in many of Seurat’s later works, scientific rigor, a subjective and ironic view and a hint of symbolism are balanced by visual poetry and a not uncritical view of reality” (Düchting 67).

Seurat has only one work in his repertoire that could be considered a portrait. This work is *Young Woman Powdering Herself* and the subject was no longer a nameless face or an insignificant model. This model’s name was Madeline Knobloch, and she was not just a model, but also Seurat’s lover. Once again, Seurat returned to the naturalistic style of meticulous Pointillism. In this painting, Seurat experimented with the use of spiral to create movement and mood. A young scientist named Charles Henry had just presented his theory that spirals rotating from left to right could be used to express pleasure. The top of the painting contains an arch, as did *La Chahut*, to create a more aesthetically pleasing composition. It is apparent that Seurat took great care in depicting his lover and placing her in the best possible light. The art community was quick to once again politicize his work. They seemed to think Seurat was pointing to the social constraints of middle-class women by his use of the corset and “the gulf between socially
dictated vanity and natural beauty, which may also be symbolized in the flowers” (Düchting 56). Even in his portrait of his lover, Seurat advanced his technique and his method.

Figure 10: Young Woman Powdering Herself, 1890

Seurat’s last work, *Cirque*, was another depiction of Parisian entertainment of the time. Popular with many artists of the day, the Cirque Médrano would be the subject of
Seurat’s painting. Once again, Seurat demonstrated the precise nature of Pointillism and the ability to create movement with line and composition. He also, either intentionally or unintentionally, shows the distinct social class structure in Paris.

Figure 11: Cirque, 1890-91

At the top of the painting there are workers in utilitarian caps behind the bleachers. These workers represent the bottom of the class structure. Then there are three rows of hard wooden seats reserved for the second- and third-class patrons. The front rows are
padded and reserved for the upper class citizens. Was this a social statement, or was this just a factual representation of the Parisian circus at the time? With Seurat’s obsession with science and accuracy, one might assume that Seurat was not particularly interested in creating social upheaval. After all, he was living off of his father’s money and not really living the life of a proletariat.

A close look at the faces of the subjects in *Cirque*, reveals there seems to be something different in the eyes than any other Seurat work. The eyes look almost Asian. This is deliberate. Here he tried to implement Humbert de Superville’s theory of line and emotion. This is not Seurat’s first attempt – parts can be seen in as far back as *The Sideshow* – but it was his first attempt on such a grand scale. de Superville’s theory states that upward moving lines (\ / ) express gaiety, horizontal lines (− − ) express calmness, and downward lines ( / \ ) express sadness. Seurat made the assumption that this may be just another scientific set of rules that may govern emotion.

Seurat sent *Cirque* to the exhibition of the Indépendents in 1891 with the hope that this showing would strengthen his position as the leader of the up-and-coming movement of Neo-Impressionism. This painting was finally accepted by the art community and the critics as a whole. Seurat had always been ahead of his time, but now it seemed that time caught up to his ideas and techniques at last.

**Later Life**

On 16 February 1890, Seurat’s child with Madeleine Knobloch, his model for *Young Woman Powdering Herself*, was born and named Pierre Georges, the reversal of Seurat’s first and middle names. By March of 1891, Seurat had developed what he
considered to be a minor sore throat that followed a cold. He went to his mother’s home to recuperate and on 29 March 1891, Georges Pierre Seurat died at the age of 31, having never sold a major painting. Those at his bedside reported that he appeared to choke to death. Since no medical attention was given to his illness, it is believed he died from diphtheria. Some historians have also suggested bacterial meningitis or angina as other possible causes of death. Whatever was his cause of death was contagious. His son contracted the same disease as his father and died within the year. It was this contagion and other symptoms that lead most scholars to point to diphtheria, which was prevalent in France at the time of Seurat’s death. Georges Seurat was buried in Paris at the cemetery of Pére Lachaise. After the death of Pierre Seurat, the bonds between Madeline Knobloch and the Seurat family became very strained. Knobloch broke the connections to the family and was never seen by the Seurat family again.

**Influences of Seurat**

After Seurat’s sudden death, there was a leadership vacuum in the Neo-Impressionism Movement. Without Seurat’s inventiveness and ingenuity as leadership, there was a great deal of turmoil within the movement. Signac would eventually emerge as the new leader of the movement, but he would always give Seurat credit as the true innovator and genius behind Neo-Impressionism and Pointillism.

As to the effects of Pointillism, the art world would never be the same. Many point to Seurat’s *Cirque* as the building blocks upon which the Cubists and Constructivists built their principles. Newspapers would use a form of pointillism in their printing process of photos and the effects can be seen in the Pop Art movement in works
such as Lichtenstein’s. Pointillism never became the mainstream art form Seurat had hoped, but he did secure its place firmly in art history.

Seurat’s greatest work, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*, resides currently in the Art Institute of Chicago. The painting is on permanent display to the public and hundreds of people admire the work every year. *La Grande Jatte* has also become a popular culture icon. Tributes and impressions to *La Grande Jatte* can be found in topiary gardens (in Columbus, Ohio), on magazine covers (*The New Yorker* and *Lands’ End*), in movies (*Ferris Bueller’s Day Off*), in a Broadway musical (*Sunday in the Park with George*), as well as in other media.

Pointillism’s effects can be found not only in the visual arts but in music as well. Pointillism in music refers to the effect in which the notes are heard as individual sounds, or dots, rather than as a successive, linear progression. Milton Babbitt, a well-known instructor and mentor of Stephen Sondheim, is known for this style of music. Babbitt’s music consists of 12-note tone rows and their resulting interactions. Some might not think of this music as melodic, but that is not the point of Pointillist music. Just like Seurat’s position, the point is the technique, not the critical response.

Seurat’s influence is still apparent today, and his paintings still are the subject of numerous debates. Much of the mystery and intrigue of Seurat comes from his social silence, but despite that, he did speak a great deal through his works and they continue to speak to us to this day.
Sunday in the Park with George

Original Production

On May 2, 1984, Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine’s musical Sunday in the Park with George opened on Broadway in the Booth Theatre after 35 preview performances. The show would run for 604 performances and close on October 13, 1985. Starring Mandy Patinkin and Bernadette Peters, Sunday took Broadway and the arts community by storm. The production received over 20 awards and nominations including Drama Desk Awards in technical theatre, music, lyrics, direction, libretto, acting, and outstanding musical. Sunday won only two Tony Awards in Scenic Design and Lighting Design from its ten total nominations. Jerry Herman’s La Cage aux Folles was the belle of the ball at the 1984 Tony Awards and upon accepting his Tony for Best Score, Herman remarked, “There’s been a rumor around for a couple of years that a simple, hummable show tune was no longer welcome on Broadway. Well, it’s alive and well at the Palace” (Kantor 397). Many took this as a direct insult to Stephen Sondheim and his pointillist score for Sunday. Sondheim would have the last laugh though because in 1985 Sunday won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama out of recognition for its outstanding exploration of art and its effects.

Sunday’s beginnings came when in 1982, James Lapine, a new playwright, called Stephen Sondheim in the hopes that the two could collaborate in a new project. Lapine had just been commissioned by Playwrights Horizons for a new work and Sondheim was coming off his less than successful production of Merrily We Roll Along. The two men decided that a musical exploration of Seurat’s painting, A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte, would be the focus of their collaboration. Through workshops the
two men realized that the story would revolve around the artist of this work and his obsessive creation of this masterwork.

![Sunday in the Park with George Original Production Photo, 1984](image)

Sondheim and Lapine chose to workshop through Playwrights Horizons because of the volatile nature of Broadway at the time. They knew their piece was going to take some polishing and understanding. Playwrights Horizon was just the perfect venue to shape and hone this work. It had a reputation of welcoming new, innovative and experimental works. André Bishop, in his introduction in *Four by Sondheim*, recalls the partnership between the artists and the venue.

> When we began performances in July of 1983, we had most of a first act . . . and hardly any Act Two. So we decided to only perform the first act—it was, after all, a fairly complete unit—and to add Act Two when the authors were ready. (565)

It is plainly clear that Playwrights Horizons was committed to allowing its artists to grow and create without the overwhelming pressure of making money. Bishop states:

> Playwrights Horizons believes that opportunities create and sustain artists, and we felt that the best thing we could do for Sondheim and Lapine was to step back and give them a chance to discover their show. I wanted them to be free to do what they wanted without any kind of management pressure, without any kind of publicity or review, and most of all, without any kind of fear. I felt that they
were onto something important, and I knew that the collaboration between the two men was new and at an early and delicate stage. (566)

“That whole process was just like watching a painting come together, particularly that painting, dot by dot,” James Lapine remembered. “And as each song came in, as each lyric came in, the picture became more focused, and the storytelling clearer, and it literally didn’t come together until a day or two before the critics arrived.” (Kantor 397)

_Sunday_ opened to the press on July 6, 1983 and the Shubert Organization was ready, willing and able to offer Sondheim and Lapine a transfer to the Booth Theatre. After closing on Broadway, _Sunday_ has had great admiration but not a lot of production. It is probably one of the least produced Sondheim shows in his repertoire, well maybe after _Follies_. It was revived in 1994, on the ten year anniversary of the production, for a one night concert version bringing back a good deal of the original cast, including Patinkin and Peters. In 1986, the original cast was reassembled to create a filmed production of _Sunday_, and it continues to entrance audiences to this day. Most recently _Sunday_ was revived in 2006 for the London’s West End stage to great acclaim.
Author Process

After the commercial and critical failure of *Merrily We Roll Along*, no one was sure what Sondheim’s next move was going to be. It was clear he needed to reinvent himself and boost himself out of his current rut. The first thing Sondheim needed was a new partnership. He dissolved his partnership with Harold Prince. One can assume that things were getting a little predictable in their collaborations and *Merrily We Roll Along* did not leave the best of tastes in their mouths. The second thing Sondheim needed was an environment that allowed him to create his art free from the pressure of Broadway. Sondheim found both of those needs in James Lapine and Playwrights Horizons.

Lapine, originally a graphic designer, was fairly new to playwriting with only two other credits to his name, *Photograph* and *Twelve Dreams*. Playwrights Horizons had recognized Lapine’s talent and commissioned him to create a new work. He had called Stephen Sondheim to see if he was interested in collaborating and Sondheim was. Sondheim actually had thought of Lapine before the phone call. Sondheim recalls,

I was knocked out by both the writing and directing [of *Twelve Dreams*] . . . and at the time I thought, “Gee, I wonder if that man would like to write a musical? I bet he could.” But I was too shy to ask, so I just let it go. (Zadan 295)

In thinking back on the beginnings of *Sunday*, Lapine remembers,

I had just met him and was fairly new to theater and so naively I said, “Well, gee, I’m sure we could sit down and think of a show that could be popular, and could be successful.” And he looked at me like I was crazy, and said, “I would never do that.” (Kantor 396)

After throwing around a couple of ideas, the two men found themselves excited about creating a show revolving around Georges Seurat and his masterwork, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grande Jatte*. One of Sondheim’s early notes reveals his
thought process, “the show is, in part, about how creation takes on a life of its own; how artists feed off art (we off Seurat); the artist’s relationship to his material” (Kakutani 1). Act I would encapsulate the creation of the work and Act II would “also [demonstrate] how that painting [would] influence later generations, how art, like love, endures through time” (Kakutani 1). Sondheim, who had just defined a new genre of musical theatre with his “concept” musicals, was interested in pushing the boundaries of musical theatre even further. “He hoped, with Sunday, to realize an old, unfulfilled ambition – to translate the musical form of ‘theme and variation’ to the stage” (Kakutani 1). Sondheim has always expressed a great admiration for Rachmaninoff and his variations on a theme by Paganini. He thought this musical concept could transfer to the stage with ease.

“When we’d fastened on the idea of using Seurat’s painting and showing how it was made for the first act, I was all excited because I thought the second act could be a series of variations or comments on the painting – in some way, an answer to the first act” . . . Or, it might deal with a series of variations on Seurat’s painting itself. (Kakutani 1)

Lapine was not as excited about the theme and variation idea. Sondheim recalls that “[Lapine’s] first response . . . was ‘We must have a story, we must carry some kind of storyline from the first act or there’ll be no focus of interest’” (Kakutani 1). Part of what attracted Sondheim to Lapine was because he “comes from a generation much freer theatrically than [his own]” (Savran 235). Sondheim says, “He’s less linear and I’ve always been interested in nonlinear theatre at the same time that I believe in strong stories” (Savran 235). Their partnership seems to be a balancing act of ideas. Sondheim does confess that he has a problem trying to impress his theory upon the music when it does not always fit. It is the square peg/round hole problem.
Sondheim and Lapine had long discussion sessions before any writing occurred. They would discuss ideas about concept, dialogue, Seurat, and possible special effects. In September of 1982, Lapine began his first draft of the show. “In order to give the show the feeling that it had been translated from the French, he tried to keep his language formal and simple” (Kakutani 1). He wanted to create a dialogue style that mirrored the pointillism of Seurat’s paintings. Sondheim asked that Lapine overwrite his script as much as possible. He liked looking for song ideas in the excess material, so “Lapine filled locations for songs in his script with long stream-of-consciousness monologues” that Sondheim would use as inspiration for composition. (Kakutani 1)

Sondheim had some interesting ideas as he sat down to compose *Sunday in the Park with George*. In an interview with Mark Horowitz for his book *Sondheim on Music*, Sondheim says,

> Isn’t it interesting that Seurat had, on his palate, eleven colors and white. And I thought eleven and one make twelve. Any how many notes are there in the scale? Twelve. And I thought, ooh, isn’t that interesting. So I thought I would utilize that in some way. (91)

He tried to assign specific colors to the twelve notes of the chromatic scale and keep the motif throughout, but he soon realized that would straightjacket himself and pigeonhole the entire production. Sondheim quickly abandoned this idea as a nice idea but impractical. Then, Sondheim realized that the pointillist style he was looking for could be found in a rhythmic staccato pattern. This motif is found throughout the entire score.

Sondheim found that his own request of Lapine to overwrite would be his own downfall. He found that Lapine had created such a strong script that it was difficult to change or alter any of his words. Sondheim recalled that Lapine’s script was “so meticulously worked out for the ear, that by merely changing one syllable – to make it
work musically – I would kill the entire phrase” (Kakutani 1). Because of this fact, Sondheim really used very little of Lapine’s words in his own creations. He just added upon what was already there. What was created was an overwritten production with little focus and too many tangents.

It was clear to the creative staff that there was a great deal of revisions that was necessary. Once again, the pressures to deliver that Broadway can put on a production was dodged by being at Playwrights Horizons. The authors were given time and resources to polish and invent a balanced and creative work of art. First to go was anything that detracted from the main story of George and Dot and the creation of the painting. This meant some lengthy character songs and roles were cut significantly. Also, there were some technical aspects that had to be cut due to time, budget and streamlining of the show. Lapine remembers,

Part of the problem in writing the show was the wealth of things we wanted to say. Later, when we put the show on its feet, I think my reaction was “God, it’s about too many things.” So a lot of the later decision making was about honing it down, making it specific. (Kakutani 1)

Sondheim found his inspiration to make specific decisions from Seurat.

He put hundreds of thousands of dots on that canvas. And every one was a separate decision. Some people say there were five million individual decisions. And that is what art is. You spend four days working out the flower of the hat, then you spend four days working on the hat. Then you have twenty other hats to do, then all the hats are a part of a pattern. Then you start working on the face. It is just . . . hard . . . work. (Kantor 397)

Another moment that was jettisoned was the section of the script that Lapine wrote that filled in the one hundred year jump that currently resides in the intermission. The second act also became less about theme and variation, but “the hero in Sunday’s second act uses the past as a means of finding redemption” (Kakutani 1). The collaborators were
changing things left and right and watching the effects in front of the Playwrights Horizons audience. Lapine recalls,

> The original idea was for all the secondary characters to have songs . . . [and] what we discovered in the workshop was that people weren’t interested in them. They were interested in George and Dot, and we realized that it was very hard to write a “little” song, because then it became very unsatisfying. So we ended up paring down a lot of the songs in the workshop and making them more like little sketches, as opposed to full-blown moments for the characters, and them putting all our focus on developing the relationship of our two leads. (Zadan 303)

> By this point in the process, Mandy Patinkin and Bernadette Peters had been cast to play the lead roles of George and Dot. This caused some interesting changes, as Sondheim remembers,

> I initially wrote George as a bass-baritone and I wrote Dot as a soprano. And, of course, it turns out we cast Bernadette Peters, who has got a bass-baritone, and Mandy, who’s a soprano, and the duets didn’t quite work. (Horowitz 97)

There was some minor rewrites of the score to adjust to these new timbres, but in the long run, it really opened up some great opportunities for Sondheim. Sondheim does his best work when he is *limited* by certain guidelines, parameters and given circumstances.

> Patinkin remembers the pressures of the workshop production:

> We had many conflicts in the beginning . . . I was very testy because I wasn’t used to any kind of workshop atmosphere. So I was working for five weeks and sitting for five weeks and sitting on the side, with not many things to sing and not enough of my part written for me to figure out what it was going to be, and getting more and more impatient, and right before we opened to the public, I quit. (Zadan 304)

Lapine stepped in and asked Patinkin to perform the show as planned and invite his wife and agent to see the performance. If after receiving their feedback, he still wanted to quit, he could. His wife and agent advised that he should stay and so he returned to the process. It would be one of Patinkin’s best career decisions. Patinkin recalls,
But you have to understand that a few days later, Steve wrote “Finishing the Hat.” How did I know he’d come up with a song like that? I was standing around, waiting for a song to be written and going absolutely crazy. I didn’t know what the hell the guy was going to do. It was very frustrating. But once that happened, I started to recognize, okay, this the way this guy works – he takes his time, he needs the pressure, but he’s going to come up with some amazing stuff . . . and I’ll just shut up and serve him as best I can. (Zadan 304-5)

The collaborative team was running out of time and resources. These changes continued to occur even after the Schubert Organization transferred the show to Broadway for previews. These changes started to have their effects on the morale of the company.

The actors – many of whom had already seen their Act I roles diminished – were faced with daily changes in the second half of the show, and during early previews had to contend with dispiriting audience reaction as well. “Steve and I had to explain to the company that it was just not the kind of show audiences were used to seeing,” recalls Mr. Lapine, “and that it was important to take pride in it.” (Kakutani 1)

The problem that Sondheim and Lapin kept running into was how to end the second act. One possible ending had a little girl come up to George, give him a sketch pad, and then he would start sketching the island. This was an ending that seemed trite and too *perfect*. Lapine recalls, “We wanted an ending that would be sort of ineffable. I think both Steve and I really like mystery. We like unexplained things” (Kakutani 1). Sondheim speaks of creating the perfect balance. “It’s finding that line where everything isn’t exactly explained, and yet doesn’t rouse hostility in the audience because they’re confused” (Kakutani 1). What they finally created was the fusion of art and intellect.

“It’s like making a painting,” says Mr. Lapine. “You go through the process of doing what you do, and then finally, you just have to put it up there and hope others respond. The irony is, you want it to look effortless, and to get that, it’s such hard work.” (Kakutani 1)
The final draft of the second act can be attributed to a principle taught to Sondheim by his teacher and pointillist composer, Milton Babbitt. Sondheim recalls,

I thought one way to tie the two acts together would be to make – this is a word I learned from Milton Babbitt, and I loved it – architectonic similarities. . . So the two acts string together because the second act depends on the first act. But in *Sunday*, the second act is an entirely separate entity – it’s another ship – so the way to link them together, it seemed to me, was to make it some kind of parallel structure. (Horowitz 101)

The show was finally ready, after many different rewrites and polishing, for the open public. It was now time to put the production on its feet and wait for the Broadway reaction.

**Critical Response**

When assessing the response of critics to *Sunday in the Park with George*, there is no greater champion than Frank Rich of *The New York Times*. From the very beginning, Rich touted *Sunday* as a masterpiece and continued to write about it long after its opening night. “Broadway wags claimed that Rich and his paper had given the show so much coverage, the Pulitzer should have been award to the *New York Times*” (Kantor 397). Much of the success of the year and a half run can be attributed to Rich’s constant attention.

Rich’s first article appeared in the *Times* on May 3, 1984. Rich gave the production a very positive review but at the same time balanced. He stated that “the song-writer Stephen Sondheim and the playwright-director James Lapine demand that an audience radically change its whole way of looking at the Broadway musical” (Rich 314). Rich was being up front with his readers saying that this musical will be a challenge to understand, but when one does, it can be “audacious,” “touching,” and “groundbreaking”
Rich warned his readers not to try to compare *Sunday* to anything they have seen before.

*Sunday* is not a bridge to opera, like *Sweeney Todd*; nor is it in the tradition of dance musicals of Jerome Robbins and Michael Bennett. . . . In creating a work about a pioneer of modernist art, Mr. Lapine and Mr. Sondheim have made a contemplative modernist musical that, true to for, is as much about itself and its creators as it is about the universe beyond. (Rich 314-315)

Rich also praised the performances of Patinkin and Peters and cited “Finishing the Hat” as “the show’s most moving song” (Rich 316). Rich also mentions that the act one finale was especially moving “not because the plot has been resolved but because a harmonic work of art has been born” (Rich 316).

What makes Rich’s review so significant? It was because that almost every other critic posted negative or hostile review. Rich recalls:

I was full of self-doubt and shaken by the loneliness of my stand, especially since I couldn’t articulate my response to *Sunday* to my own satisfaction. So I went back and saw it again and again and again – and kept being moved and kept writing about it until I felt I had made my case. (Rich 974)

Many saw this writing campaign as Rich’s attempt to show the rest of the world the power of a review from the *New York Times*. Rich remembers:

I particularly angered the late Richard Hummler, of the trade publication *Variety*, who despised the *Time*’s extensive coverage of the show nearly as much as he did the show itself. The theater’s resentment of the iconoclastic Sondheim, always apparent in the anonymous and not-so-anonymous mail I perennially received from the Broadway fold who attacked him, eventually even surfaced on stage at the [1984] Tony Awards. (Rich 974-75)

On 21 October 1984, in an article titled “A Musical Theater Breakthrough,” Rich lays out in great detail the reasons why he feels *Sunday* truly is an innovative work in musical theatre. In this article, Rich compares *Sunday* to *Oklahoma!* and how even this groundbreaking Rodgers and Hammerstein show’s initial critical response was not
positive. Rich wrote: “According to Broadway lore, the impresario Mike Todd walked out of a New Haven tryout performance of the first Richard Rodgers—Oscar Hammerstein II musical, pronouncing its doom: ‘No legs, no jokes, no chance!’” (Rich 341). This love letter of an article implored his readers to not only give Sunday a fair chance, but to take a hard, long look at Sondheim. “Sunday is a watershed event that demands nothing less than a retrospective, even revisionist, look at the development of both the serious Broadway musical and of Sondheim’s groundbreaking career” (Rich 343).

Rich traces back Sondheim’s canon and how he connects to his past, traditions, and passion while moving forward with his ideas and innovations. One must remember that in 1984, when this article was written, the jury was still out in the Broadway community as to Sondheim’s place in musical theatre history. He was considered to be an outsider who had a cult following. Rich would sound the call to arms in this article and give Sondheim the recognition he deserved.

Rich also traced how Sondheim reveals himself and his thoughts about theatre in his musicals. He shows Sondheim’s hostility in Merrily We Roll Along by writing,

Echoing many criticisms Sondheim has suffered over the years, the producer sings to the hero: “There’s not a tune you can hum . . . /Why can’t you throw ‘em a crumb?/What’s wrong with letting ‘em tap their toes a bit?/I’ll let you know when Stravinsky has a hit – Give me some melody!” (Rich 384)

Rich contends that Sondheim has elevated “the tone and substance of the argument from the sour-grapes, showbiz gripes of the previous show to the impassioned arena of esthetic debate” (Rich 352). Rich argues that Sondheim is no longer trying to answer his critics from a defensive standpoint, but from a place of reason and understanding.”
When a salon painter dismisses Seurat’s canvases as being “all mind, no heart” in an early song in *Sunday*, Sondheim doesn’t respond with snide wisecracks. “I am not hiding behind my canvas,” George insists later, “I am living in it.” (Rich 352)

Mark Horowitz, in his book *Sondheim on Music*, went so far to ask about this apparent parallel between character and creator. “MH: As a composer, how much did you identify with Seurat? Did you want to try and emulate that intellectualism? SS: No” (103). Well, we are all free to make our own conclusions, but there was something different about this score. Gerald Bordman, in his book *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, remarked,

> The wholesale, unyielding despair, misanthropy, and emotional flagellation of all his recent works were discarded in favor of an often sentimental warmth and tentative optimism, with only enough of his former negativism to remind you that this was Sondheim speaking about a real world. (Bordman 775)

*Variety* countered Rich on 31 October 1984 with an article titled “Sondheimania Grips N.Y. Times; ‘Sunday’ Plugs Keep on Coming.” In this article, *Variety* accuses the *Times* of playing favorites. It seems to *Variety* that once the *Times* discovers a musical it finds to be worthy, it sends out an endless streams of features, follow-ups, and reviews that tout the certain musical while ignoring all other productions. This basically dooms any other production to financial ruin while excelling the “prized” production.

> There is, of course, no reliable way to relate the box office success of “Sunday” to the *Times*’ extensive favorable coverage, but as the paper that’s ready by the bulk of the N.Y. metropolitan area legit audience, it’s certain to have been a positive factor. (“Sondheimania” 102)

*Variety* also claims that a bad review from the *Times* “usually is tantamount to a news blackout for the remainder of the panned show’s run” (“Sondheimania 102). *Variety* thinks that productions should receive some equality of coverage, or at least an attempt to do so. “The *Times* editors doubtlessly believe the show they cover in such depth are the
most newsworthy and deserving of elaborate and repeated attention. News coverage
decisions are at least in part subjective, however” (“Sondheimiana” 102).

Many of Sondheim’s antagonists pointed to the fact that Sunday was not really a
show about plot or characters but a musical that debated ideas. “As a result, alongside
Sondheim’s advocates, there would always be detractors who would agree with Variety
that ‘Dispassionate respect rather than enjoyment is likely to be the predominant
reaction’” (Bordman 775). Most critics found that an exploration of art and its creation
was not a suitable subject matter for a Broadway musical. Catherine Hughes of America
wrote: “Sondheim and his associates once again have taken an original and potentially
exhilarating challenge but in this case fallen considerably short of meeting it.” Richard
Schickel of Time hoped that Sondheim and Lapine could take the painting and thaw it
“into something like life,” but he concluded that “Broadway audiences may have more
trouble than George stepping into this austere, demanding concept.” Leo Savage of The
New Leader remarked that “its characters are never fully developed and its story, which
doesn’t take hold until the second half, is rather inadequate.” Peter J. Rosenwald of
Horizon admired the concept and imagination but concluded that “the subject [was] at the
same time too big and too subtle for the Broadway stage.” One has to wonder if
Rosenwald had seen the original workshop production at Playwrights Horizons, if he
would have the same opinion. Howard Kissel of Women’s Wear Daily was hopeful of
the venture, but wrote that “the sad fact, however, is that despite his obvious intention to
treat the subject in a mode as experimental as it deserves, despite enormous talent and
passion of the performers, ‘Sunday’ is a thin and lifeless evening.” Joel Siegel of
WABC-TV may have summed up the opposition’s voice most succinctly in his report when he said:

The idea is clever. But clever doesn’t mean good. The overlong first act seems even longer because there are no human beings. There’s no drama, no conflict – no story . . . The evening is interesting, adventuresome, but it’s a play about a painting. Plays have to be about people. For Sondheim fans, and I am one, “Sunday in the Park with George” is no picnic.

Many critics found that Sondheim was falling into his same old traps and Lapine was falling short as a librettist. Robert Brustein of The New Republic wrote that “Sondheim, once again frowning on melody, is here composing in a minimalist, vaguely serial style which functions primarily as a setting for his surprising, often witty lyrics.” David Denby of The Atlantic Monthly was so very disappointed in Sondheim’s musical abilities that he wrote, “Sunday in the Park with George is completely undramatic – especially the songs, which reach a certain plateau, both emotionally and tonally, and then just stay there, repeating themselves for a spell before ending.” Douglas Watt of Daily News thought that the book was “static and even foolish” and the songs were so uneventful that “you almost literally come away humming the scenery.” John Simon of New York agrees, stating, “Strictly speaking, this is a musical without a single song in it.” Charles Stuckey of Art in America wrote that “the plot is no more exciting than that of Phillip Glass’s The Photographer,” a recent modern-styled flop. Dennis Cunningham of WCBS-TV said that “Lapine’s limp and shallow book is constantly in search of itself” and that the “wonderful” moments of the show just end up as “a sad reminder of everything that isn’t.”

It was not all sour grapes in all of these reviews. Most all of the critics agreed that Act I, especially the finale, was solid. The performers were never really touched
upon in anything but a positive light and the technical aspects of the production were highly exulted. Although, John Simon of New York was not too impressed with the ensemble work stating, “Thus some of the figures in the show are cardboard cutouts that contribute as much as the allegedly non-cardboard ones.” Of the set, Robert Brustein of The New Republic said, “one could sit and look at it for hours. This, in fact, is precisely what the audience finds itself doing at the Booth Theater.” Brustein was also not impressed with the Act II finale as a mirror to the Act I finale. “Sondheim and Lapine have returned to their original image because that image is the essence of the work; the rest is landfill.” He does give a suggestion though of cutting the second act.

Without the second act, and without the modest but foolish plot, Sunday in the Park with George might have been a genuine breakthrough in American musical theater. At the moment, it seems more like an effort to adapt the insights of serious art to the entertainment needs of popular audiences.

Edwin Wilson of The Wall Street Journal humorously states his opinion: “The first act of ‘Sunday in the Park with George,’ which opened this week at the Booth Theater, is the best musical of the season. Unfortunately, the second act may be the worst.” He goes on to address Act I in his review, but when it comes to Act II, he does not even write about it. He simply states that “there is no point in dwelling on the shortcomings of the second act.” One critic, David Denby of The Atlantic Monthly was not even impressed with the Act I finale. “The show demonstrates that a great painting can be re-created onstage. What of it?”

In the end, though, most dismissed Sunday as clichéd, boring and problematic. Paul Berman of The Nation simply stated that the production was “relentlessly clichéd.” Once again, David Denby of The Atlantic Monthly did not pull any punches in summing up his opinion and crediting his stamina. “What’s onstage is so perversely uninvolving
that I admire my own persistence in staying interested in it.” Charles Stuckey of *Art in America* felt that the production did not do the art world justice and “that is the basic trouble with *Sunday in the Park with George*: we’ve seen it all before. The art world may have its problems, but it delivers a lot more.” Douglas Watt of *Daily News* wrote, “‘Sunday in the Park with George’ is pretty; trouble is, you can’t simply pass on to the next gallery after a bit and take in another show.” He goes on to say that the production “doesn’t bear looking at or listening to for very long.” He takes one last stab when he states that “the painting itself says far more about the people in it than the show does.” Clive Barnes of the *New York Post* stated, “Personally I was nonplussed, unplussed, and disappointed” and that within this production “art itself is trivialized” and that “it might be better to go to the park with anyone than to spend it boringly in the theater with George.” *Women’s Wear Daily*’s Howard Kissel summed up that the show gives “clichéd characters, so their convergence has no drama at all” and that “‘Sunday’ is too tepid even to occasion outrage or anger. It makes you nostalgic for ‘Merrily We Roll Along.’”

Rich was not completely alone in giving *Sunday* a positive review. There were a handful of others. Jack Kroll of *Newsweek* found it so innovative that he wrote, “To say that this show breaks new ground is not enough; it breaks new sky, new water, new flesh and new spirit.” Milan Stitt of *Horizon* found the production to be “brilliant” and “a masterpiece.” Stephen Holden of *The Atlantic Monthly* wrote not just about *Sunday*, but about “The Passion of Stephen Sondheim.” After seeing the production and analyzing it against all of Sondheim’s previous works, he concluded that “Sondheim’s songs and shows have not simply peeled away the sentimentality of Broadway but have tried to
delineate some enduring artistic and moral truths.” Brendan Gill of The New Yorker declares that of all the shows nominated for Tony Awards, “the only one that I can recommend without grave cautionary asides is ‘Sunday in the Park with George.’” Frank Rich looks to Sondheim’s future and states, “Should Sondheim keep moving on and moving others with him, he may yet become the giant he saw his teacher, [Hammerstein II], to be — one who leaves our theater profoundly and permanently changed” (353).

So, what was the public response? While it could have either been from the controversy created in the critical arenas, actual admiration of Sondheim and Lapine’s work, or a curious inquisitiveness for entertainment, but Sunday played to sold-out houses on Broadway for its entire run. However, the show was considered to be too much of a risk to take on the road, so it closed after its year and a half run, losing one-fourth of its $2.4 million investment. Sunday is an interesting exposé on the creation of art and its effects that continues to challenge critics and audiences alike.

“I care a lot about art and the artist,” admits Sondheim. “The major thing I wanted to do in the show was to enable anyone who is not an artist to understand what hard work it is. You can’t tell why a show is successful or not. But I think one of the reasons this one did fairly well was that it created a world . . . You just wanted to live in that park forever and ever, which is part of the point of the play. It became mesmeric . . . so the audience success had to do with a willingness to know that it was all going to be a little strange, and then realizing they’d fallen into an enchanted world. Sunday was a world on a stage.” (Zadan 316-17)

In the end, despite vicious controversy and along with the recognition of winning the Pulitzer, Sunday in the Park with George has become one of the crowning achievements in Stephen Sondheim’s repertoire.
**History**

The Estill Voice Training System™ is a comparatively new voice system developed in the 1970’s by voice pioneer, Jo Estill. This system empowers vocalists by placing the responsibility of awareness and control in their hands, or throat as it were. EVTSTM is not just a singing system; it addresses the total health of the voice in both singing and speaking. EVTSTM is intended for the entire speaking and singing community, but for the purposes of this thesis, this section will primarily focus on the singing voice and vocal qualities. Divided into two levels, “Compulsory Figures for Voice Control” and “Figure Combinations for Six Voice Qualities,” EVTSTM applies scientific observations to practical applications of to create a system that is easy to follow and can provide great rewards for the singer.

One of the most striking tenets of EVTSTM is the separation of “the mechanics of singing from the artistic and aesthetic preconceptions” (*Estill Voice Training System™*). A “good” sound is measured in this system by using proper, healthy phonation, which in most cases would result in a “pleasing” sound. There is a place in this system for aesthetics, but only after correct phonation has been established. The *Estill Voice Training System™: Level One* states in its mission statement: “The heart of this unique approach is the assumption that everyone has a beautiful voice. The balance of vocal health and aesthetic freedom is central to our teaching” (Klimek vi).

Jo Estill, the system’s founder and creator, began her career as an entertainer singing lieder and opera. As the *Level One* text states, “She often wondered, ‘How am I doing this?'” (Klimek 1). While pursuing her Master’s Degree in Music Education, Estill
attended classes in anatomy, physiology, and speech science. With the information that she was receiving from these classes, along with her own ideas and continuing research, she changed her focus from entertainment to voice research and teaching. EVTSTM is the system that emerged from her research and findings.

EVTSTM bases its foundation on scientific principles. Through her extensive study of the anatomy of the voice, Estill became even more curious as to how these anatomical pieces fit and work together. In 1981, utilizing the most advanced technology of the time, she had her vocal tract x-rayed and noted the changes in her vocal structure as she sang in different vocal qualities. As technology progressed, Estill utilized it to its fullest potential. By studying the voice by way videolaryngoscopy, the process by which a camera is inserted in either the mouth or nose to record activity in the vocal tract, Estill discovered that the changes she assumed were taking place by “feeling” and listening to what she was doing while singing and studying x-rays were in fact greater than her assumptions. Each change in the sound she created was the result of a discrete change in the vocal tract. VLS gave her the tools and irrefutable evidence she needed. Estill created a system that ensures healthy and specific sounds qualities based on her solid scientific findings.
The EVTS™ operates under four basic principles. First, “Knowledge is power; understanding how the voice works is a good thing” (Klimek 4). Secondly, “Voice production begins before the voice is heard; muscle effort makes it happen” (Klimek 4). The third principle states, “The breath must be allowed to respond to what it meets on the way out” (Klimek 4). These three principles address the voice and vocal training without any bias of aesthetics. They remain scientific in observation and speculation, but the fourth principle adds aspects of aesthetics. “Voice training is optimized when separated into 3 disciplines: Craft, Artistry, and Performance Magic” (Klimek 4). Level One and Level Two address Craft, but it is up to the student and instructor, or director as the case may be, to build upon Craft with Artistry to carry on into performance, where a special relationship with an audience creates Performance Magic. Figure 14 illustrates this principle and how the layers can be applied to create a balanced performance.

Figure 13: Videolaryngoscopic View of the Larynx during Respiration

Inhalation

Exhalation
Voice training is best accomplished when separated into 3 disciplines:

![Craft-Artistry-Performance Magic Model](image)

Figure 14: Craft-Artistry-Performance Magic Model

*Level One: Compulsory Figures for Voice Control* lays the foundation for the EVTSTM. This level borrows the term “compulsory figure” from the world of ice skating, where it pertains to carvings made in the ice by the skates in certain designs or shapes, such as the “figure eight.” It used to be that 60% of the total score in ice skating was based on the successful completion of these basic figures. In EVTSTM terms, compulsory figures pertain to the specific manipulation of certain anatomical structures that create phonation. Just as in skating, the EVTSTM has the student demonstrate these compulsory figures in order to exhibit a physical mastery of the principles.
EVTSTM begins with simple vocabulary. It follows the standard voice science model of Power, Source, and Filter. “Power” refers to the breath supplied by the lungs and supporting structures, “Source” refers to the tone produced at the larynx, and “Filter” refers to resonance affected by the vocal tract structures. Each one of these components has numerous anatomical components that can be controlled independently to give the desired effect and each of these components is governed by the amount of energy exerted, which EVTSTM labels Effort. The amount of perceived effort can be measured on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 is the lowest amount of energy expelled and 10 being the greatest amount. Students are able to monitor their own energy output, assign the appropriate number, and assign the location of this effort.

Compulsory figures have been developed for the following structures: True Vocal Folds: Onset/Offset (Glottal, Aspirate, or Smooth), False Vocal Folds (Mid, Constrict, or Retract), True Vocal Folds: Body-Cover (Slack, Thick, Thin, or Stiff), Thyroid Cartilage (Vertical or Tilt), Cricoid Cartilage (Vertical or Tilt), Larynx (Low, Mid, or High), Velum (Low, Mid, or High), Tongue (Low, Mid, High, or Compress), Aryepiglottic

Figure 15: Estill Voice Training System™ Vocal Model
Sphincter (Wide or Narrow), Jaw (Forward, Mid, Back, or Drop), Lips (Protrude, Mid, or Spread), Head and Neck (Relax or Anchor), and Torso (Relax or Anchor). Through specific exercises, each one of these components can be manipulated independently and expertly. Mastery of these compulsory figures takes a great deal of practice, time and guidance from a licensed EVTS™ instructor.

![Larynx Structures and Vocal Tract Structures](image)

**Figure 16: Compulsory Figure Components and Symbols**

Students who might be intimidated by the amount of anatomy needed to understand the EVTS™ need not be. A companion book, *Geography of the Voice: Anatomy of an Adam’s Apple*, by Dr. Steven Chicurel and Kerri Obert, introduces the reader through the anatomical structures of the voice with ease and understanding. The best quality of the companion book is that it was written with the EVTS™ in mind. Both experts and novices can use this book as a reference guide while studying the EVTS™ and have a complete understanding of the workings of the vocal structures and how they function in the human body.
Voice Qualities

Once compulsory figures are mastered, the vocal structures can be maneuvered in specific combinations, or “recipes”, to create specific vocal qualities. Voice qualities and their “recipes” are laid out clearly in Level Two: Figure Combinations for Six Voice Qualities. Two structures are not considered pivotal to the combinations of structures that make up the vocal qualities. “Jaw and Lip Control vary the qualities but do not define them; therefore, the focus of this Level Two course will be confined to the combination of settings in the remaining 11 structures” (Klimek, Level Two 5).

The six basic qualities of the voice in the EVTSTM are “Speech,” “Falsetto,” “Sob,” “Twang,” “Opera,” and “Belting” (Klimek, Level Two 6). Understanding that all voices have different timbres and no two voices are alike, the EVTSTM suggests that each student identifies a baseline of the singing and speaking voice called an “attractor state” (Klimek, Level Two 8). An attractor state is the conditions of the voice that each person finds to be the most comfortable and stable and serves as a default. Usually, this can be defined easily by analyzing the student’s speaking voice. It is due to these diverse attractor states that certain voice qualities may be easier or feel more comfortable to certain students than others. With a baseline established, students can understand their starting point, or blank palette, to create the six qualities and the amount of change and effort needed to create each quality. It should also be noted that, with training, attractor states can be modified to create well over a thousand combinations.
Figure 17: Voice Quality Recipes

The first voice quality defined by the EVTSTM is Speech Quality. This is the easiest of all of the qualities to identify because in singing, it is the quality that most closely matches the singer’s natural speaking voice. This quality has been identified in other voice methods as the “chest voice.” “Speech quality may be heard in folk songs, Jazz, Pop, Early Music, and Musical Theatre. Sometimes it makes an appearance as a vocal color variation in operatic singing, in low range and/or recitatives” (Klimek 11). This quality is known for being easily understood, especially on lower pitches, and so therefore is often employed in music “where the lyrics must be clearly heard: in Recitatives, Pop Music, Ballads, Patter Songs” (Klimek 12).
The next voice quality addressed by the EVTSTM is Falsetto Quality. EVTSTM does not limit this quality to just men, as other vocal methods do. When moving up the scale in Speech quality, at a certain point in mid-range, the voice will become “attracted to an easier biomechanical and aerodynamic configuration for the higher pitches” (Klimek 14). This new quality, breathy and generally devoid of vibrato, is Falsetto. Falsetto carries connotations of child-like innocence and femininity due to its raised pitch. Falsetto can be found in some women’s speaking (rarely ever in men’s) and “Falsetto can break into Speech with a yodel-like crack” (Klimek 21). Known for its “purity” of tone, Falsetto is often used in Early Music, Gospel, Folk Music, Jazz, Pop, Commercial, Boy Choir/A Cappella and Musical Theatre genres.

EVTSTM describes Sob Quality as the voice variable that most closely matches the sound produced when an adult is mourning with a sobbing cry. It is not very loud and there is a great deal of physical effort associated with this quality. Projection can be a problem with this quality due to its low resonance and low intensity, so it not easily heard in large spaces. Due to its closeness to the actual act of crying and mourning, this quality can trigger a very emotional response. “Not that this is not the kind of crying associated with the tension of anger or frustration, for those emotions would constrict the larynx” (Klimek 31). Most often this quality is utilized in pianissimo sections of Opera, Lullabies, and Blues, Jazz and Pop genres.

Twang Quality is the fourth vocal quality upon which EVTSTM concentrates. Most people who have this voice quality as part of their speaking attractor state come from a noisy environment where projection and clarity is necessary for communication. “In its purest form, it is a valuable color for interpretive effects, and is often heard in
character roles in operettas and Musical Theatre” (Klimek 41). Twang is also often applied to Country Western/Appalachian, Gospel, Rhythm & Blues, Mouth Music, Eastern European Folk Music, African, and Asian genres. Twang, in its purest form, is very useful in character songs, but it can also be blended with other qualities, especially when projection and vocal brightness is paramount to performance. While it is often described as sounding nasal, this quality can be produced by both nasally and orally depending on the placement of the velum. Oral Twang (high velum) is actually brighter than Nasal Twang (mid velum), but there are risks involved. There is a greater risk to constrict the FVF in Oral Twang, so it is important to monitor this quality to assure that a “scratchy” feeling (FVF Constriction) does not occur.

Just as stated above, the voice qualities can be blended, or combined, with one another to create different sounds and colors. Another voice quality defined in EVTSTM, Opera, is a well known permutation that is a combination of Speech, Sob and Twang. There is no exact mixture for Opera Quality, but, in fact, it varies depending on the sounds and effects desired. Other voice methods sometimes give this quality the name “Legit,” as if all other vocal qualities were somehow “illegitimate.” This name is derived from the fact that Classical or Operatic singing has a tendency to be a bit more formal. The problem with labeling a quality as “legit” is that it attaches a connotation of perceptual value and judgment. EVTSTM defines Opera Quality as part of craft, not artistry, so it does not carry that layer perceptual value and judgment. An interesting fact about this quality is that the larynx is actually “being pulled in two directions: up for Twang (to narrow the AES) and down for Sob quality” (Klimek 54). While in many circles it is considered to be the “correct” way to sing, due to its high intensity it carries
“an inherit risk to the vocal folds if misused or driven,” so proper technique is a must (Klimek 54).

Belting, perhaps the most controversial voice quality, is closely associated with American Musical Theatre and “is held in low regard by some who prefer Classical singing styles; however, there are great tenors who use it in their most passionate high notes– in a foreign language it is unrecognized and applauded with great enthusiasm” (Klimek 65). Many who hold it low regard consider belting to be dangerous or damaging to the vocal chord and it can be when produced improperly. Through the specific “recipe” defined in the EVTS™, belting is acknowledged as a healthy and legitimate voice quality. Belting is actually a very natural way of creating sound. “It is the first sound we make as babies and a sound we continue to make until socialization occurs” (Klimek 65). Belting must be relearned in a healthy manner because “singers and voice teachers increasingly recognize that singers need to know how to Belt to earn a living by performing” (Klimek 65). It is erroneously thought by some that belting is just a louder version of Speech. This is a hazardous assumption that, due to belting’s high intensity, can cause a great deal of damage to the vocal tract. A characteristic of Belt that distinguish it from Speech is the “tilted cricoid cartilage, which creates a thicker TVF: Body Cover [allowing] for a very long closed phase (>70% of each cycle), with an increase in subglottal air pressure during that closed phase that leads to high amplitude sound waves” (Klimek 66). In layman’s terms, the TVF are closed longer which creates a stronger pressure behind them that makes the sound more intense. When a performer attempts to Belt without cricoid tilt, there is a large chance for False Vocal Fold
constriction. Three other conditions must be present for Belting to occur: high larynx, high level of energy, and no apparent airflow.

Belting is an exciting sound – partly because it requires total commitment on the part of the singer, and partly because of the risks involved. It is used to add excitement at appropriate musical or dramatic moments; rarely is a song belted from beginning to end. There is no substitute, and the audience always knows! (Klimek 66)

This system, if followed, can guide the singer through an endless quantity of healthy vocal sounds that can be achieved. Just as Level One has a companion book, Level Two should be studied in concurrence with Diction-at-a-Distance. In this book, Estill lays out the principles of sound and combinations needed in order to be heard and understood clearly. As with Geography of the Voice, Diction-at-a-Distance is designed with the EVTS™ in mind. Once again, Estill uses scientific findings to inform and instruct the artist and when applied, it gives the audience what it needs to perceive good diction. She also addresses how to correct “musical blunders, like false accents, caused by hitting high notes on weak syllables” by reducing or enhancing the surrounding sounds to even out the word contours for ultimate perception. (Estill 2) Her 20 “Rules” for diction and understanding can help the student troubleshoot any problem areas and use them as a quick reference for the future. As Estill states, “The human voice is like no other instrument. It can deliver a message, but only if you deliver the words. If it is a choice between words and voice - words are far more important” (Estill 15).

While the EVTS™ has multiple applications in art and aesthetics, there are a great deal of doctors, clinicians, and rehabilitators who use the EVTS™ to aid their patients in recovery from vocal problems. Access to and mastery of Estill’s system is enhanced by using “Estill Voiceprint,” which is a “real-time spectral analysis program that can record,
analyze, and play back the voice to provide meaningful feedback about pitch and voice quality to enhance the learning and rehabilitation process” (Estill Voice Training System™). Additionally, physicians can accurately analyze and prescribe specific Compulsory Figures to rehabilitate the effected areas without causing stress to any other part of the tract.

EVTSTM is a highly applicable and accessible system. When used properly, the EVTSTM gives the professional voice user a continuous source of healthy artistic choices to draw from for any singing situation.

**Comparison to Other Techniques**

It can be difficult to compare and contrast the vast array of vocal approaches due to the relative subjective nature of vocal production. There are some people who may train for many, many years and never reach a level of quality that would warrant a performance, while others may never take a voice lesson in their life and go on to have rich and full vocal careers. The latter is becoming increasingly rare and the trend has become singers that have good deal of vocal training or coaching at their disposal. Performers have become aware of the knowledge that is needed of the voice to sustain a career that may ask for eight full-performances a week.

Just as there is a vast array of vocal approaches, there is even a vaster array of vocal students. Students must search for the vocal approach that most satisfies their needs and understanding. It is important to realize that as this section compares and contrasts the EVTSTM to other approaches, it does not take the stance that EVTSTM should replace any other techniques or systems. In fact, knowledge of other training systems can be beneficial to a student beginning the EVTSTM. As Dr. Steven Chicurel...
has often said, this system is “not a substitute for, but a supplement to.” This is not to say that the EVTS™ could not be studied exclusively, but the EVTS™ does not reject other principles. If anything, students with a background in other techniques may find the EVTS™ to be quite liberating as they find out what vocal structures are helping create the sounds they are producing.

It can be assumed that singing is as ancient as human speech. So, why do humans sing? There is an emotional attachment to the sung word that is not as often attached to the spoken word. An aesthetic sensibility tends to guide the singing voice and aids in the artful communication between the singer and the audience. Frank R. Wilson, in his book *Tone Deaf and All Thumbs?*, which explores the extraordinary nature of the brain that allows humans to possess a distinct innate musical ability, explains the potential music within us all.

As a general rule, any physical skill exists in us as a potential, and our development of that skill will depend on the specifics of our learning experience (when we started to learn, how we’re taught, by whom, and what we ourselves did to apply this instruction). Some people seem to learn faster than others, and in any group of people of similar age and experience, you will find considerable variation in the speed with which most skills are mastered. The quality of performance (if it can be measured) will fall within a certain range, with most people clustered somewhere near the middle. In other words, a few people lag behind, a few people excel, and most people are close to average. For some strange reason, the people who excel are usually the ones who work harder. (15)

The EVTS™ certainly addresses Wilson’s ideal of physical mastery. Wilson continues by stating that no one is “too old” to learn music and can acquire this skill at any age. He states, “Questions of aesthetics aside, music-making is at its foundation a physical act, involving the refinement of bodily movement for the creation and shaping of meaningful sound” (18). The act of singing does carry a certain psychological response as well as a physical. Dudley Ralph Appelman, in his book *The Science of Vocal Pedagogy: Theory*
and Application, attempts to merge the psychological and physical responses in a
definition of the act of singing.

Psychophysically, artful singing and speech is the dynamic (ever changing) act of
coordinating instantaneously the physical sensations of respiration (the will to
breathe), phonation (the will to utter a sound), resonation (the will to form a
particular vowel position), and articulation (the will to communication by forming
both vowel and consonant) into a disciplined utterance. (9)

This definition addresses the physical and mechanical act of while not ignoring the
mental and emotional attributes of singing. Appelman explains the lack of aesthetics in
his definition “because no aesthetic definition of singing is acceptable to everyone” (9).

While the EVTS™ removes the bias of aesthetics from its first tier of teaching (a
healthy sound is considered to be a good quality sound), most other approaches place this
aesthetic bias at the forefront. Clifton Ware, in his book Basics of Vocal Pedagogy,
addresses the idea of aesthetics before he writes one word about correct vocal production.
While he does address the cultural influence on aesthetics, he uses the argument of
aesthetics to create a hierarchy of quality. He states:

If the assumption that “all musics are equal” is accepted as normative, then a
discussion of aesthetics becomes a fruitless intellectual exercise . . . we believe
that human beings have a moral imperative to make aesthetic value judgments
founded on time-proven artistic principles. (3)

It is true that some music is more pleasing to some people than other music, but it may
not always be a matter of healthy vocal production. By creating this aesthetic stigma,
singers begin to imitate what they consider to be correct, creating a copycat mentality of
producing a mimicking sound, not a healthy, correct sound. Without knowledge of the
vocal tract and the process by which sound is created, imitation can be very damaging,
whether imitating pop, classical, or any other music. The EVTS™ removes that bias to
allow the singer to approach the voice from a standpoint of proper, healthy phonation. This layer of aesthetics is added only after a technical proficiency is achieved.

Where EVTSTM accepts belting as a viable vocal quality, Ware sites belting as the demise of the vocal art. He states, “With the advent of rock music and experimental music theater, a general decline in the vocal art was hastened, mostly because of belting and yelling vocal technique” (8). It becomes clear that Ware has a bias towards classical forms of singing when he states,

In classical art the level of execution generally requires a high degree of creative skill, and the substantial subject content is packed with thought and feeling. In particular, what characterizes classical vocal music is greater attention to variety and detail of expression, a high degree of specificity in style, intricacy in textual and musical treatment, a wider palate of harmonic coloration, and greater depth of meaning that elicits subtle nuances in interpretation. (6)

EVTSTM believes that not only can every style of music be performed in a healthy manner, but also sound appropriate for each genre.

The purpose of the section is not to pan classical voice training. Classical voice training is a very viable and healthy form of singing, when trained correctly. It does have its limitations though. Modern pop or folk music sung in the classical tradition creates a malapropism of genre and technique of an almost humorous proportion. EVTSTM tries to address vocal qualities rather than genres to offer the student more solutions to vocal problems.

Ware’s book is full of astute insights to the world of vocal production, including a good amount dealing with anatomy and physiology, but when addressing vocal pedagogy, he tends to lean towards what he calls a “holistic” approach. Some vocal pedagogues have amassed a large knowledge base of the vocal anatomy, but tend not to share it completely with their students. They argue that a great deal of what is being done
in the voice is instinctual and habitual, so the less the student’s mind is clouded with 
anatomy and physiology, the better. Instead, they give their students imagery or similes 
to hopefully create the desired response. Ware gives this example: “The suggestion 
‘pretend you are smelling a rose’ may be used to trigger a slow, deep breath, a soft palate 
lift, a lowered larynx, and a relaxed throat” (253). This assumes that most everyone 
smells a rose in the same manner. It can become a game of guess and check until the 
desired sound is created, then when a student wants to return to that sound, the same 
imagery may or may not work again. Mental imagery is a practical tool in the vocal 
pedagogue’s “bag of tricks,” but the student must be knowledgeable of what that imagery 
is manipulating in the vocal tract. It is as if teachers give students a picture of where they 
want them to go, but no map or starting point.

Ware also addresses what he calls a “mechanistic” approach and EVTS™ would 
fall under Ware’s definition. Ware claims that this approach utilizes a “demonstration- 
imitation” technique that “relies on the teacher’s ability to demonstrate appropriate 
singing technique, as well as the student’s ability to properly mimic the teacher’s 
behavior” (253). This may be true of some mechanistic approaches, but not the EVTS™ 
where teachers must be certified and the compulsory figures remove the necessity of 
imitation. Ware also categorizes the phonetic method (speak as you sing) and the 
behavioral psychology method (conditioning reflexes by using appropriate stimuli) as 
part of the mechanistic approach. Most of the scientific research that Ware refers to is 
based in the 19th Century and does not utilize the technological breakthroughs available 
in the 1990’s at the time of publication.
The third pedagogy that addresses is what he calls an “eclectic” approach. This is a cumulative pedagogy that combines the two aforementioned approaches and most teachers tend to gravitate towards this pedagogy. This makes sense due to the desire to give students the best of every vocal world, but it can be potentially dangerous. Teachers may not be a well-versed in certain aspects of other pedagogies and the result could be misinformed or unhealthy. That is why it is so important for singers to be aware of and able to manipulate the vocal structures to protect their vocal health.

Ware gives the instructor a good amount of strategies and exercises to help guide the student through the journey of vocal instruction but never addresses the ideas of voice qualities as EVTS™ does. Ware makes the anatomy to voice connection but not all the way through to voice qualities. The closest he comes is addressing a head and chest voice, but not to the extent of the EVTS™. Ware’s approach certainly has a more historic connection than the EVTS™ and is considered to be more traditional. It does have a large amount of merits and success stories.

In Richard Alderson’s book, Complete Handbook of Voice Training, he addresses how to approach the young vocalist and the choral environment. His book reads as a “How To” reference guide for common vocal problems and offers some solutions and exercises. Much of Alderson’s book contains analogies to other things not necessarily connected to voice, such as his numerous analogies for creating sound (Rubber Band, Balloon, Fire Siren, Brass Instrument, Reed Instrument, and String Instrument). Alderson does start to make the connection of vocal structures to vocal qualities but fails to address the totality of vocal structures. His vocal qualities tend to be vague in label such as, “Dramatic,” “Mellow,” and “Flute-like.” Complete Handbook of Voice Training
is far more holistic than mechanistic in style and tends to lend itself better to the choral
director seeking a unified sound rather than the individual voice teacher.

In *The Functional Unity of the Voice*, by Barbara Doscher is a reputable and
respected guide to the physiological processes that govern the singing process. Doscher
states clearly what her book is not intended to be:

> This book does not attempt to cover any of the psychological aspects of the
teaching of singing, important as they are, nor does it advocate a specific
“method” of teaching singing. Rather, it is an overview of the physiology of the
singing mechanism and of vocal acoustics. (xiii)

Doscher examines the anatomy and physiology of the voice from many different
viewpoints. Her approach is straightforward and considered to be among the standard of
vocal instruction.

Most notably, Doscher addresses the voice quality of belting. While it is the only
Estill voice quality addressed, it is addressed mentioning Jo Estill’s research presented at
the Ninth Symposium on Care of the Professional voice in 1980. It is Doscher’s opinion
that a large reason that many consider this quality to be so controversial is due to “a high
percentage of classically trained singing teachers know almost nothing about the
mechanics of producing this sound and refuse to even consider teaching anyone who
wishes to belt” (188). Doscher goes on to present the EVTS™ findings for the Belt voice
quality. Research has taken great strides since the writing of this book and so it rings
even more true when Doscher writes, “It is not suggested that teachers abdicate their
ethical responsibilities to advocate a healthy vocal technique. It is suggested that our
profession has a responsibility to all singers, not just to those whose aesthetic preference
we agree with.” (191)
Richard Miller, in his book *The Structure of Singing: System and Art in Vocal Technique*, merges the world of vocal technique and vocal artistry. His book is possibly one of the most respected and well-known writings on voice and vocal pedagogy. His book subscribes to the Italian School of voice (as opposed to the English, French, or German Schools), which most of the classical voice world recognizes as the most popular and successful classical voice school. Miller’s book is meant to be used as a reference to correct and learn about vocal problems and exercises. He spends the first half of his book writing about the vocal structures and how to use them to sing in a healthy and musical manner. Rather than using exercises to manipulate the vocal structures independently, Miller offers exercises to use the vocal structures to create desired vowel sounds. Once again, there is no real mention of voice qualities other than head and chest sounds. It is widely accepted that the chest sound is much deeper, darker, and usually louder, while the head sound is lighter, airier, and usually softer, but these labels are very misleading since the sound is not created in either the chest or the head. All sound is created at the true vocal folds and resonation may be felt in the head or the chest. Miller does address the vocal structure changes that create these sounds, but not to the extent of the EVTS™.

As in the EVTS™, Miller addresses the idea of aesthetics after addressing the technical aspects of the voice. He states, “A singer must operate in two worlds, occasionally separately, mostly simultaneously. It would be foolhardy to assume that an artistic temperament ensures a successful singing career, and equally faulty to hold that a perfected vocal technique guarantees success” (197). Miller argues that there must be a layer of aesthetics, mostly in the world of musicality, but also in what Miller calls the “singer’s ear.” He states, “Some singers have many of the tools required for successful
singing, but lack a viable concept of beautiful vocal timbre. Fine singers have a concept of sound in the ear” (205). Many place this responsibility of aesthetics in the hands of the teacher, but Miller goes on to say that it is not enough for the teacher to only be the artistic guide. The teacher must also be able to diagnose vocal problems and assign appropriate solutions. Miller goes a step further and states something very interesting that runs parallel with the teaching of the EVTS™.

Sometimes it is argued that in singing, the student has no need to know what happens physiologically as long as the teacher is aware of those events and can induce better production. There are flaws in that argument. The student is not a minion, depending on but one teacher throughout a singing career (usually an undesirable condition). The student (and most singers are students even in the middle of a professional career) should be equipped to make judgments about opposing technical viewpoints that must be faced by any singer in the professional world. The ability to weigh contrasting technical notions can be achieved only if the singer has some measuring stick by which to test those opinions . . . The student who has some understanding of how the vocal instrument functions will be in a more favorable position to select teachers with whom advanced work is to be taken. (206)

Rather than comparing approaches or pedagogies, Miller chooses to compare and contrast the categories of teachers available to the student. He labels the teachers “The Technically Intense Teacher,” “The Interpretation-Oriented Teacher,” “The Technique-Mystique Teacher,” and “The One-Aspect Teacher.”

The Technically Intense Teacher’s goal tends to be mechanical freedom and the EVTSTM instructor could be labeled as such. Miller warns that this teacher must be more than just a vocal technician. The Interpretation-Oriented Teacher focuses primarily on the musicality and interpretation over technical aspects. The idea is that if the student is left alone, the natural functions of the body will take care of the technical aspects. Miller describes this point of view as “you are a naturally coordinated animal, never to give a thought to the breath (‘You do not think about breath when you are not singing, so why
when you sing?’)” (210). An EVTSTM instructor may argue that singing is not necessarily a natural act. If anything, the body reacts to singing as if it were protecting itself from harm by readying a scream to be released. It is the artistry of the singer to train to make this scream a palatable noise. Miller illustrates that these two camps tend to be at odds with each other when we states, “It has been pointed out that in recent decades American vocal pedagogy has become a body with two heads, one speaking with the voice of the subjective teacher, the other with the voice of the science-oriented teacher” (209). EVTSTM hopes to bridge these two by addressing technique and artistry in two separate, but relatively equal sections.

The final two categories of teacher are warnings that Miller gives to the reader. Technique-Mystique Teachers create an atmosphere that the only path to vocal success lie through them and One-Aspect Teachers seem to have the same fix for every vocal problem. Miller stresses the use of a pedagogical balance and that the perfect instructor would have the following principles.

1. Stability, resulting from the possession of a body of factual information which is constant.
2. Growth, the ability to incorporate new concepts and information (after weighing them against fact), and a willingness to change.
3. Artistic imagination and musicianship. (213)

The perfect instructor must know how to correct a problem without over compensating with a solution that can create new problems on the other side of the scale. The perfect instructor may not exist, but it does seem that the EVTSTM comes very close to meeting all of Miller’s principles as a system.

No one approach or instructor is perfect. Students must search for the method, approach, or system that works best for them. EVTSTM may fit some student’s needs
while other systems may fit another’s. The professional voice user looking for a system that provides healthy artistic choices to draw from for any singing situation will find it in the EVTS™. The EVTS™ encompasses all types of music and not just the “classical” sound. As one of many choices, the EVTS™ is an excellent choice that empowers the vocalist and provides, with diligence, great rewards.
CHAPTER 3 - STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Scholars and novices alike have struggled to find away to accurately analyze and categorize the structure of *Sunday in the Park with George* due to its shifts from realism to idealism. What follows is the interpretation that I have chosen to investigate as it pertains to the production we presented. It could be challenged, depending on other productions or the classification one gives this musical. When one tries to analyze *Sunday* in the Aristotelian, or Narrative Structure, several problems present themselves. As a set of dramatic circumstances is established, Sondheim and Lapine often take theatrical liberties to obliterate them. Characters can address the audience members and then ignore them. Large laps of time are traversed. Plot points are revealed through absurd and theatrical devices. Timelines collide and a painting comes to life.

A better category in which to place *Sunday* is under the heading of Concept Musical. Sondheim is no stranger to the idea of a Concept Musical since he, along with Harold Prince and Michael Bennett, helped create the genre with their collaborations in the 1970’s. A Concept Musical can be defined as a production that is built around a central idea, or “concept,” rather than a traditional, narrative plot. Once this concept is established, it should be examined from all sides through different characters, relationships, and situations. Ethan Mordden, in his book *One More Kiss: The Broadway Musical in the 1970s*, defines the Concept Musical as "a presentational rather than strictly narrative work that employs out-of-story elements to comment upon and at times take part in the action, utilizing avant-garde techniques to defy unities of time, place and
action” (127). *Sunday*’s concept is art and its creation. A storyline is present, but it is only there to exemplify the central concept.

**Dramatic Structure**

*Sunday* as a Concept Musical is centered around art and its creation and so, “consequently, this musical not only dramatizes its subject matter, it is the thing itself” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 266). It is fairly reminiscent of the absurd works of the like of Tom Stoppard, who is a friend and contemporary of Sondheim and Lapine. Frank Rich, in an attempt to categorize it, calls it a truly modernist musical. “It has no linear, casually connected plot. Its narrative structure is focused on evolving states of mind rather than a conventionally developed story. Events are less important than aesthetic decisions” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 265). It is no surprise that *Sunday* tends to be non-linear in structure when one considers the fact that Sondheim’s original concept for the show was theme and variation. Remnants of the idea are found throughout the dramatic structure, but not in the original way Sondheim intended.

**Prologue**

As the lights rise, we find Seurat alone on a blank stage. He directly addresses the audience and delivers his artistic creed and mantra. “White. A blank page or canvas. The challenge: bring order to the whole. Through design. Composition. Balance. Light. And harmony” (Lapine I-1). This is the thesis statement for the character and the production. Through these words, the stage is revealed to be Seurat’s artistic world, the filter by which we will observe Act I. “The apparently disjointed words that open the musical are in fact George’s aesthetic creed, [or mantra,] and serve as a thematic
framework both for the artist’s life and the musical’s structure” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 267). The theatrical conventions that will govern the evening are introduced and explored. If Seurat can imagine something artistically, it can occur in his reality. Therefore, the audience must accept the fact that Seurat’s reality and imagination can meld and be explored simultaneously. Just as the real Seurat, once he is satisfied with his landscape, he can start bringing on his subjects.

Seurat allows his lover and model, aptly named Dot, to take her position on stage. He connects with in this world and adores her. He takes his place on stage as well, so that he may sketch her. It is clear that Seurat is a passionate artist with brooding and serious undertones. Dot carries herself with a different, more playful energy that admires Seurat and his talent, but she does contain the somberness that Seurat seems to exude.

**Act I**

As Seurat commands Dot with the words, “No. Now I want you to look out at the water,” there is a dramatic shift in mood. (Lapine I-2) It is clear to the audience that the action is no longer taking place in an ethereal aesthetic world, but in Seurat’s reality, but with ethereal and aesthetic occurrences. Seurat’s line slaps us into this new territory, but even though it is not a true reality, it is somehow more acceptable as a reality after the experiences of the Prologue. This inciting incident propels the audience onto La Grande Jatte, in Paris, France in the 1880’s. The scene that follows reveals Seurat and Dot’s relationship as being almost clinical while Seurat is sketching. It is clear that Seurat is control of the relationship and his surroundings. As Seurat remarks, “I hate this tree,” the tree is removed from the stage. (Lapine I-3) Dot attempts to keep Seurat’s attention on her, but not just as a model. Seurat is strictly business.
An Old Woman enters seeming to be lost. She is looking for the tree that Seurat just “erased.” She is followed by her Nurse who seems unaware that a tree was ever there. Dot comments that people have been gossiping about him and his odd habits. Seurat seems disinterested. The Nurse and Old Lady discuss the tower being built for the International Exposition. Seurat enters further into his artistic reality adding more components to his sketches. Dot speaks to him, but he does not respond.

Dot moves seamlessly from dialogue into the song “Sunday in the Park with George.” This song reveals Dot’s frustration while posing for George. She describes in fragments of thought wear her mind wants to go and the struggle to stay concentrated on the task at hand. George punctuates this song with demands to stay resolute. As the dramatic tension constricts Dot, she bursts from her pose, if only mentally, and moves the wild freedom she desires. The audience is now transported to Dot’s artistic reality and Seurat remains to sketch her in his reality. Here she can express her desire for immortality through art and her admiration for Seurat’s work. She reveals her true love for him. It becomes clear what she loves in him is his artistic intensity.

She begins to faint, which takes her and the audience out of Dot’s dream and back to the island. The heat of the situation begins to really sizzle, both in temperature and in attitude. Dot is in the sun and her lyrics are frantic. Seurat is in the shade and his lines are calm and methodical. Dot reveals her need for attention and the feeling she is being ignored. It is Seurat’s artistic intensity, which Dot revealed to love, that will ultimately frustrate her the most.

The song moves effortlessly back into dialogue. Franz, the chauffeur, enters and gazes at the Nurse. Dot notices Franz and warns Seurat that his boss, also a painter, may
not be far behind. Seurat focuses still on his sketches and demands that Dot do the same. Dot storms off, finally taken to the breaking point of frustration. Seurat stays to watch a little of a flirtatious moment between Franz and the Nurse before exiting to go after Dot. The Old Lady calls the Nurse back from her almost tryst with Franz.

The action is suddenly transported to an art gallery where Jules and Yvonne, Franz’s bosses, are critiquing Seurat’s painting, Bathing at Asnières. Once again the authors break Aristotle’s unities of time, place, and action. Jules and Yvonne are not just critiquing Seurat’s work, they are tearing it apart. Their assessment is sung through the song “No Life.” It becomes clear as these two, who are obviously in the upper crust of the art community, are not just critiquing the work, but the artist as well. “No presence. No passion. No life” (Lapine I-12). This song also reveals the power structure of the relationship. Jules is in charge and takes an almost professorial attitude towards Yvonne. He seems surprised that she has thoughts of her own and he corrects her phrasing when it does not suit his liking.

After the song, the action is transported back to the island and carries Jules and Yvonne back along with it. The Old Lady recognizes Jules as a painter, but she and the Nurse cannot remember his name. This could be due to the fact that there was no artist friend of any significance in Seurat’s life named Jules, or it could be a statement on the amount of aspiring artists of the time. Jules approaches Seurat and there is a sense that Jules is sent to spy on Seurat and report back to the Salon. Seurat asks for their opinions about Bathing, but they answer with polite condescension. Even as they leave, Yvonne takes one last quiet jab at Dot’s dress. She expresses her hatred of them and Seurat
defends them saying, “Jules is a fine painter” (Lapine I-15). Jules and Yvonne call from offstage for Franz, who quickly breaks his gaze with the Nurse and follows them.

Seurat finishes his sketch and thanks Dot, though in a patronizing way. It is clear that Seurat sees himself as a higher status than Dot. He tells her to go back to the studio and he will meet her later. She is upset that he has dismissed her after he has finished sketching her. She wants their relationship to be more than professional. She begins to storm off, but Seurat stops her and plays to her emotional side and promises to take her to the Follies that night. She leaves feeling that she made a breakthrough in her relationship with him. This reveals Dot’s constant vigilance to keep her relationship with Seurat alive.

Seurat then turns his attention to the Old Lady and the Nurse. He offers to sketch them, but the Old Lady quickly dismisses him. She addresses him as “Monsieur.” Seurat addresses her as “Mother.” She shushes him and he leaves stating, “Yes. I guess we will all be back” (Lapine I-17). This scene, though short, does many things for the dramatic structure. First, it reveals Seurat’s relationship with his mother and her deteriorating health. The audience is not sure what is ailing her, but it is clear that something is wrong. Seurat’s statement is also foreshadowing other events. Is he saying that there will be other Sundays to sketch, or is his speaking on more ethereal terms?

The action quickly moves to Seurat’s studio where Dot is busy preparing herself for the evening at the Follies. She addresses seemingly no one while Seurat paints his large canvas in another room. She speaks of Seurat’s constant work ethic and the amount of secrets he keeps from her. Underscoring this conversation is the introduction to the next song “Color and Light.” The focus of the scene shifts to Seurat at the canvas. He
speaks his mantra heard earlier in the Prologue and they merge into a form of stream-of-consciousness lyrics. He speaks his thoughts, color choices, and conversations with his subjects with the same sort of punctuation as his pointillist technique. His vigor and fervor almost exude the same energy as one preparing for a sexual act.

This same energy is passed to Dot, even though she is in the other room. She speaks in the same terms, but the canvas is her own body. She speaks of the fact that her body seems to be growing and says, “Nothing seems to fit me right” (Lapine I-18). She turns to examine herself and tries to find the reason Seurat does not find her irresistibly attractive. Dot enjoys the challenge of getting Seurat’s attention, but does not succeed often. She lists all of the things that she would want to change, but she comes to an interesting conclusion. If her body was how she wanted it, she would run off and join the Follies. She momentarily daydreams of her life as a Follies girl, but comes to the conclusion that the reality of that life would not be as satisfying as her dream.

As if almost looking through a camera’s lens, the focus moves back to Seurat. He is even more excited about his work and is addressing two figures within his painting. His tone is serious and his libido is piqued. Dot and Seurat begin to overlap their lyrics and Seurat breaks through the chaos with an almost orgasmic release of tension and lyric. He speaks of colors, technique, numbness, Dot’s waiting, and Dot’s weight. He speaks, also in a form of foreshadowing, lyric fragments that will be expanded as the act moves along. “The window shut . . . finish the hat . . . it’s hot in here . . . Sunday!” (Lapine I-20). The two then begin to overlap their lyrics once more, but they just do not quite line up. Much like a metaphor for their relationship, they speak the same thoughts, but not at the same time. They just cannot line up. One marvels at their intensity, albeit in different
medias. If only the two could line up at the same time, their love could be powerful. They finally come together to say, “I could look at him/her forever” (Lapine I-22), but their minds are in different places. Dot asks Seurat if his is going to clean up for the Follies, but he responds, “I have to finish the hat” (Lapine I-23). Seurat has made the choice of his art over his lover. He chooses an inanimate object over a human being. As Seurat returns to his canvas, he wonders how Dot will react. He knows that his actions are not what she wanted to hear and not what he should have done. He knows she perceives his decision as hurtful and wrong, but he believes his choice to be right. He debates going after her, but his sucked back into his painting. There seems to be a yearning from Seurat to be able to connect on a social level, but there is also an inability to do so. This is Seurat’s struggle.

The scene changes back to the island where Seurat is discovered sketching the Boatman. He is of the working-class and has distinct opinions. Just like Seurat, he does not care what people think of him. The Nurse and Old Lady, as Seurat foretold, are back. For the first time, we see Seurat active in a conversation, even taking the aggressive stance of asking questions. Does Seurat feel more comfortable with the lower-class, or is he just trying to keep his subject still until he is finished sketching?

Celeste #1 and Celeste #2 enter and immediately begin gossiping. Gossip will become the driving force for this scene. Dot enters arm in arm with Louis, the baker. It can be assumed that Dot has moved on to other relationships. The gossip coming from Celeste #1 and #2, the Nurse and the Old Lady are centered around the breakup of Seurat and Dot. Jules and Yvonne appear and begin gossiping about Seurat and his newest
work. They mock his sketch subjects and Jules seems almost afraid of the new technique
to which Seurat is attempting to breakthrough.

The Boatman begins speaking about the hypocrisy of the island visitors on
Sundays. He says that he would rather spend his Sundays with his dog than with a person
who might spread your private thoughts all around the island. When the Boatman asks
his dog, Spot, for verification, Seurat, as Spot, answers, “Right” (Lapine I-25). Once
again, this is a foreshadowing for events to come later in the act.

Celeste #1 and #2 begin to sing the gossip along with the accompaniment figure
that underscored the previous gossip sequence. This song is aptly named “Gossip
Sequence.” Things are said about Seurat within his earshot, but he does nothing to
correct these erroneous assumptions and accusations. The characters create a
cacophonous reverberation of gossip that seems to echo the same sentiment over and
over, “Artists are so crazy. Artists are so peculiar” (Lapine I-26).

Seurat’s world his crashing down around him and he does nothing to prevent it.
Dot has a new man and Jules vows to never let his work be exhibited in the group shows.
As usual, Seurat continues sketching. Dot settles within audible range of Seurat and
begins reading loudly from her primer. She is teaching herself to read, a fault Seurat
pointed out earlier. She seems to be trying to better herself for him. While she has
moved on to Louis, her heart is still with Seurat.

Louise, the daughter of Jules and Yvonne, enters and immediately begins creating
the kind of chaos only a little girl can create. She approaches the Boatman’s dog to pet
him, but the Boatman screams at her to get away, sending the little girl away screaming
for her mother. Seurat comments that the Boatman’s actions were hardly necessary. The
Boatman lays into Seurat with a verbal assault that Seurat just takes in silence. Seurat showed a little backbone defending Louise, but cannot defend himself.

With Seurat’s subject, the Boatman, gone, Celeste #1 and #2 see this as the golden opportunity to be in Seurat’s next sketch. They hint that they would like to be sketched, but Seurat says that he already sketched them from afar and he is now sketching Spot. They continue to badger him about seeing the sketches and Seurat retreats. His retreat takes him straight into the presence of Dot, who is still studying her primer. In his attempt to run away from a situation, he has walked directly into the one situation he wanted to avoid.

They exchange pleasantries and Seurat reveals that he has been paying attention to her even though he pretended to ignore her. He reveals this by asking, “Lesson number eight?” (Lapine I-30). This is the name of the lesson that Dot has been working on. He encourages her learning and begins to reveal that he misses her. Just as things seem to be going in the right direction for their relationship to rekindle, Louis enters ebulliently with a plate of creampuffs. This causes Seurat to retreat, both physically and mentally.

This retreat embodies itself in the song, “The Day Off (Part I).” In this song, Seurat begins by perfecting his sketches of Spot. When he cannot deal with reality, he runs away to his art. It is only in his art that he is in control. His art is the only thing that has never hurt him. As Seurat sketches, it becomes clear that he is not a well man. He begins to get lost in his artistic reality and personifies Spot and another dog, Fifi. We see not only his artistic process, but his social inabilities. It is with these two dogs, in his own imagination, that he can let his guard down and interact, even if only with fictional
dog. His passion is undeniable and we glean a portion of his fervor for the art. We also hear the lyric, “Sunday, the day off” (Lapine I-32), for the first time and it will become a lyrical motif throughout the sections of the song.

Just as Seurat is reaching the mental point of no return with the dogs, the Horn Player sounds his instrument, launching Seurat out of his world with the dogs and back onto the island in the song, “The Day Off (Part II).” Where he was in his own world before, this song opens him up to the subjects that are around him again. He is ready to observe because “everyone’s on display on Sunday – the day off” (Lapine I-34). “Most of the people the artist encounters are seen by him strictly in terms of their utility, and the audience perceives them through his eyes” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 267).

The action moves seamlessly into “The Day Off (Part III).” This song is a mixture of Seurat’s artistic reality and his actual reality. He leads the listener through his sketchbook of subjects and they reveal portions of themselves as he studies them. The first subject to catch Seurat’s small attention span is the Nurse. He makes some basic appearance observations about her, but then a special moment occurs. The Nurse and Seurat sing the same line at the same time. “One day is much like any other listening to her snap and drone” (Lapine I-34). This is the window into his subject and the Nurse’s story is revealed. Hers is the story of a woman who takes care of Seurat’s mother so she does not have to take care of her own. Just as the audience is getting interested in the Nurse’s story, Seurat shifts his attention to Celeste #1 and #2.

In “The Day Off (Part IV)” there is no singing. This scene underscores Celeste #1 and #2 as they are fishing in the hopes they will attract men. They are literally fishing for men. The two women notice two soldiers that have just entered. The Soldier turns to
his companion, who is a cut-out of a soldier, and remarks that he is attracted to girls. Once again, Sondheim and Lapine, are asking their audience to suspend their disbelief even further now that one of the human characters is a cut-out. Dogs are somehow more plausible on stage as a cut-out, but a human being is a little harder to swallow.

Before the audience has time to consider this, Seurat’s focus is shifted once again as Louise enters screaming for Frieda, Franz’s wife and her caretaker. “The Day Off (Part V)” begins just like Part IV, as underscoring, but will eventually merge into singing from speaking. Louise is asking Franz and Frieda to play with her, but they protest saying that it is their day off and they do not have to play with her. Franz threatens the small girl and she runs off to tell on Franz. As the singing portion melts in, Seurat is able to connect with his subjects by singing along with them. He connects with Frieda’s discovery of the amount of alcohol they have consumed and with Franz’s wandering eye, looking for the Nurse. This portion of the song reveals their relationship as being one based on distrust and affairs. Their attention is shifted to Seurat and for the first time, other than Dot, one of Seurat’s subjects notice the fact that they are being sketched. This sends Franz, a German immigrant, into a rant about art and work. He thesis statement is summed up in the lyric, “Work is what you do for others, Liebschen, art is what you do for yourself” (Lapine I-37).

The music ends as Jules interrupts Seurat’s sketching and forces Seurat’s attention completely back into a total reality. Jules, who represents the “in crowd” of the art world, tells Seurat to take a day off to replenish. It almost seems that Jules is telling Seurat not to work so hard because it is making all the other artists look bad by comparison. He rebukes Seurat for his choice of subjects, his servants, and seems to
torment Seurat by remarking that he saw her “pretty little friend . . . arm-in-arm with the baker” (Lapine I-38). This push from Jules causes Seurat to push back. They begin a repartee that climaxes with Seurat’s statement, “I do not paint for your approval” (Lapine I-38). Jules begins to leave and Seurat stops him, stating that he would like to have Jules come by and see the work sometime for his opinion. This moment reveals Seurat’s knowledge of the social structure needed to get his work exhibited. Critics can no longer argue that Seurat was socially inept due to an incompetence or ignorance of how to socially interact. Seurat shows ability for and an understanding of socialization, so it must be concluded that Seurat chooses to be as socially inept as his is. He may wish to not be that way, but it is definitely a choice he makes on his own.

This negative interaction with Jules causes Seurat to immerse himself back into his work. Sondheim and Lapine show this immersion by returning to song in “The Day Off (Part VI).” Once again, Seurat connects with his subject by singing along with them. This time he connects with the Boatman again, but this time he shares his rage. Seurat seems to vent his frustration from his interaction with Jules by singing with the Boatman, “You and me, pal, we’re the loonies. Did you know that? Bet you didn’t know that” (Lapine I-39). Through the lyrics of this song, the Boatman attacks Seurat in the same manner as before, but now, even though Seurat does not respond, there is a sense of defiance and camaraderie in the attack and rage.

The Boatman’s rant rushes the action into “The Day Off (Part VII)” where the entire company enters and sings similar lyrics to what Seurat sang in “The Day Off (Part II).” This seems to be the perfect bookend to the opening and closing of Seurat’s sketchbook, but there is one twist to the end of this song. As this portion of the song is
being performed, Louis and Dot enter, making Seurat confront the fact that he cannot have what he desires. This causes him to exit the stage so he does not have to face them and his exodus causes Dot to respond in the song “Everybody Loves Louis.”

This song is the exploration of Dot’s frustrations of not being able to connect with Seurat in the way that she would have liked. Dot flaunts her new love in the hopes of making Seurat jealous. The only problem is that Seurat is nowhere to be found. Seurat was never, in social terms, popular. Dot has found the total antithesis of Seurat in Louis, who is nothing but popular. Through this song she tries to convince herself that Louis feeds all of her needs in ways that Seurat never could. While Seurat is the one she wants, Louis is the one she can have. Louis gives her everything she needs accept a challenge. She says, “That’s the trouble, nothing’s wrong with him” (Lapine I-41). By the end of this song, Dot has not convinced Seurat that she is happy, but ironically revealed to herself that she is unhappy.

The entire stage clears at the end of this song to reveal two Americans, named Mrs. and Mr., followed by Seurat, who is sketching them. These two people represent the stereotypical ignorant Americans who do not appreciate the history and culture of Europe. To top it all off, they are tremendous gluttons and interested in taking Louis, their favorite baker, back to the United States with them. In essence, this scene starts the ticking clock for Seurat. If Louis takes the job and takes Dot with him, it could be the last time he would ever see Dot.

As they exit, Celeste #1 and #2 enter with their fishing poles. They have devised a plan to attract the attention of the soldiers. Celeste #1 pretends to have a large fish on the end of her line and the Soldier comes over to assist her. This is just the ice breaker
they needed. The Solider introduces his best friend, the cut-out, but unfortunately he is deaf and dumb. The live-action soldier is obviously the better catch, so there becomes an instant competition between Celeste #1 and #2 over the Solider. Seurat all the while is observing and sketching. Seurat connects this time with the Soldier as he is asking for a date by singing, “Mademoiselles, I and my friend, we are but soldiers” (Lapine I-44). Through the song “The One on the Left,” the courtship of the soldiers and these girls begins. Once again, just as their story starts to develop, Lapine and Sondheim have them exit to leave the audience guessing.

This leaves Seurat on stage alone to assess and analyze his sketches from that day. He sits and starts to flip through his sketchbook as the first notes of “Finishing the Hat” sound. He reveals what sketch he is looking at by singing the same lines he used to connect to his subjects. His mind soon drifts away from his sketches and moves to thoughts of Dot. She was searching for his attention in “Everybody Loves Louis” and Seurat reveals that he was aware of her searching, but as per usual, did nothing about it. Now that he is alone, he can let his guard down and reveal and explore his feelings. The moment that he keeps playing over and over in his head is when he lost Dot. Rather than taking her to the Follies, like he promised, he said that he had to “finish the hat.” He describes that he feels like he watches the world through a “window” and is not a full participant in the world he observes. He lives in two worlds, but is most comfortable in the world that does not contain other people. He wishes he could bring Dot into this world, but cannot. Once again, Seurat reveals an awareness of the causes of his problems, but an inability to do anything about it. This inability causes him to retreat
even further into his work. By the end of the song he has revealed his love for Dot, but he chooses his art. “Look I made a hat . . . where there never was a hat” (Lapine I-47).

Mr. and Mrs. walk in on the end of his song and Seurat quickly puts his emotional walls back up. Mr. and Mrs. are lost and ask the Boatman for directions. Since Mr. and Mrs. do not speak French, they just speak English louder. The Boatman, in French, tells them to go walk into the water and drown. This transitional scene provides comic relief, but it also mirrors Seurat’s lost soul and inability to find direction. The Old Lady, also lost, is searching for her tree or her nurse. Seurat goes to help his mother, but is caught in a current of people. The full company, in a very theatrical moment, surrounds and swirls around Seurat. They are singing bits and pieces of lyrics from earlier in the show in random patterns. Dot moves to the inside of this circle and begins to stalk Seurat. All at once, all movement and sound stops and Dot moves her bustle from her rear to her stomach to reveal her pregnancy to Seurat, who is presumably the father. The unity of time is most definitely broken.

Breaking the unity of action, the scene shifts back to Seurat’s studio, some time later. Seurat is nearly finished with his painting and Dot is nearly ready to give birth. There is a duality of this scene where both characters want to leave and stay all at the same time. Neither wants to be the one that breaks down first and give into the other. Dot has come to ask for a painting of her, presumably *Young Woman Painting Herself*. Seurat becomes enraged at the idea of giving her his art, but really what is enraging him is the fact that Louis can do for her all the things he refused to do. Seurat also acknowledges that the child is his own. Just as the argument is reaching a peak, Jules, accompanied by Yvonne, enters to give his opinion on the painting and in doing so, takes
the wind out of the argument. Seurat, once again, puts his art first and tells Dot to wait in the other room until he is finished speaking with Jules. Yvonne joins her in the other room.

While Jules and Seurat are looking at the painting, Yvonne attempts to carry on a conversation with Dot. Yvonne reveals that the life she longs for, the wife of an artist, is not everything she dreams it to be. Jules is distant and never uses her as a subject. She longs for the kind of attention that she receives from Seurat and from Louis.

The action then cross fades to the other room where Seurat and Jules are revealed. Seurat is trying to explain his scientific principles that govern his work and Pointillism to Jules, but Jules cannot get beyond his own artistic biases. Seurat explains, “Why should I paint like you or anybody else? I am trying to get through to something new. Something that it my own” (Lapine I-53). Jules cuts Seurat to the quick by saying that the only reason Seurat has brought him there was so he could persuade his friends to allow Seurat to exhibit in the next group show. Yvonne interrupts before Seurat has a chance to respond and Jules says he will give the matter some thought. They both leave, but rather than going back to talk to Dot, he retreats back to his work. He has moved so far into his artistic reality that he begins to speak to his work as a coconspirator.

He does not like you. He does not understand or appreciate you. He can only see you as everyone else does. Afraid to take you apart and put you back together again for himself. But we will not let anyone deter us, will we? (Lapine I-53)

He speaks in immature tones, like teenagers defending their first love to their parents. Dot, realizing he is not coming out to speak with her, calls to him. He is shocked out of the artistic reality and they begin overlapping each other in a barrage of words. Dot reveals to Seurat that will be leaving for America with Louis after the baby
arrives. Seurat begins to escape to his work, but Dot thwarts his escape by saying that he always retreats to his work and does not care about anything. She forces him to deal with the situation at hand through the song “We Do Not Belong Together.” He tries to make her understand that he loves her by including her in his work and she begs him to tell her not to go. He is unable to give her the words she desires and eventually runs back to his work. Dot is left alone to work through her feelings. She realizes that they “should have belonged together” (Lapine I-56), but their relationship will never work. She makes the crucial decision that she has to move on. “The achingly beautiful torment of ‘We Do Not Belong Together’ exemplifies the distinction Sondheim draws between the shallowness of sentimentality and the complexity of true passion” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 283). This song reveals that Dot is a strong spirit in charge of her own destiny. She will ultimately do what is best for her and her baby. Seurat, finally making the right decision, leaves his painting and starts to go after Dot, but it is too late. She is gone and any hope of Seurat being able to have a relationship leaves with her.

As the lights come up on the next scene, the audience finds Seurat sketching his mother, Old Lady, on the island. She begins telling Seurat stories of his life and Seurat quietly corrects his mother’s inaccuracies, which are numerous. This leads directly into the song “Beautiful.” This song reveals the special relationship between Seurat and his mother. She describes how the world around her is changing day by day. It is not clear what is ailing the Old Lady, but it may be a mix of blindness and Alzheimer’s. Seurat finally puts down his sketches to take care of something meaningful in his life. He tells his mother that he will draw a perfect world for her so that she may always remember things how she wants to remember them. It is his gift to her.
The Soldier and Celeste #2 enter speaking of the joys of being free from their counterpart. Each tries to agree with the other, but only ends up offending. Mr. and Mrs. enter looking for Louis and Dot, but appear to be lost on the island again. This section signifies the lack of order Seurat’s world. Louise runs across the stage being chased by the Boatman. Chaos seems to be imminent.

Dot enters, carrying a small bundle, followed by Louis. Dot tells Seurat that the baby is born and is named Marie. She gives him one last chance to give her the painting, but really she is giving him one last chance to tell her not to go. Seurat refuses to look up from his sketch book. He tells her that he has already painted over the painting she wants and gives the title of “father” to Louis. He has severed every tie he could. He is not able to tell her not to go, but as she is leaving, he is able to apologize. This is another example that Seurat is aware of his actions, but does them anyway.

As Dot and his daughter, Marie, leave, he continues to sketch. The Old Lady tells Seurat that she is worried about him because he is so distant. He replies, “Connect, George. Connect . . .” (Lapine I-63). He is retreating deeper and deeper into his artistic reality to get away from the pain. As he does this, the world around him continues further into chaos. Jules enters with Frieda as they are trying to sneak off to have an affair. The Soldier, his companion, Celeste #1 and #2 enter in the middle of a feud. Franz and Yvonne enter looking for a lost Louise. Louise enters exposing that Jules and Frieda are in the grass tonguing. Chaos and overlapping line erupt in a theatrical moment similar to the reveal of Dot’s pregnancy. Seurat escorts his mother to safety and prepares to confront the masses. She guides him by saying, “Remember, George” (Lapine I-67).
Through all of the chaos, Seurat breaks the tension by commanding, “Order” (Lapine I-67). The group freezes and comes to attention before Seurat. He uses the words from his mantra to assemble his subject for his painting. During this theatrical moment, Dot is revealed with her child. Seurat motions for Louis to take the child away from her and Seurat remarks, “Harmony” (Lapine I-68). The entire company begins to sing “Sunday” as Seurat assembles his subjects into his masterwork, *A Sunday Afternoon on the Island of La Grand Jatte*. The beautiful lyrics describe the painting as Seurat places these subjects into his artistic reality. The theatrical moment that follows is Seurat’s final gift to Dot. He places her in a place of honor in his painting. At the final moment of the song, all of the characters freeze in their place and the painting is revealed. “Art and reality merge” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 285). This song, and finale, is a catharsis for Seurat and a tribute to the people he studied.

**Epilogue of Act I**

While the next section is the top of Act II, in dramatic structure terms it could be considered the epilogue of Act I. Sondheim and Lapine take us into the world of the painting and create a world where the subjects of the painting are aware of the fact that they are part of a masterwork. As the light come up, the audience finds the character in their Act I finale poses and the song “It’s Hot Up Here” begins. This song marks the beginning of an interesting use of dramatic structure. Sondheim and Lapine choose certain plot points from Act I to intentionally mirror in Act II.

“It’s Hot Up Here” follows the subjects of *La Grande Jatte* as they attempt to hold the poses Seurat gave them and deal with the personalities of those around them. Each subject has something to complain about and the audience gets the feeling that they
have not stopped complaining since the moment they were painted. “Such a juxtaposition of petty bickering with the formal serenity of the canvas itself provides a comic comment on the discrepancy between subject and effect in art” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 286). This song mirrors Dot’s “Sunday in the Park with George” because it is a song about holding a pose and it also shares lyrical material like, “There are worse things than sweating by a river on a Sunday” (Lapine II-4). Sondheim, in Mark Horowitz’s Sondheim on Music, remarks about this mirroring of structure beginning with this song: “So, ‘It’s Hot Up Here,’” even though it may relate to Dot’s opening number in the fact that it’s posing, and she’s also central to it, is essentially a prologue to a reiteration of the structure” (101). While Sondheim refers to this number as a prologue and in the mirroring structure, it does serve as one, some may feel that an epilogue is a better way to categorize it since it is a conclusion to the stories introduced in Act I. No new characters are introduced.

This song also reveals portions of Dot’s character that were not really revealed in Act I. In “Sunday in the Park with George,” she reveals that she wants to be permanently remembered by her lover in a work of art, but in this song, she reveals, “I do not wish to be remembered like this, George, with them, George” (Lapine II-3). Dot gets what she wants, but in the end, realizes it was not really what she wanted. She fell in love with George through his art, but ultimately recognized that it was the man who created the art she wanted. By being in his masterwork she is immortalized, but she keeps stating, “I hate these people” (Lapine II-5). Dot’s one real wish she received from Seurat seems to be her eternal punishment.
As the song ends, the characters stretch and move from their pose, as if doing it quickly while no one is looking at the painting, and then snap back into position. The tension is palpable and the lyrics reflect the patter in “Sunday in the Park with George,” but create a new tension for holding the position and that fact that “it’s hot” (Lapine II-5). Following the final notes, each character steps forward to deliver a kind of eulogy (the underscoring is titled “Eulogies”) to Seurat and reveal bits and pieces to ends of their story. Some stories seem to be frozen in time while others give hints to a life after Seurat’s death. This section is the dénouement of Act I, if the creation of La Grande Jatte was the climax. While in this section, there is no real sense of time or period. It seems that the characters have stepped out of their natural timeline to comment on the future and the past.

Each character reveals a part of the mystery that surrounds Seurat’s death. Since he was never really a socialite, his death went rather unnoticed and these characters tell of the moments they noticed that “he was no longer” (Lapine II-6). Celeste #1 and #2 reveal that he died suddenly and quietly at the age of 31 and Franz and Frieda admit that they admired Seurat’s style and art. Dot reveals relief rather than remorse when hearing the news of Seurat’s death while she resided in Charleston, South Carolina. The Old Lady reveals guilt in not dying first and Jules revealed an admiration of his work. The Boatman gives the most balance observation of Seurat and his relationships:

They all wanted him and hated him at the same time. They wanted to be painted – splashed on some fancy salon wall. But they hated him, too. Hated him because he only spoke when he absolutely had to. Most of all they hated him because they knew he would always be around. (Lapine II-8)

These remarks are probably the most accurate, but at the same time, the most ambiguous. It is a statement that seems to mirror Seurat’s statement to his mother in Act I, “Yes. I
guess we will all be back” (Lapine I-17). Both statements speak to the human legacy and the lasting effects of art. With the Boatman’s comments, the set-up is complete for the Act II follow-through. There is a little overlap in “It’s Hot Up Here” of the two sections, but with the next section there is a clear delineation of dramatic structure.

Act II

The lights shift dramatically while the music becomes electronic in style. The action jumps one hundred years to 1984 in a gallery of the museum where *La Grande Jatte* hangs. This breaks all three of Aristotle’s unities. Through the following action the audience is introduced to a whole new cast of characters, played by the same actors. The light show is not just transitional fireworks, but it is the latest art installment of a young artist named George. George is played by the same actor who played Seurat. He wheels on an old woman, Marie, who is played by the same actress as Dot. These are the two pivotal roles that must be played by these actors. All other roles may be played by different actors, depending on their strengths. The original Broadway production gives Sondheim and Lapine’s suggestions on how the doubling should occur.

The audience becomes acknowledged once again, but this time it is playing a character as well. The audience is the audience present at an art gallery exhibit opening. George reveals that his current piece, Chromolume #7, commemorates Seurat’s painting *La Grande Jatte*. “Seurat called his work chromo-luminarism, so George’s work is linked to the artistic style and direction of his great-grandfather’s” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 287). He also reveals that Marie is his grandmother. George is giving a short presentation before the activation of his chromolume since he has a special connection to the artist of the painting, Seurat. The presentation describes Seurat’s life and process and
when the moment comes to activate the machine, the power source blows a fuse. George quickly corrects the problem and the presentation continues. The presentation reveals Marie is the Marie from Act I, Dot and Seurat’s daughter. George also reveals since there is no real proof of this lineage, George does not believe the story and the connection. Marie shows Dot’s grammar book as proof, but George refuses to acknowledge its meaning. As Marie continues to badger George, he cuts her off and ends the presentation. This is a man in search of a connection who is caught in a rut of creation. This section while mostly exposition for the following act (noticeably out of order) is actually very revealing to the exposition necessary for our new main characters, George and Marie.

The presentation ends with another color and light show, representing George’s art, and the lights come up to reveal the cocktail party that immediately follows the unveiling of George’s latest chromolume. All of the art cognoscenti (and wanna-be-cognoscenti) are in attendance. As they discuss and critique the work, they use “buzz words” to show off their superior knowledge and understanding. Harriet Pawling, a museum board member, claims “It’s all theme and variation” (Lapine II-14). This is a humorous inside joke for Sondheim and Lapine because originally Sondheim wanted to base the entire show on theme and variation. These critiques, much like “Gossip Sequence” in Act I, flow directly into the song “Putting It Together.” The lyrics even mirror the same rhythmic structure as this song. More “buzz words” fill this song stating, “that is the state of the art, my friend, that is the state of the art” (Lapine II-16).

“Whereas the nineteenth-century gossips concentrated on George’s unconventional life-
style, however, the twentieth-century critics express their disapproval in trite aphorisms” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 288).

The crowd consists of Harriet Pawling, her friend Billy Webster, museum director, Bob Greenberg, George’s collaborators, Naomi Eisen and Dennis, a visiting Texas museum curator, Charles Redmond, fellow artists, Betty and Alex, the museum’s publicist, Lee Randolph, and an art critic, Blair Daniels. As the song reaches a lyrical climax with all of these characters debating the future of art, the action stops to allow George, Marie, and George’s ex-wife, Elaine, enter to the applause of the crowd. This is where the crowd demonstrates its two-facedness. This crowd had been discussing their confusion and criticism of the art, but as soon as George enters, they are all false smiles and approval.

George’s entrance freezes the action and he is able to comment to and address the audience directly. He sings his thesis statement for the cocktail party. “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 . . .” (Lapine II-18). He must work the room to get the funding for his next work. This man is focused on funding, not on the purity of creating a truly new and groundbreaking work of art.

The scene unfreezes and George begins his true art: schmoozing. George is introduced to Harriet and Billy by Greenberg. George must spend a certain amount of face-time with influential people in order to fund his next work and livelihood. These people are the source of his donations and commissions. After another short freeze while George addresses the audience, the action continues with Harriet and Billy speaking to Marie. George is fearful that she is going to say something that might jeopardize support
for this next work. It is obvious that George has brought Marie here as a sort of publicity stunt, but he does not wish her to speak too much as to embarrass him. He needs to work the room, but he cannot devote himself fully to any conversation, especially when he needs to keep tabs on what Marie is saying to different people. George is a man with many balls in the air that he is juggling. “Putting It Together” is a song about the struggles of creating art in the 20th Century. As George says, “Art isn’t easy – even when you’re hot. Advancing art is easy – financing it is not” (Lapine II-20).

Marie begins complaining that George works too hard on his machines and reveals an upcoming trip to France to exhibit the chromolome on La Grande Jatte. George’s lyrics are full of doublespeak. When he says, “First of all you need a good foundation, otherwise it’s risky from the start” (Lapine II-21), he is not just speaking of the base of a sculpture, but of a financial foundation of donors. “The art of making art is putting it together bit by bit . . .” (Lapine II-21). What is this “it” of which George speaks? “It” is the process. Art is no longer just judged by product, but also by the process by which the art is created.

The next person to approach George is Redmond. He offers George a sizable commission from the County Museum of Texas. Redmond seems to have tinges of the character Mr. from Act I. The party continues, but George is able to remove himself from the party and address the audience. In this “stepping out of the moment” moment, George reveals his frustration in having to raise funds this way, but it is the only way he knows how. He remarks, “Every time I start to feel defensive, I remember lasers are expensive” (Lapine II-22). The entire company begins singing in another theatrical moment as they speak their minds on the ups and downs of living the art community.
The next people to divert and divide George’s attention are Marie, Randolph, and Naomi. Randolph is big on getting a lot of photos of the evening so he can create a lot of publicity for the museum. George is encountering another person trying to put “it” together. They are collaborators for that evening in creating the art of hype. The audience obtains some interesting perspective when George sings, “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” (Lapine II-24). George is not speaking to these people because he wants to, he is speaking to these people because he has to in order to acquire funding. He looks at this process as a superficial job, not as the glory he wished it could be.

George’s next diversion comes from his collaborator, Dennis. Dennis is apologetic for the system malfunction from earlier in the evening. George tries to calm him and move on to people that could give him money. Just as George think he has put out this fire, another arises. Dennis reveals that he is quitting his collaboration with him and George reacts in panic. He tries to mollify the situation and tell Dennis that they will talk about it later, but George is visibly shaken. Dramatically, there is a crack in his foundation. George exclaims to the audience, “Art isn’t easy . . . even if you’re smart . . . you think it’s all together . . . and something falls apart” (Lapine II-25).

While George is at a weak moment, he has to face his biggest critics, his fellow artists. Betty and Alex talk about their successes and failures while they were working the room. Alex did not receive a commission from Redmond and so George gives him so advice, “It’s all politics, Alex. Maybe if you just lightened up once in a while” (Lapine II-26). This sounds eerily like the advice that Jules gave Seurat. This time the mirroring
represents the differences between Seurat and George. While Seurat was a true visionary and creative artist with little social skills, George is an artist with fantastic social skills and a mediocre artist needing to break through to new artistic ground. The tension of the evening throws George into a patter-esque sequence of lyrics that exhibits a man who is on the brink of cracking. The crowd seems to be closing in on George and in the moments he takes a breath, the entire company erupts in laughter, only adding to George’s frustration and confusion.

The most telling for George comes at the end of this patter section.

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. (Lapine II-27)

It becomes apparent that George is not interested in creating a true work of art, but the work of art he is interested in creating is his own image. He longs for the fame and notoriety, but is unable to truly admit that is what he wants. He hides it behind an artsy persona. “Patronage, commissions, canonical status, publicity, reviews . . . these are the compositional elements that really matter to the modern George” (Gordon, Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook 176).

Daniels is able to snap George out of this spiral of self-doubt. Out of an entire room of phonies, she is the one person who tells George the truth without any biases or agendas. She tells him that his ideas are getting tired and his works are “just becoming more and more about less and less” (Lapine II-28). While George protests and looks for an escape, Daniels continues to give him the honest feedback he needs to hear. In this way, Daniels and the Boatman mirror each other in this dramatic structure. They both have nothing to lose and speak the truth about the situations they observe. She leaves
George with encouragement when she tells him, “There are new discoveries to be made, George” (Lapine II-28).

George, by this point, has become swept up into too many moments across the stage and has spread himself too thin. The lyrics begin to overlap and attempt to beat each other out. The most difficult section of lyrics for the performer and for George come at this very moment. The lyrics seem to become a satire of themselves in the line, “Even if you do have the suspicion that it’s taking all your concentration” (Lapine II-29).

In creating a Concept Musical about the creation of art, it turns its magnifying glass upon itself to give yet another viewpoint on the situation. As there becomes more and more productions of this musical, there only becomes more and more viewpoints on the situation. This Concept Musical is ever changing and ever growing.

The tour de force theatrical moment that is “Putting It Together” comes to a head with a reiteration of all of George’s lyrical themes. In this moment, it is revealed that it takes a lot of hard work and socialization to create a work of art. “And that is the state of the art” (Lapine II-30). More importantly, this one song introduces each of the major character of this act and gives the perfect amount of exposition to satisfy the audience’s needs. The audience realizes that George is in need of artistic and personal rejuvenation, he is a master at social manipulation, and Marie is his connection to the past and his possible grandfather, Seurat.

After the button of the song, Greenberg announces that the dinner is served, so most of the party guests exit into the other room. A few stragglers remain, notably Harriet, Billy, Daniels, Marie, Elaine, and George. Harriet asks Marie to identify a certain object in the background of *La Grande Jatte* and Daniels answers for her. When
she does so, Marie tells her that she is incorrect. When Daniels tells Marie that she has read every book on the subject of *La Grande Jatte*, Marie tells her that she has something stronger than a book; she has a family connection. She tells Daniels her thesis statement, “You know, Miss Daniels, there are only two worthwhile things to leave behind when you depart this world: children and art” (Lapine II-32). Marie wishes that Elaine and George would have had a child to continue the lineage. Feeling uncomfortable from Marie’s advances on behalf of George, Daniels exits.

Elaine situates Marie so she can see the painting more clearly and goes to speak with George, who has been observing the action from the side. Elaine questions Marie’s stamina and George offers to take her back to the hotel. Elaine tells him it would be ridiculous to leave his own party and he should feel wonderful. George plays the part of a martyr saying “Well, I don’t feel wonderful” (Lapine II-33). George acts like a child, much like Seurat speaking to his painting after Jules rejected him in Act I. George, sensing a chance for a connection, tries to move in on Elaine for a kiss, but she refuses and exits. George, feeling dejected and unwanted on his “special night,” sits to watch Marie.

She is speaking to the painting, quietly, almost to herself. She sings her thoughts and ramblings in the song “Children and Art.” She speaks to the painting as if she were speaking to Dot, her grandmother. She tells Dot that she would have liked George and his inventions. She also asks Dot for advice on how to give George’s life direction, purpose, and happiness. She looks at George and calls, “Henry . . . Henry? . . . Henry” (Lapine II-33). George identifies himself and Marie quickly covers her mistake by stating that she thought he was his father for a moment. This is one of many times that
Sondheim and Lapine allude to the fact that Marie is slowly fading away, both mentally and physically.

She introduces him again to Dot (the painting) and tells him that after she is gone, this painting will be all he has. She tells him, “This is our family – this is the lot” (Lapine II-34). Now she turns her focus on George and tells him how much he would have liked Dot. George’s carefully constructed walls start to crack and he looks at the painting with the start of a new understanding. Marie’s best advice to George is “Mama said, ‘Honey, mustn’t be blue. It’s not so much do what you like as is it that you like what you do.’ Mama said, ‘Darling, don’t make such a drama. A little less thinking, a little more feeling--’” (Lapine II-34). This advice catapults George’s thinking in a new direction that maybe he should take more risks and not give so much thought what other people think of him. “[‘Children and Art’] is a straightforward expression of faith, without doubt or dissonance” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 291). Marie hands George the grammar book, the proof he needs, and Elaine enters to take her back to the hotel. George is left alone and he echoes Seurat from Act I by saying, “Connect, George. Connect . . .” (Lapine II-35). He is a man in search of meaning and a connection.

The action jumps from the museum to La Grande Jatte, still in 1984. George and Dennis are looking for the best place on the island to set up the chromolume. George is frenzied and unable to concentrate fully on the task of setting up the chromolume. George notices a tree, possibly the tree from Act I, and states, “At least something is recognizable . . .” (Lapine II-36). Lapine and Sondheim could have intended for this to be an indication of George looking for landmarks from Seurat’s painting, or they could have intended this to be something more visceral. George is looking for something that
feels familiar, as if he had been there before, not just the modern sights of the island. The audience knows from Marie, in the scene earlier, that George has never been to the island. He is traversing unknown waters on his own in a search for a connection.

This scene also reveals that Dennis has decided to move on to other things and George has turned down the Texas commission. Just like Dennis, he wants to move on to new things. George is frustrated by his inability to break out. He tells Dennis, “Why do you think I turned down the commission? I don’t want to do the same thing over and over again either . . . I just want to do something I care about” (Lapine II-37). Dennis also notices that George brought the grammar book along since Marie has died. Dennis tells George there may some validity to Marie’s claims if he really looks at the notes written in the back, presumably by Dot. George asks Dennis to leave him alone on the island and Dennis leaves him by saying, “George. I look forward to seeing what you come up with next” (Lapine II-38). Dennis points George towards the future and leaves him alone with his thoughts.

George begins leafing through the grammar book as “Lesson #8” begins. This is the same lesson that Dot was reading out loud to try to impress Seurat. George begins reading these rudimentary sentences from the book and slowly transitions into a journey of self-discovery. Where he was reading, “Charles misses his ball . . .” (Lapine II-38), he places himself inside these statements. “George misses Marie . . . George misses a lot . . . George is alone” (Lapine II-38). “Using the style of the pronoun lesson contained in the language primer, George repeatedly uses the third person to refer to himself. Sondheim thus suggests the character’s alienation in the detached tone of the song, without allowing the character to become self-pitying” (George, Art Isn’t Easy 294).
George, much like “Finishing the Hat,” is able to reveal the most about himself and his insecurities when he is left alone on La Grande Jatte. George reveals himself as a man full of doubt, loneliness, and fear. He looks to the tree for a connection to Marie and his past. He does not know what direction in which to take his life. As he looks around the island he sings, as if an invocation, “George would have liked to see people out strolling on Sunday . . .” (Lapine II-39).

The theme of connection, initially explored in act 1 as Seurat sought to find the connection between the primary colors, now becomes the principal dramatic action. George has lost his sense of self and artistic integrity. He cannot find his aesthetic voice. He consequently decides to return to the site of his ancestor’s inspiration. In this musical the past serves, not as a reflection of former innocence, as in Follies and Merrily We Roll Along, but as a source of redemption. In order to rekindle his artistic fervor, George needs to discover his heritage and relate once more to the world beyond self. In contrast to Seurat, who, although he was unable to sustain any human relationship, never expressed any doubt about the significance of his aesthetic vision, George profoundly mistrusts his own artistic instincts. (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 293)

**Synthesis Epilogue**

As George finishes “Lesson #8,” Dot appears. Not Marie, but Dot. Structurally, this is the trickiest section to categorize since it combines components and characters from Act I and Act II. Do the two timelines converge? Do they all meet in an artistic reality? Do they meet “out of time” similar how “It’s Hot Up Here” is set? Sondheim and Lapine purposely leave this section ambiguous. They want the audience to feel some closure, but they do not want to answer all of the questions. Seurat explains: “Dot appears because George summons her – it’s a personification of his finally making a connection with his heritage and the picture’s legacy, both personally and in a continuum of art” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 295). If anything, this Synthesis Epilogue (the term
referring to an epilogue of the entire show using an amalgamation of all the components found therein) creates more questions than it answers.

Dot addresses George, not as George, but as Seurat. Her first words to him are “I almost did not recognize you without your beard. You have my book” (Lapine II-39). George somehow seems to have been expecting her and engages her in conversation, never correcting her that he is not Seurat. He makes the connection that this is Dot, Marie’s mother and his great-grandmother. Marie had asked her for help when she was speaking to the painting in “Children and Art” and now it seems she has come to give her guidance to George in the song “Move On.”

Dot begins by asking, “What about you? Are you working on something new?” (Lapine II-40). He answers, “No. I’m not working on anything new. I’ve nothing to say” (Lapine II-40), in a lyric structure that mirrors the Act I song “We Do Not Belong Together.” The advice that Dot gives George is even when you do not know where you are going, you must “move on” (Lapine II-41). She guides him to make bold choices in his life, regardless the consequences. She tells him of her choice to leave Seurat. “I chose, and my world was shaken – so what? The choice may have been mistaken, the choosing was not. You have to move on” (Lapine II-41). One cannot sit and constantly analyze the past. As the old adage goes, “The moment you stop paddling, you are moving downstream.” She tells him a version of this adage by saying, “Look at what you want, not at where you are, not a what you’ll be” (Lapine II-41).

She then moves from the position of student of Seurat to the position of instructor of George. She repays her debt to Seurat by teaching George how to concentrate and see the island. She instructs him to “notice every tree,” “understand the light,” and
“concentrate on now” (Lapine II-41). George expresses his desire to do these thing and get through to something new that is truly his own. She calmly responds, “Stop worrying if your vision is new. Let others make that decision – they usually do. You keep moving on” (Lapine II-41). Here she tells him to shut out the world of detractors that are out there and focus on the art. He needs to become less of the flashy showman and more invested in himself.

If Seurat, warts and all, embodies *Sunday in the Park’s* artistic hero, then George, though more likeable and self-effacing, is the lost soul in need of artistic guidance. This George lacks the aesthetic wherewithal and self-sufficiency of his great grandfather. In contrast to the mythologized Seurat, George and his work represent a deflation of the artist and a dark commentary on the sad state of the art world’s affairs. Thus, in the end, George must turn to his own roots, both his family roots and the artistic principles that guided Seurat, for inspiration. The struggling young artist looks to the past for guidance and renewal of purpose. (Gordon, *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook* 177).

George begins to notice the things around him, not just the modern island. He notices the light, trees, sky, and Dot’s flower and smile. Most importantly he notices “the care. And the feeling. And the life moving on!” (Lapine II-42). He is man who is now open to opportunity and prospects of the future. George steps further into the role of Seurat (almost to the point of cross-generational incest) sing with Dot, “We will always belong together” (Lapine II-42). George has found his connection. She ends the song simply with her advice, “Anything will do, let it come from you. Then it will be new. Give us more to see . . .” (Lapine II-42). He is not given the gift of talent, but the gift of inspiration. His life, once directionless, now has the promise of meaning and significance.

George asks Dot about the words listed in the back of her grammar book. She tells him that they are his words. These, of course, are Seurat’s mantra words. Just as the
Act I finale, George speaks the first word, “Order” (Lapine II-43), as the first chord of “Sunday – Finale” sounds. Also, another character from Act I appears, the Old Lady, looking for Seurat and finding him in George. She asks him what he thinks of the island and he responds in negative terms. “Well, the greens are a little darker. The sky a little greyer. Mud tones in the water” (Lapine II-43). The Old Lady seems somehow disappointed, but when George adds, “But the air is rich and full of light” (Lapine II-43), she encourages him to continue with the praise, “Good” (Lapine II-43).

George continues to read Seurat’s mantra words of “Design. Composition. Balance. Light.” and cannot read the last one (Lapine II-44). Dot helps him by stating that it is “Harmony” (Lapine II-44). As she says this line, the audience hears a reprise of the lyrics sung during the Act I finale “Sunday” and the subjects used in the creation of La Grande Jatte from the Act I finale enter a watch George. George, unaware of this combination of time periods and realities, is reading aloud Dot’s observations about Seurat from the back of her grammar book. “So much love in his words . . . forever with his colors . . . how George looks . . . he can look forever . . . what does he see? . . . his eyes so dark and shiny . . . so careful . . . so exact . . .” (Lapine II-44). Dot interrupts his reading to turn him to face the group. All of these characters bow to George and George bows in return. The collaborative process is present and healthy. The finished product pays homage to the creative artist and the artist pays homage to the inspiration. “At this moment, perhaps the most memorable of the play, the artist is reverenced as a God-like figure, worthy of praise and honor for creating something beautiful and important and valuable and timeless” (Gordon, Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook 181).
Dot and George mirror exactly Dot and Seurat from the Act I finale by singing, “In our perfect park made of flecks of light and dark” (Lapine II-44). Dot has made a real impact on George and he is ready to be on his own. As the company sings the three final “Sunday” lyrics, the subjects from the painting leave, giving the stage to Dot and George. George reads the last phrase from Dot’s book, “White. A blank page or canvas. His favorite. So many possibilities . . .” (Lapine II-45). These are the same words Seurat used to begin the show and they signify perfects book ends for the production.

Seurat’s painting is the central pivot or reflecting surface, for it is built up from nothing but white space during the course of act 1, while at the beginning of act 2 we are told that it is fading, and by the end of the act George has deconstructed himself and his heritage to nothing, has returned once again, in the face of the cultural death he experiences and observes in Paris, to the purity and emptiness of “White. A blank page or canvas.” Symbolic of this creative birth and death are the real birth of Marie during the course of act 1 and her death, at the age of ninety-eight, during the course of act 2. (Banfield 365)

Seurat was a man who saw the entire world as his canvas and now, George see the possibilities of the world that Seurat saw. “In its final scenes the play returns to the traditional assumptions with which is began – the genius of the artist, the ineffable moment of imaginative inspiration, and the timeless value of a true artistic masterpiece” (Gordon, *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook* 179). Dot leaves, giving the stage to George and to his destiny. “The two figures are now simultaneously artist and inspiration, Seurat and Dot, George and art” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 298).

The lights fade on George, a man who is now full of hope and potential. “The two Georges here somehow merge, Dot somehow reappears, and the lovers themselves take on a kind of transhistorical property that is emotionally felt rather than logically explained” (Gordon, *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook* 180). This ending gives the audience more questions than answers, but certainly does not leave the audience without
anything to talk about. “It does not really matter how we construe George’s creative
status at the end of act 2, as long as we accept that he has come through an extended
dramatic monologue since the start of the show” (Banfield 346).

**Classification**

In *Aristotle’s Poetics*, the author describes the structure of a good play as simply
one that has a beginning, middle, and end.

A whole is that which has a beginning, a middle, and an end. A beginning is that
which does not itself follow anything by causal necessity, but after which
something naturally is or comes to be. An end, on the contrary, is that which
itself naturally follows some other thing, either by necessity, or as a rule, but has
nothing following it. A middle is that which follows something as some other
thing follows it. A well-constructed plot, therefore, must neither begin nor end at
haphazard, but conform to these principles. (*Aristotle’s Poetics* 65)

Under these principles, there is no way that *Sunday in the Park with George* can be
defined under Aristotle’s dramatic structure. Although, it does follow Aristotle’s
components of Character and Diction, it can not be defined as an Aristotelian structure.

In the 1800’s, a German dramatist Gustav Freytag elaborated on Aristotle’s
dramatic structure. He further divided Aristotle’s three parts of the drama into five. He
labeled the part of the play as exposition, rising action, climax (or turning point), falling
action, and dénouement or catastrophe (depending on whether the drama is a comedy or a
tragedy). Freytag’s analysis of Greek and Shakespearean drama is often represented in a
diagram titled “Freytag’s Pyramid.” The shape is derived from the directions of the
action, either rising or falling.
Sunday does not fit Freytag’s dramatic structure either. Edward Bonahue, in Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook, states that “the action does not build, climax or resolve in the traditional dramatic scene of those terms” (Gordon 171). Freytag’s pyramid fits most traditional plots, but Sunday cannot be considered traditional.

Another 19th Century dramatist, Eugène Scribe, attempted to define dramatic structure in what he called, “A Well-Made Play.” His theory states that the rising action begins early on and the climax takes place very close to the end of the play. According to Scribe’s theory, much of the exposition takes place before the inciting incident of the play. Henrik Ibsen was one of Scribe’s notable followers. “The staging of Ibsen’s early social plays followed standard methods . . . with its climaxes and strong curtains, its
economy of means, its careful planting of clues and significant properties” (Brown 327). While *Sunday* does not follow Scribe’s well-made play structure, it does borrow one of its hallmarks. The use of letters or papers falling into unenlightened hands in order to bring about plot twists and climaxes (causing an unexpected reversal of fortune, in which it is often revealed that someone is not who he or she pretends to be) can be found, even if somewhat veiled, in *Sunday*. The grammar book could be considered the cause of George’s reversal of fortune and his enlightenment to the possibilities that surround him. Even with this example, *Sunday* does not fall under the category of Scribe’s well-made play.

As stated earlier, the only dramatic structure that *Sunday* comes even close to fitting is that of a Concept Musical. Edward T. Bonahue writes in Joanne Gordon’s *Stephen Sondheim: A Casebook* that in “analyzing the structure of the Sondheim ‘concept musical,’ critics find elements of ‘pastiche,’ ‘collage’ or other ‘neoimpressionistic’ forms, and point out contrasts with the well-made play or the traditional ‘book musical.’ ‘Sondheim has always said that he never set out to revolutionize an art form,’ notes Stephen Schiff, ‘but that is precisely what he did’ (76). His innovations are so radical, critics would have us believe, as to constitute a wholesale ‘departure from the traditional patterns of realist theater’ (Gordon 10)” (171). While *Sunday* is indeed a mixture of structures, the ideals of examining a central theme from many different standpoints that define Concept Musicals seem to embody *Sunday*’s structure. *Sunday* breaks Aristotle’s three unities and consistently comments on the action and at some points, comments on itself. *Sunday* is a Concept Musical with borrowed components from other structures.
While Sondheim and Lapine created a mirroring dramatic structure in the libretto, Sondheim carried those elements over into the score, especially in his use of musical motifs. These reoccurring musical themes are no stranger to Sondheim’s works. He uses them to represent character, location, emotions, and actions, but in *Sunday in the Park with George* he uses them to represent all of those things, plus creation of art and structure. In Joanne Gordon’s book *Art Isn’t Easy*, Sondheim is quoted as saying:

> I always start with motifs. Always. That’s partly because of my training with Milton Babbitt, who taught me the long-line technique of musical development, whereby small musical ideas are expanded into large structural forms, and the point is to make the most out of the least and not vice-versa. I’ve always taken that to be the principle of art. Specifically, in terms of music, if you look at a Bach fugue you see this gigantic cathedral build out of these tiny little motifs. I’ve always composed that way, and I think that’s why I’m attracted to the kind of musical I’m attracted to – the kind that offers opportunities to take characters and assign motifs to them which can grow with them. (265)

It appears that Sondheim just as meticulous a composer as Seurat was a painter. “Seurat’s emphasis on form is echoed in the meticulous structure of a Sondheim musical: nothing is random; nothing is arbitrary; each detail is essential to the overall composition” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 265). Seurat was also no stranger to motifs, albeit visual motifs. Gustave Kahn writes of Seurat’s painting technique that “the means of expression of this technique is the optical mixture of tonal values, colors and their reactions (shadows), in accordance with very fixed laws, and the frame is no longer, as at first, simply white, but contrasts with the tonal values, colors and lines of the motif” (Taylor 545).

The first thing that is apparent is *Sunday’s* lack of an overture. Without an overture, Sondheim creates his own blank aural palette. He does not reference any of the
melodies he will later exploit in the production. As such, it appears to the audience members that each song and motif is being created spontaneously in front of them.

The first sounds the audience hears are in the notes of the “Opening Prelude.” In this section Seurat addresses the audience and states the tenets behind creating art. As he does, Sondheim implements what could be called the Creation Motif. (Figure 19) This motif is composed of four sustained sixteenth notes tied to a quarter note. This motif is always found with a rising motion and the sound concocts images of sparkles or flashes of light. Sondheim will repeat this motif throughout the show as Seurat is creating in his world.

![Figure 19: Creation Motif - “Opening Prologue,” m. 1](image)

The next motif appears immediately after George finishes the mantra, over top the Creation Motif in “Opening Prelude.” This motif is played by the horn in measures nine through 16. (Figure 20) The defining aspect of this motif is the leap of a Major sixth followed by flutters of sixteenth notes contained within an interval of a minor third. This motif will eventually evolve into the material used in the Act I finale, “Sunday.”
Figure 20: Sunday Motif - "Opening Prologue," m. 9-16

While this musical statement contains no singing, it does reveal two important motifs and sets the stage for Sondheim’s acoustic palette. “In these few opening moments, the dramatic scheme of the score is set. We are propelled into the artist’s universe. Anything is possible. Worlds can materialize and vanish” (Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 268).

The next piece, “Flying Trees,” is nothing more than a brief restatement of the Creation Motif, but this time, it is used to remove something from Seurat’s reality.
This demonstrates that the Creation Motif is used any time that Seurat creates or eliminates something, such as a tree, but is not limited to these moments. “This arpeggio does not advance the melodic development of the score; it hangs suspended, complete in itself, a musical counterpart to the artist’s drawing” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 268).

Figure 21: "Flying Trees"

“Sunday in the Park with George,” Dot’s song about posing, immediately introduces a new motif consisting of two chords written as staccato quarter notes. (Figure 22) Sondheim utilizes the still and stiff nature of staccato notes to create a feeling of heat and rigidity. This mirrors Dot’s unsuccessful attempts to hold still in the blazing hot sun.

Figure 22: Hot Motif - "Sunday in the Park with George," m. 2a

In measures 29 through 32, Sondheim introduces the yet another motif, the patter effect of sixteenth notes as Dot speaks a stream-of-consciousness. (Figure 23) The effect of the cyclic sixteenth notes mirrors the dizzying effects and tension of the heat while the
longer notes that end the motif represents the release, as if a sigh, from that tension.

“Sondheim conveys a frustration so great that the character transcends the mundane limits of controlled conversation and bursts out with a stream of vehement indignation”

(Gordon, *Art Isn’t Easy* 270).

Figure 23: Dizzy Motif - "Sunday in the Park with George," m. 29-32
At measure 45, Sondheim changes the stiff feel of this song, just as Dot is released into her imagination, into a more free and lighthearted section of music. During this section, Dot speaks of her desire of being immortalized by modeling for an artist. At measure 65, Sondheim changes from the key of E to the key of D♭ to create a seemingly less harsh feel as Dot softens to reveal her true feelings for Seurat. “It is the artist in George that Dot simultaneously loves and loathes” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 271).

A new motif introduced at measure 76, is a foreshadowing of the musical introduction to “Everybody Loves Louis.” (Figure 24) It will become a phrase the Dot uses when she is trying to get Seurat’s attention.

Figure 24: Hello George Motif - "Sunday in the Park with George," m. 76-78

An important new motif is introduced at measure 87. (Figure 25) This is an accompaniment figure of sixteenth and eighth notes in a falling chain of parallel thirds that becomes a driving force behind Seurat’s creative and emotional energy. What is interesting is that Sondheim introduces this motif during one of Dot’s songs, but expressing her love of his art. This accompaniment figure will become the driving force behind “Finishing the Hat.”
In measure 99, Sondheim snaps Dot back into the hot, stiff reality by returning to the Hot Motif. Sondheim moves back through the Dizzy Motif, but this time it is extended to give Dot more room to express her exasperation and frustration towards Seurat and the heat.

“Parasol” is a one-measure song that is a repeat of the Creation Motif, now used to represent inspiration. (Figure 26) The Old Lady asks the Nurse for her parasol and Seurat notices the curvature of the parasol. He will use this inspiration later on while sketching the dogs. While it seems insignificant, Sondheim draws attention, ever so slightly, to any spark of creation with the Creation Motif.

The song “Yoo-Hoo!” was cut from the UCF production as was a recreation of Bathing using actors. This particular song does not contain any reoccurring motifs.
“No Life” transports the audience into the world of the artistic elitists. This song has a feel unlike anything up to this point in the musical. First of all, its three-quarter time and simplistic accompaniment produce an antiquated, severely Classical feel. (Figure 27) Sondheim chose this motive to represent Seurat’s artistic colleagues, embodied by the character of Jules.

![Jules Motif - "No Life," m. 1-2](image)

Jules and his wife, Yvonne, sing this song to mock Seurat’s painting and chuckle at their own wit. Both of them try to top each other in how they disparage Seurat’s painting. As they sing this song that seems to be cut from a different musical cloth from the rest of the show, it becomes apparent that this song is not as much a criticism of Seurat’s painting as it is a criticism of Seurat’s way of life.

Sondheim employed scene change music only three times in the musical, and “Scene Change to Studio” is one of them. In this piece, a very interesting thing occurs. Sondheim combines the Finishing the Hat Motif and lays an augmentation of the Creation Motif over top of it. (Figure 28) This music transports the audience to Seurat’s studio with the Finishing the Hat Motif as a form of foreshadowing and the Creation Motif as a segue to the place where Seurat generates his work.
“Color and Light” is an expertly crafted song that reveals much about the characters of Seurat and Dot. In its first measures a new motif is introduced that will become more insistent as the song progresses. (Figure 29) This motif parallels Seurat’s use of pointillism and the single-minded nature of his life.

George’s “painting” motif . . . in its equal-note rhythm and repeated-note melodic character the obvious musical correlative to the repetitive physical act of putting the dots on the canvas (thought Sondheim has observed that Seurat’s brush technique was more a matter of tiny swirls, not dots), is a vestige of the abortive idea of using adjacent semitones for adjacent colors, and Sondheim has further stated . . . that act 1, viewed as a whole, can be seen as the resolution of semitonal descent . . . into the radiant diatonism of “Sunday,” the point of resolution being sharply spotlighted by the rather cryptic-sounding disposition of the descent and its simultaneous inversion as dissonant two-part chromatic counterpoint. (Banfield 354)

The initial statement of this motif underscores Dot’s monologue about Seurat’s maniacal work ethic and, at times, ignorance of her presence. Later, beginning at measure 22, Seurat’s creation mantra is restated while he is painting, but no Creation
Motif is used. Now it is underscored by the Painting Motif. It is not until measure 29 that any part of this song is sung. As Seurat sings about painting, his melodic structure mirrors the Painting Motif fairly closely. At measure 50 the Painting Motif is changed slightly. (Figure 30) The key of $D_b$ to is modulated to $E_b$ and a constant interval of a second, spread out by an F in the right hand and an $E_b$ in the left hand, is placed upon the Painting Motif. The effect is an extraordinary feeling of sparkling light and intensified creation.

![Figure 30: "Color and Light," m. 50-51](image)

In measure 72, the key changes once again to $B_b$ and the focus moves from Seurat painting his canvas to Dot “painting” her body with make-up and powder. She does not sing the Painting Motif, but rather introduces another motif that will become important to the telling of Seurat’s story. She examines herself and shares what she would change about herself. This Observation Motif will be exploited later when Seurat observes the dogs. (Figure 31) It becomes apparent that Dot is truly Seurat’s muse and she does introduce a good deal of Seurat’s important musical material.
Another important motif is introduced earlier in this song, which this author designates the Lullaby Motif. (Figure 32) This is a theme Seurat sings throughout the show, usually on the lyric “bum.” It has a calming influence on Seurat, and later, will be connected to his mother, Old Lady, in the song “Beautiful.” “Just as Seurat atomizes
blocks of color into dots, Sondheim fragments his lyrics and musical themes” (Gordon, 
*Art Isn’t Easy* 267).

Figure 32: Lullaby Motif - "Color and Light," m. 38-39

Once again, Sondheim uses a completely different musical sound to delve into a
different world from the world Seurat creates. At measure 92, Dot begins to reveal her
dream of being a Follies Girl and Sondheim a typical 2/4 time signature with a “boom-
chick” accompaniment representative of the music found at The Follies Bergère. (Figure
33)

Figure 33: "Color and Light," m. 92-95

The Painting Motif returns in measure 134, underscoring Seurat’s monologue to
his painting. (Figure 34) As Seurat adds thicker layers of paint to his canvas, so too does
Sondheim add thicker musical layers with the addition of sustained notes much like the
accompaniment figure found under the Observation Motif.

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The height of Seurat’s manic state is realized in measure 151 where he sings the Painting Motif in its entirety. His words are a mix of colors, observations, and thoughts about Dot. It shows his ability to multitask and his desire to remain single-minded about his work. In measures 186 through 187 Sondheim use of the Finishing the Hat Motif represents Seurat’s frustration of being socially inept and foreshadows his inevitable fully realized expression in “Finishing the Hat.”

As if to illustrate Seurat and Dot’s inability to communicate, Sondheim has them sing the same melodic material, but not quite together, in another realization of musical pointillism. (Figure 35)
The resolution comes in measure 215 when Seurat and Dot finally sing together that they could look at each other forever. These two characters at last seem connected in a meaningful way, but it turns out to be just another miscommunication. Dot is expressing love through conventional terms and Seurat is expressing love through obsession for his painting. The scene that interrupts the song at this point proves that while Dot is ready to go out, Seurat is obsessing about finishing a hat. Dot storms off and
Seurat’s subsequent monologue of conflicting feelings between painting and comforting Dot is underscored by the Painting Motif. The song ends as it began with little singing and the speaking trails off as the Painting Motif intensifies until, as Sondheim notates in the music, “he is consumed by light” (Sondheim 47).

The second of three scene change pieces is found in the song “Scene Change to Park.” Once again, the Finishing the Hat Motif occurs, but soon morphs into the Painting Motif. During this scene change music, the park is revealed with all of its inhabitants. Seurat’s painting world and the real world begin to combine and collide.

At the top of “Gossip Sequence” Sondheim uses an upward eighth-note figure to create an almost “busy body” feel. (Figure 36) This motif does not resolve and it seems to mirror the idea of cackling rumor-mongers.

![Figure 36: Gossip Motif - "Gossip Sequence," m. 1](image)

This Gossip Motif continues on to underscore characters in the park as they speak about what they have heard about Seurat. Most of the observations they make are obviously over-inflated, but based in some form of truth. As Jules and Yvonne share their gossip, Sondheim layers the Jules Motif on top of the Gossip Motif. (Figure 37)
This is just another example of Sondheim’s expert use of motifs and dense layering. This theme of layering and connection motifs will become more and more important as the musical traverses through its songs. The major culmination of motifs will occur in “Move On.” The Gossip Motif emerges as the major melodic material for the characters of the park to sing their thoughts about Seurat. They punctuate the ends of their gossip phrases with the lyric, “Artists are so crazy” (Sondheim 53). Under this phrase is the Artist Motif. (Figure 38) It represents an outsider’s view on art and artists.

The Gossip Motif continues through the verses of the song until measure 71 when Jules and Yvonne begin to speak. Their section is underscored by the Jules Motif.

The underscoring titled “Cues in the Park” utilizes the Creation Motif, but this time to illustrate new developments in Seurat’s social life. As he finally approaches Dot
with a bit of an apology and as Louis burst onto the scene, the Creation Motif is played. The line between Seurat’s fictional painting world and reality become even more blurred and Sondheim addresses this idea musically in “Cues in the Park.”

“The Day Off” begins with a repetition of the Painting Motif while Seurat observes his next subject, Spot the dog. As he decides on how to sketch the dog, he reiterates Dot’s Observation Motif. Once Seurat discovers that the key to this dog is mimicking the curvature of the parasol, the Painting Motif comes back in with a driving force at measure 13. We seem to be transported, through Seurat’s mind, back to the studio and the industrious nature of his work. Seurat takes one step further into his world of painting and begins to embody and imitate his subjects. To go even further, it is a dog’s mind he is trying to get inside.

At measure 27, Seurat literally becomes Spot the dog and sings about the trials and tribulations of being the boatman’s dog. At measure 76, Seurat goes even further and becomes Fifi, the small pug dog. Sondheim notates that Seurat should sing in falsetto for this dog to create the feeling of a lap dog of a much smaller stature than Spot. Fifi complains about being a dog in the lap of luxury, in stark contrast to Spot’s complaints.

When the Boatman’s mutt is joined by a pampered pug, social-class distinctions is satirized as the two dogs exchange pleasantries and complain about their contrasting life-styles. The two dogs introduce the primary melodic line as they pay tribute to Sunday. They are joined by other characters who explore the freedom of their day off in individual segments. This typifies Sondheim’s characterization techniques for this musical. Each of the characters is incomplete, merely a fragment of George’s perception. Their own concerns and preoccupations are mentioned and then abandoned. Eventually George’s vision coalesces as the figures sing together of the pleasures of Sunday in the park: a Sunday in which they will endure forever in the perfection of Seurat’s painting and Sondheim’s musical. (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 276)
A new motif is introduced by Seurat as Spot, that reoccurs each time a character speaks of Sunday as the day of rest. One of the best examples of this motif can be found in measures 64-65. (Figure 39) This motif will become a rallying call for the characters as they find a common interest, a need to relax. Ironically, Seurat is the only one of them that does not seem to need this day to replenish.

Immediately in measures 1 and 2 of “The Day Off (Part II),” a new important motif is introduced. This motif is found in the accompaniment and is played by the French Horn. (Figure 40) On stage, the horn player pretends to play this figure. It becomes a call to arms for Seurat and startles him out of his artistic state and back into reality.

The next important motif is found in “The Day Off (Part IV).” As the Soldier and his cut-out friend enter, a quick sixteenth-note pattern occurs symbolizing both the voice
of the cut-out solider and the excitement that the Celeste girls feel while around the eligible soldiers. (Figure 41) The effect is that of chatter, both from the solider and the giggling girls.

Figure 41: Chatter Motif - "The Day Off (Part IV)," m. 3-6

Throughout these sections of “The Day Off,” secondary characters step forward with small detours into their lives. These sections are the remnants of former, longer songs that Sondheim ended up cutting down into these departures. They are not really motifs, but help round out the lives of the secondary characters. Notable characters with diversions are the Nurse, Franz, Frieda, and the Boatman. Each time, Seurat sings a small portion with the character to help the audience understand Seurat’s connection with his characters. He cannot relate to them face to face, but while he sketches, he is suddenly linked to them in a very special way. The best example of this comes in “The Day Off (Part VI),” when Seurat and the Boatman sing of the frustrations of being an outsider. After being rebuked by Jules, Seurat can suddenly relate completely to this other outsider and for a small moment, they are connected.

“Everybody Loves Louis” begins immediately with the Hello George Motif with the lyrics, “Hello George” (Sondheim 80). This motif will be used throughout the song as Dot is trying to get Seurat’s attention and spark his jealousy. At measure 51, Dot uses the Hello George Motif while describing her new sex life in the hopes of enraging Seurat.
to do something about it. (Figure 42) The trouble is, Seurat has retreated and all of this showing off is for nothing.

\[ \text{Figure 42: Hello George Motif - "Everybody Loves Louis," m. 50-54} \]

In measure 107, Dot returns to a familiar, but, as of yet, not important accompaniment figure. The Finishing the Hat Motif returns to underscore Dot’s expression of longing for Seurat, but quickly switches back to the fast pace “Everybody Loves Louis” accompaniment that seems to carry Dot back into her new fictional world that she has created with Louis. It seems both main characters tend to live in worlds of their own creation. “Dot is trying convince herself of the truth of what she sings” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 277).

“The One on the Left” starts off with the Chatter Motif to signify the entrance of the soldiers and the Celestes. In measure 76, the Celestes end up singing this difficult motif. (Figure 43) Also, in this song Seurat sings a small portion of the soldiers song with him. This is yet another connection Seurat feels with his subjects.
At the top of “Finishing the Hat” Seurat revisits both through his sketchbook and musically the other characters and their song snippets. The accompaniment figure is reminiscent of “The Day Off.” At measure 12, the mood shifts dramatically and is represented by a shift in key from C to G♭ which tends to have a more mournful sound than C. As he sings in this new key, he laments the loss of Dot and his inability to stop it. In measure 15, a more legato Painting Motif is introduced as an accompaniment figure until in measure 24 when the Finishing the Hat Motif is finally used in its most meaningful way. Sondheim has subliminally created a relationship with Seurat and this motif, so that the payoff comes when “Finishing the Hat” gives the motif its purpose.

Another motif is used in “Finishing the Hat.” In measures 27-28, the musical phrase of four eighth notes and a quarter note becomes the next important motif. (Figure 44) It will become extremely important in the second act and “Putting it Together.”
The emotional journey that Seurat moves through in “Finishing the Hat” is extraordinary. He lays, for the first time, his emotions out on the table. The problem is there is no one else on stage to receive his emotional confession. He confesses his emotional turmoil to his sketches.

“Bustle” is a song that begins with the Horn Motif to once again call Seurat to attention. He must face something in his real life that this Horn Motif represents. During the following chaos of music and vocal lines (improvised) that creates a very theatrical moment where the music represents Seurat’s confusion, Dot reveals by moving her bustle around to the front to show that she is pregnant.

“Scene Change to Studio” uses the Painting Motif to move the action back into studio. This is not the normal Painting Motif, but slightly modified. (Figure 45) Something is different in Seurat’s life and this music foreshadows the coming events.
The song “We Do Not Belong Together” moves the audience through Dot’s final plea to Seurat for compassion and understanding. She reaches out to him hoping that he might turn and reach back. Unfortunately, he reaches further into his work and his painting. The two become more enraged in their argument as the song moves into the Painting Motif and Dot sings the Communication Motif over top of it. (Figure 46) This motif is used when Dot and George are actually hearing each other, but this time it comes far too late for it to do any good in their relationship.

![Communication Motif - "We Do Not Belong Together," m. 8-9](image)

The two move through a very touching segment of the music while trying to communicate their standpoints of the relationship, but soon Seurat begins to shut down. He sorrowfully admits that he cannot give Dot what she really needs and as he does so, Sondheim seems to combine two motifs. He uses as similar rhythmic phrase to the Finishing the Hat Motif and a similar intervalllic relationship to the Creation Motif. (Figure 47) What is created is new, but somehow familiar to the listener.
By measure 49, Seurat completely drops out of the song, retreating to his painting, and Dot finishing the song as a solo. Interestingly enough, as Dot comes to the epiphany that she must move on from her relationship from Seurat, the accompaniment figure seems to be the Creation Motif and permutation of the motif. (Figure 48) Sondheim very elegantly moves these motifs from character to character to give significance to certain situations.
The last phrase of the song is an important foreshadowing to the end of act two. This last phrase is actually a motif that will return in the song “Move On.” (Figure 49) Dot introduces the idea of moving on in her life and it will be that same idea that she needs to communicate to George in act two. The song “Move On” is primarily based around this one motif (as well as many others from through the show) found in “We Do Not Belong Together.” “George cannot be what she wants, and Dot cannot survive on what he can give” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 282).
“Beautiful” is quite possibly one of the most beautiful and touching songs in the whole score of *Sunday in the Park with George*. It is a song that not only shows Seurat’s important relationship with his mother, but also reveals some of Seurat’s humanity and that he is able to converse with another human being in a meaningful and poignant way. As Seurat’s mother is slowly slipping away, he assures her that he will capture and create the “beautiful” world that she remembers in her memories, whether they are true or not. To help show the Old Lady’s slipping mind, Sondheim uses a constant triplet figure and quarter notes that move in intervals of seconds that seems to help dizzy and confuse the Old Lady. (Figure 50)

As the accompaniment figure progresses, Sondheim slowly introduces other motifs underneath the lyrics. At measure 43, Sondheim uses the Painting Motif as Seurat describes the concept of beauty to his mother and then layered on top of that, in measure
49, he places the Lullaby Motif in the violin part. (Figure 51) This ties the Lullaby Motif to Seurat’s mother and its influence on Seurat’s work by layering it on the Painting Motif. It is a subtle accompaniment figure that is a treasure for the discerning listener to find.

“Soldier Cue #1” is a quick reference of the Creation Motif, but at its most tension-filled. (Figure 52) Seurat’s carefully constructed world has a tinge of dissonance as it starts to unravel.
"Jules and Frieda" is a recapitulation of "No Life," but this time it is not as lush. It sounds almost secretive, which is perfect since this song underscores the meeting of Jules and his servant Frieda for a clandestine sexual encounter.

"Soldier Cues #2 and #3" functions much as "Soldier Cue #1" did in the progression of the show. The relationship between the Soldiers and the Celestes falls apart to symbolize Seurat’s own relationships and life falling apart. The dissonant tension found in these repeats of the Creation Motif shows the anguish and pain that Seurat is feeling.

"Chaos" works in much of the same fashion as "Bustle." It is a musical representation of the bedlam the Seurat is feeling as he is losing is lover, his mother, and his work is being ridiculed by most. The basic form of this section is a constant repeat of the Gossip Motif. (Figure 53) This makes sense because it is the weight of everyone else coming down upon Seurat that is causing most of his problems. On top of that, the percussion is using the rhythm of the Creation Motif and the violin part is using the Horn Motif. All of this layered on top of each other is familiar, but helps create the anarchy needed for this scene to work.
Figure 53: "Chaos," m. 1-3

At the top of “Sunday,” Seurat calls for order and the Creation Motif calls all the characters to attention. He moves through all of his creative mantra while being underscored by the Creation Motif. The characters of the park obey Seurat’s orders until, at last, harmony is found through the tension at measure 20. (Figure 54) All of the characters come together to sing the same phrase at the same time (a rarity for Sondheim) and the basic melodic phrase is based on the Sunday Motif. Seurat takes all of the chaos and creates a harmonic picture for his painting.
When Seurat is at his most creative, comfortable, and placing Dot in her place of honor, he sings the Lullaby Motif in measure 59. He shares this phrase with Dot so that she might share it with their child that he will never help father. Another addition of layering that Sondheim implements comes in measure 69 and creates one of the most beautiful moment of the show. The characters are singing the Sunday Motif in stunning harmony, the horn is playing the Horn Motif, and as the characters finish their phrase, the tension from the Creation Motif plays in the accompaniment. Then as the voices clear out, the Sunday Motif comes soaring out of the horn line to finish the act and freeze the painting into place just as Seurat wishes. It is a stunning a complete ending to Act I.

Act II opens seemingly like the end of Act I. The audience sees the same tableau of the painting and for a moment, it almost expects to see Seurat walk out on the stage and finish where the story left off. Instead, the audience finds that the timeline has been fast-forwarded ahead 100 years and it is looking at is the painting hung in a museum. The first sounds of Act II are the stinted notes of the Hot Motif in “It’s Hot Up Here.” This song is a direct departure of realism and travels into the minds of the subjects living in a painting. The song seems to directly mirror “Sunday in the Park with George,”
which starts the reiteration of the musical material, as if an echo from 100 year earlier. It is almost as if Act I was the set-up or exposition for Act II. (Figure 55)

![Figure 55: Hot Motif - "It's Hot Up Here," m. 1](image)

Sondheim does not try to create an exact copy of “Sunday in the Park with George,” but he does infuse it with the same feel. “This kind of repetition and patterning of word, idea, and musical phrase echoes Seurat’s pointillism and helps to unite the two acts. The technique serves not only to link the content and emotion of acts 1 and 2 but reinforces the textual consistency of the work” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 286). Sondheim is not shy of using some of the same material, but not in the same way. Dot, in measure 53, still sings a section that uses the Hello George Motif. In this section, she seems to directly answer her “hello George” section from “Sunday in the Park with George.” In Act I, she was interested in being remembered forever in Seurat’s work and now that she is in a painting, it is not all she thought it would be.

At measure 91, the whole company comes together to sing a direct repeat of Dot’s line “And God, I am so hot!” (Sondheim 143). Then the entire company rushes into the Dizzy Motif, though extended and tailored to each character’s needs and frustrations.
The song shows the strain and exhaustion of being stuck in a painting. Just like “Sunday in the Park with George,” it is a song about the stresses of modeling.

“Eulogies” is used as a bridge to a new kind of sound that will tend to dominate parts of Act II. Sondheim adds sustained notes, one at a time, to create an ethereal feel to the underscoring of the denouement of Act I. It also creates part of the new technological feel that will thrust the dramatic action into “Chromolume #7.”

The main chromatic feature to note is the twelve-tone chord that is built up, one note at a time, in parallel with each spoken tribute to Seurat in “Eulogies” and that therefore, as well as acting as a stylistic transition to the modern George, his environment, and his Chromolumes, it points out to us that there are twelve articulated characters or groups of characters who constitute the relationships fabricated from the painting – George, Dot, Jules, Yvonne, Louise, the Nurse, the Old Lady, the Soldiers, the Celestes, Franz, Frieda, and the Boatman (Louis, who never speaks, would form the baker’s dozen). The point of this tone row is that it is derived, as the “miscellaneous” sketches show, from another that incorporates a more obvious variant of the fanfare with which the musical opens. (Banfield 356)

Interestingly enough, “Chromolume #7” is an underscoring (“composed” by a character in the show) for a presentation about Seurat by George, Seurat’s supposed great-grandson. It is the first introduction to this character of George. As he is speaking of his creation, Chromolume #7, the underscoring moves in quarter notes, which if one looks closely, it can be noticed that it is an elongated Creation Motif. This ties George’s creative ability to Seurat’s. (Figure 56)
The second part of “Chromolume #7,” after the crash of his art piece, utilizes the Painting Motif, especially in section 6. Once again, while subtle, there is a connection of Seurat to George. “Chromolume #7” is like no other song in the score. It is very minimalist and modern. There is a lot of use of tone rows and non-metered music. The influence of Milton Babbit and pointillist music is utilized, if not tongue-in-cheek, to tie the two artists even stronger together. Hints of the Horn Motif are also found in this section. It could seem that Sondheim is trying to use atonal music in this section, but he once said, “I haven’t studied atonal music. When I studied with Milton Babbitt I asked him if I could study atonality, and he said: ‘You haven’t exhausted tonal resources for yourself yet, so I’m not going to teach you atonal.’ And he was absolutely right; I’m still in tonal” (Horowitz 117). This may be the closest to atonal he has ever ventured. Sondheim also enjoyed that minimalist music “uses the (analogically) pure colors; it uses very diatonic harmony” (Banfield 357). Sondheim also found that minimalist music gave the music the same kind of shimmer that is found in Seurat’s painting.

Probably the most daunting and certainly the longest song of *Sunday in the Park with George* is “Putting It Together.” The song is divided in the score into seventeen different sections. This song effectively tells the story of how George traverses through cocktail party and has a definite dramatic arc. As Steve Swayne points out in *How Sondheim Found His Sound*, “musical logic is made subservient to the dramatic requirements of the piece in question. Structure is dictated by the drama; content dictates form” (197). Part I of the song is, in essence, cocktail music to transition the audience from the exhibition to the reception that immediately follows it.
Part II is a section that mirrors “Gossip Sequence” from the first act. (Figure 57)

The Gossip Motif is present and prevalent and the underscoring is updated to a samba rhythm to reflect the era of the 1980’s. Once again, the characters are using the Gossip Motif to speak negatively about George and his art. It is the typical “buzz word” conversations found at functions such as this. The Artist Motif is not found in its entirety, but very similar elements can be found in the lyric “That is the state of the art” (Sondheim 159) Part III falls almost exactly in the same lines as Part II. (Figure 58)
Part IV continues the gossiping about George and his chromolume, but now the accompaniment figure changes to reflect “The Day Off.” Once again, Sondheim ties the two acts together by using similar musical ideas. (Figure 59)

Part V introduces new material into the mix and by doing so, introduces a new motif. This motif is used each time a character speaks about the hardships of creating a successful piece of art and keeping the momentum building. This motif is the Art Isn’t Easy Motif. (Figure 60)
Part VI is full of powerful motifs from the first act. Instantly, the Horn Motif is found as a call to attention of the characters on stage that George is entering. (Figure 61) He enters as if the horn call was to announce the king’s arrival and his subjects should take notice.

The room freezes as George pumps himself up and steels himself for the coming onslaught of critics, colleagues, and contributors. (Figure 62) While singing about getting ready to work the room, he uses the Hello George motif to focus himself and prepare for battle.
Under the dialogue of the following scene, Sondheim keeps the downbeat elusive to the ear by using a constant eighth-note pattern that falls in threes and overlaps past the bar lines. Layered on top of that, fragments of the Painting Motif can be found in quarter notes. (Figure 63)

Part VII is another cocktail music section, this time in a jazz waltz, that functions as underscoring for the scene and a reminder to the audience that the events are taking place at a reception. This kind of music could be found at any reception anywhere in the world.

Once again, all of the action freezes as George steps forward and laments the actions his must do to fund another piece of art. During Part VIII, he utilizes the Hello
George Motif while doing so. As the scene unfreezes, the Painting Motif can be found in quarter notes again in the accompaniment figure.

Part IX is another cocktail music section, but this time it is a hot swing number to transition the action smoothly into the next section of this behemoth of a song.

Part X finds George explaining his art to possible contributors while trying to keep Marie, his grandmother, quiet. He uses the Art Isn’t Easy Motif to express his frustration of having to suck up to this kind of crowd to have the means to create the art that he knows is deep within him. Like an echo, a predominant Painting Motif is used in the accompaniment, as if George is trying to remember, or connect, to something he might have learned from Seurat. (Figure 64) Is this his inspiration that he just can’t find?

Figure 64: Painting Motif - "Putting It Together (Part X)," m. 11-13

Part XI starts George’s expulsion of his aggravations to the audience while still trying to work the room and gain some ground in the art community. He speaks of the small steps it takes to create a cohesive and well-funded work of art. Not many listeners will make the connection, but the melodic line of “Putting It Together” is a direct derivative of “Finishing the Hat.” (Figure 65) Seurat uses the Putting It Together Motif to lament being a great artist in search of a social connection while George laments being a great social artist in search of artistic fulfillment. It is a fantastic juxtaposition and a common musical ground for both men.
Each time George starts a new section of “Putting It Together” that utilizes the Putting It Together Motif, the accompaniment figure becomes more dense and tumultuous. (Figure 66) It is as if Sondheim is trying to reflect George’s inner conflict in an outward way by connecting the accompaniment figure to his stress and frustration level.

In measure 44 of Part XII, George finally releases a little of his anxiety in a long-lined use of the Art Isn’t Easy Motif. (Figure 67) It comes as almost a cry for help in a world surround by dense lyrics and quick tempos.
The entire company joins in for Part XIII which is based around the ideas of the Art Isn’t Easy motif. Different characters at the part put in their two cents about where art is heading while the whole company sings the motif between phrases. It is a rest for George to gather his thoughts and head right back into the fray.

Part XIV is another round of cocktail music, this time of the Bossa Nova persuasion to give the underscoring an almost smarmy feel to connect with George’s feelings about the meat market that is his evening.

The accompaniment figure in Part XV uses the structure of an eighth-note figure vacillating mostly within an interval of a second. (Figure 68) The melody stays the same as other sections and still utilizes the Putting It Together Motif. This section has a very diluted accompaniment figure with very few notes sounding at the same time to create a harmonic interval. By doing so, Sondheim creates a singularly neurotic figure to mirror George’s frenzied attempts of keeping too many balls in the air.
At measure 28a, Sondheim shifts into a cocktail style to underscore yet another party scene. In this scene, Dennis, George’s collaborative partner, tells George that he is going to quit. When he reveals this, the music comes to a sustained halt with a fermata until George can deal with the situation and then it moves on in measure 29. When George does sing again, after dealing with yet another setback, he uses the Art Isn’t Easy Motif, but this time it is not the release as before, but a short, snippy phrase.

After George can release himself from speaking with Alex and Betty, artist friends and competition, he can release with the elongated Art Isn’t Easy Motif in Part XVI. As he becomes more and more harried, the Putting It Together Motif repeats numerous times (with very clever lyrics) while the triple eighth-note accompaniment creates a certain amount of chaos that George is feeling at this moment in the song. (Figure 69) He gets so flustered that he reveals a little too much and shows that it is not his work that he wants on exhibition, but himself.
The final section of “Putting It Together,” Part XVII, starts with an underscoring for a scene in which George hears some harsh advice from his critic, friend, and mentor Blair. He uses the Hello George Motif to express his wanting to banish his detractors, but he must remain a nice guy in order to keep up his public image. By measure 38, he continues to repeat the Hello George Motif to express his irritation with the current
situation until he releases on the longest note of the song up to this point at measure 46.

(Figure 70) The note is a scream, or a cry for help, to release his aggravation.

He immediately returns to the Putting It Together Motif, but Sondheim is going to slowly break apart and deteriorate his world. Sondheim does so by adding in 5/4 measures to keep the downbeat elusive and adding snippets of other character’s phrases from the gossip section in Parts II and III. In true Sondheim form, the layers become thicker and thicker until it becomes almost unintelligible. George continues to uses the Putting It Together Motif continuously over top of these layers. The entire company comes together under George to sing long-lined harmonic phrases of the Art Isn’t Easy Motif. The song concludes with the company singing about the troubles of creating and
promoting art while the three eighth-note figure flutters underneath. This demanding song ties Seurat to George without one word in the song saying so. The motifs are ingeniously used to connect these two characters together without being obvious or cliché.

“Children and Art” is a song sung by Marie to reveal her deep connection to Seurat’s painting and her family line. She wants George to feel that same connection and uses it in his art. The most interesting part of this entire song, besides its sentimental and touching message, is that it is entirely based on a triplet of eighth-notes and either a dotted quarter-note or a quarter-note and eighth-note in 12/8 time. It is daring in its simplicity and makes the song that much more poignant. (Figure 71)
“After Children” is a scene change song that is a direct repeat of the “Children and Art” material. This song changes the action from the museum to the island of La Grande Jatte. George and Dennis are setting up the chromolume for an exhibition on the island. The island is not what George expected and he is a little disappointed in the lackluster and corporate surroundings that now create the skyline of the park.

After Dennis leaves George alone, he begins to leaf through the grammar book that Marie gave him, which she claims was Dot’s. Similarly to the beginning of “Finishing the Hat”, Sondheim has George sing what he is singing at the top of “Lesson #8.” As George reads, he uses a similar triplet and quarter note rhythm that Marie used in “Children and Art.” George is in search of a connection to his past and he seems to be trying out Marie’s rhythm in the hope that he may find what she had. This rhythm also gives the character a sense of lack of breath, as if a panic attack is arising. These short little sentences are also a form of vocal pointillism. (Figure 72)

![Figure 72: "Lesson #8," m. 15-18](image)

“Lesson #8” seems to conjure Dot back to teach George a lesson he needs to know. “Move On” is the duet that will teach him everything he needs to know to take the next step on his own. Sondheim will weave a tapestry of the motifs he employed throughout the musical to create a masterwork. “Their, [Dot and George’s,] is a
continuous and continuing loves song that isn’t complete until the end of the show” (Zadan 301). Sondheim utilizes a “long-line technique of musical development, whereby small musical ideas are expanded into large structural forms, and the point is to make the most out of the least and not vice-versa” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 265).

The song opens with Seurat using permutations of the Communication Motif as found in “We Do Not Belong Together.” This time the Move On Motif does not end the song, but Sondheim uses it to hold the song together, much like a refrain. It is also the main message that Dot wants to give George. He must “move on” (Sondheim 221). Dot takes the time to teach George the “rules” to life by using the Communication Motif, the Move On Motif, and the Observation Motif. The accompaniment figure utilizes bits and pieces from the Finishing the Hat Motif, the Painting Motif, and the accompaniment figure under “Putting It Together.” The last two measures of the song, in a brilliant move by Sondheim, uses the Creation Motif. It is musical representation that Dot’s message has been received by George.

Stephen Sondheim describes how “Move On” works musically in Craig Zadan’s book Sondheim & Co..

The way the score was constructed was based on the relationship of the two central characters. Theirs is a continuous and continuing loves song that isn’t completed until the end of the show. In the song “Sunday in the Park with George,” Dot, in one section, begins a lyrical theme, which is her affection and her love for George. This is picked up later in “Color and Light,” and it develops and starts to reach a climax, and just at that point, they break off and they speak. Then in “We Do Not Belong Together” it’s picked up and further developed as if it’s almost where they left off, and ends with an unrhymed line where she sings, “I have to move on.” And when their love is finally consummated, which is the end of the second act, it all comes together and becomes a completed song in “Move On.” “Move On” is a combination of all the themes involving their relationship, including every harmony and every accompaniment; it’s where everything culminates. Only it’s over a period of four major scenes covering a hundred years. It’s one way of threading the theme through time. (301-2)
Figure 73: Harmonic Representation of the Creation of "Move On," (Banfield 277)
George begins to question Dot and the meaning of her notes in the back of the grammar book. Those words are Seurat’s creative mantra. As he reads them aloud, “Sunday – Finale” begins to underscore George’s lesson. He is finally getting the connection he so desperately wanted and the characters from Seurat’s painting return to pay homage to Seurat and witness the passing of the creative baton on to George. “Sunday – Finale” is a direct reprise of “Sunday” with no musical changes other than a removal of the Lullaby Motif. It can be assumed that Sondheim omitted this section of the music to represent that George still has much to learn and it will all come in time. “Such moments belong only to what we can imagine beyond death or can experience through art” (Banfield 379).

“Bows” takes the audience back throughout the thematic material of the piece, most notably the Painting Motif and the Finishing the Hat Motif. “Exit Music” is an orchestra representation of “Sunday.”

With the conclusion of the show, the musical mirroring structure is complete. Stephen Banfield, in Sondheim’s Broadway Musicals, very clearly states the connections between the two acts.

Both acts begin with nervously pointillistic numbers (“Sunday in the Park with George” and It’s Hot Up Here”) that share much melodic, accompanimental, and lyric material and could almost be thought of as variants of the same song; both end with the hymn “Sunday.” In “Color and Light,” George is looking at his canvas and making his painting while Dot is looking in her mirror and making up her body, and thus we also have parallel structures within this song that, with its synaesthetic lyrics and the synaesthetic mise-en-scène (mise, as it were, en Seine), offers an overall parallel to the synaesthetic light sculpture light of “Chromolume #7.” The first three parts of “Putting It Together” reprise the material of “Gossip Sequence,” while part 4 reuses not only a vamp and chord from “The Day Off,” as we have observed, but retains the melodic inflections of its part 5 . . . The melodic motif of “The Day Off” is perhaps parent to the “Art isn’t easy” refrain that arises in part 5 of “Putting It Together” (if so, the contrasting implications of leisure in the one and hard work in the other are a nice touch). “Finishing the
Hat” and parts 6 to 17 of “Putting It Together” are the two big “process” songs in the score: the term can be used to indicate both their minimalist musical idiom and the content and mode of their lyrics, and both songs have a present participle in the title phrase and share the musical phrase itself, which is a variant of the original fanfare whose progeny permeate the whole musical and are especially forefounded in the horn call found near the beginning of both “Putting It Together” and “The Day Off.” (365-366)

It becomes clear that this carefully constructed score is an equal part to the dramatic structure as the libretto. “Sound, meaning, feeling, and aesthetic beauty have autonomous significance, yet are combined into a unified work of art” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 266). The show does not necessarily reset at the end of the final curtain. “Opening and closing are linked, but not in a static circularity. Rather there is a sense of an ever-ascending spiral as each artist strives to contribute a unique vision to the many-faceted nature of artistic truth . . . the revelation of a new truth – this is the sacred mandate of the artist” (Gordon, Art Isn’t Easy 299).
CHAPTER 4 - ANALYSIS OF ROLES

Character Analysis

When approaching the role of George in Sunday in the Park with George, one must approach the role as two totally different character analyses. The first is Seurat and the second is George, one hundred years later.

There is an interesting dichotomy when playing a historical figure such as Georges Seurat. While Seurat was a very secretive and private man, there is a wealth of information written about him and his works, as noted in earlier sections. Due to his mysterious and enigmatic life, much of what is written about Seurat is estimation or conflicting. The other misleading item in playing a historical figure is that the playwrights do not always follow exactly what happened in his life. Sondheim and Lapine took their right as creators to use dramatic license. One must use the information available about the person to inform the character, but not create it. The moments and happenings of the character’s life in the confines of the production must be what creates the character.

After reading and analyzing the script and score, it is necessary to break the scenes down into acting beats and intentions. After the beats have been identified, it then becomes essential to assign active verbs to each of the beats. Table 1 illustrates active verbs assigned to beats that involved Seurat.
Table 1: Act I George’s Acting Beat Intentions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>to start creating</th>
<th>to sketch</th>
<th>to correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to capture her presence</td>
<td>to keep her attention</td>
<td>to disarm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to pry</td>
<td>to diffuse</td>
<td>to appreciate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to draw</td>
<td>to focus</td>
<td>to capture color</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to replenish</td>
<td>to capture the light</td>
<td>to exalt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to connect</td>
<td>to create</td>
<td>to worship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to relate</td>
<td>to admire</td>
<td>to flirt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to commit</td>
<td>to deliberate</td>
<td>to paint</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to put at ease</td>
<td>to paint</td>
<td>to humor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to placate</td>
<td>to admonish</td>
<td>to repel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to prod</td>
<td>to apologize</td>
<td>to retreat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to analyze</td>
<td>to discover</td>
<td>to fantasize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to comment</td>
<td>to instruct</td>
<td>to journey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to open</td>
<td>to observe</td>
<td>to sympathize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to defend</td>
<td>to deflect</td>
<td>to attack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to explode</td>
<td>to brood</td>
<td>to manipulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hide</td>
<td>to live through</td>
<td>to reflect</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to cover</td>
<td>to wish</td>
<td>to lament</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to carry away</td>
<td>to regret</td>
<td>to justify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to mourn</td>
<td>to desire</td>
<td>to get to the point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to smolder</td>
<td>to lash out</td>
<td>to pause</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to appease</td>
<td>to plead</td>
<td>to reach out</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The idea of a misunderstood artist is not a new one. It is a character that audiences have seen before and will see again. The secret of playing the misunderstood artist is to make him as accessible and human as possible. Audiences must find a connection to the character, a way to relate. If they cannot find a part of themselves in the character, they just will not care. In today’s fast paced society, careers have been exalted to almost a religious level. Seurat felt the same way in a society that treasured its free time.

The Belgian poet Verhaeren described how Seurat would discuss his work “calmly, with careful gestures, while his eye never left one and the slow level voice searched for the slightly professional phrase. . . .” “If I had to describe him in one word,” Verhaeren went on, “I would say that he was above all an organizer, in the artistic sense of the word. Hazard, luck, chance, the sensation of being carried away – these things meant nothing to him. Not only did he never start painting without knowing where he was going, but his pre-occupation with his pictures went far beyond their success as individual works. They had no real meaning, in his view, unless they proved a certain rule, a certain artistic truth, or marked a conquest of the unknown. If I understood him correctly, I think that he had set himself to pull art clear of the hesitations of vagueness, indecision, and imprecision. Perhaps he thought that the positive and scientific spirit of the day called for a clearer and more substantial method of conquering beauty. (Russell 131-132)
This single-minded, organized obsession of work is something that most can connect or relate to in today’s society. He also wanted to understand beauty and light as much as possible. His scientific approach to creation is also something to which modern audiences can relate. In our world of genetic manipulation and plastic surgery, we can easily understand how science can help influence the perception of beauty. Seurat’s own words in a letter to Maurice Beaubourg, dated 28 August 1890, explain:

Art is harmony. Harmony is the analogy of contrary elements and the analogy of similar elements of tone, color and line, considered according to their dominants and under the influence of light, in gay, calm, or sad combinations.

The contraries are:

For tone, one more clear (luminous) for one more dark:

For color, the complementaries, that is to say a certain red opposed to its complementary, etc. (red-green, orange-blue, yellow-violet);

For line, those forming a right angle.

Gaiety of tone is given by the luminous dominant; of color, by the warm dominant; of line, by lines above the horizontal.

Sad tone is given by the dark tone dominant; in color by the cold dominant; in line by descending directions.

Technique:

Taking for granted the phenomena of the duration of the impression of light on the retina –

Synthesis necessarily follows as a result. The means of expression is the optical mingling of the tones and of the tints (local color and that resulting from illumination by the sun, an oil-lamp, gas, etc.), that is to say, of the lights and their reactions (the shadows), following the laws of contrast, of gradation and of irradiation.

The frame is in the harmony opposed to that of the tones, the colors and the lines of the picture. (Taylor 541-42)

Seurat’s own search for aesthetic fulfillment made him a social outcast. Many historians refer to him as the “quiet experimenter,” due to his social inability and his progressive theories. Lapine, in writing first drafts of Sunday in the Park with George, wrote a monologue for George to occur before “Eulogies” that ended up not being used in the final production. In this monologue, Lapine tries to show that Seurat had this
single-minded approach to life since he was a child and that it continued all the way through to his early death.

A fascination with light. The bedroom where I slept as a child – it had a window. At night, the reflection of the light – that is, the light outside the window – created a shadow-show on my wall. So it was, lying in my bed, looking at the wall, I was able to make out shapes of night activity from the street. These images were not rich in detail, so my mind’s eye filled in the shapes to bring them to life. Straying from the point. The point? Light and sleep. I didn’t sleep. Well, of course I slept, but always when there was a choice, when I might fight the urge, I would lie awake, eyes fixed on the wall, sometimes until the bright sunlight of the morning washed the image away. Off and running. Off and running. First into the morning light. Last on the gas-lit streets. Energy that had no time for sleep. A mission to see, to record impressions. Seeing . . . recording . . . seeing the record, then feeling the experience. Connect the dots, George. Slowing to a screeching halt – in one week. Fighting to wake up. “Wake up, Georgie.” I can still feel her cool hand on my warm cheek. Could darkness be an inviting place? Could sleep surpass off and running? No. Lying still, I can see the boys swimming in the Seine. I can see them all, on a sunny Sunday in the park. (Four by Sondheim 664-5)

With all of this material (as well as the script and score – see earlier analysis), a well-rounded character is easy to construct. A quite detailed physical description of Seurat is even available from his friend and contemporary, Gustave Kahn.

Physically, he was tall and well-proportioned. Thanks to his abundant black beard and his thick, slightly curly hair, his face, apart from its flaring nostrils, resembled those of the mitered Assyrians on the bas-reliefs. His very large eyes, extremely calm at ordinary moments, narrowed when he was observing or painting, leaving visible only the luminous points of the pupils beneath the lowered lashes. An accurate but very badly printed profile drawn by Maximilien Luce shows him at the easel (in Les Hommes d’aujourd’hui).

Beneath a somewhat cold exterior appearance, dressed always in dark blues and blacks – a neat and correct appearance that prompted Degas in a moment of humor to nickname him “the notary” – he guarded within himself a nature full of kindness and enthusiasm. Silent in large groups, among a few proven friends he would speak animatedly about his art and its aim. The emotion that filled him at these moments made itself visible in a slight reddening of his cheeks. He spoke in a literary manner and at considerable length, seeking to compare the progress of his own art with that of the auditory arts, intent upon finding a basic unity between his own efforts and those of the poets or musicians. (Taylor 543)
George Seurat in Sunday in the Park with George is a very intense man. He has a high socioeconomic status due to his upbringing, schooling and artistic profession, but he does not live up to the social standards of a man-about-town in the 1860’s. He prefers to be a social recluse and work on his paintings and theories in private. Due to this, many feel he is secretive, dark and untrustworthy. It seems that he only reaches out to three people, Jules (his artistic contemporary), the Old Lady (his mother), and Dot (his lover and model).

His approach to art is extremely scientific during a time when many artists are rejecting scientific findings for their own techniques utilizing emotion and expression. This is just another reason why he wears the label of a social outcast. He is often found sketching subjects in the park, but does not often approach people for permission or conversation. Due to his private nature, people assume things about him and tend to gossip erroneously about his life. Seurat is not affected by their gossip and chooses to ignore it and not correct it.

Everything in Seurat’s life is used in a strictly utilitarian way. He is a many of little frills, though is a very expressive artist. He sees people, not as relationships, but as subjects for his work. Landscapes are broken down into geometric patterns and relationships. In his mind, art is science and science is life, therefore, art is life.

His relationship with Jules is one that goes back years. It is obvious that they went to school together and have known each other for a long time. George is the superior artist, but never played the social games that Jules succeeds in. Therefore, George must use Jules and a conduit to the rest of the art community. He wants Jules to understand his theories and help bring them to the forefront, but Jules is not willing to
stake his social status and notoriety on George’s controversial hypotheses. Theirs is a relationship that is growing thin as they keep taking steps away from each other in different artistic directions.

The best relationship that George has that shows the most of his human, compassionate side is the relationship he has with the Old Lady, his mother. It is clear that his mother fostered George’s artistic side as a child. She was responsible for most of his upbringing and care as he grew up. Now that she is older, the roles have reversed and she has taken the position of child and George the position of caregiver. Her mind and eyesight are slipping and because of that, the connection to George’s art becomes extremely urgent. He must make her see his work as the masterpiece and culmination of his life’s work. His strivings must not be made in vain. He must prove, to the Old Lady more than anyone else, that he has worth as an artist, theorist, and ultimately, as a human being. The Old Lady serves as his definitive guide and judge through his artistic journey.

George’s relationship to Dot, being the central relationship of the story, is by far the most complex. She serves many different needs for him. She is his finest model, his greatest frustration, his sexual outlet, his mirror to his soul, and his true love. George wants to give Dot everything she wants, be he truly is incapable of doing so. He emotionally and physically knows exactly what she wants, but something deep within him cannot give her what she needs. He is selfish and must feel that his own needs are met before he can give to others, especially Dot. His own needs are insatiable and consequently no one else’s needs can ever be met.

George sees in Dot everything that a “normal” person could have. She is his opportunity, but he places his work above all things, even himself, so his opportunity is
lost. Because he cannot take this opportunity, she becomes a reminder of his lost chances, so he must push her away. He truly loves her, but since he does not know how, so he uses his art to be his outlet to honor her. She exalted in his art, but he cannot give her the same position in his social life. Although, it must be noted, that Seurat does feel that art is life, so in his mind, she is exalted in all forms of his life. He does realize that Dot does not see it that way, but he wishes that she could. Art is the only thing that has never betrayed him, so that is where he run to retreat and not into the arms of Dot.

While George does interact with some others on interesting levels (finding a fellow social outcast in the Boatman), there are no other significant relationships in George’s life. The rest of the world is a subject for his sketchbook. Once he has sketched someone or something, he is in control. If he must interact with people outside of his art, he is out of control, so his social awkwardness and phobias are exposed.

Overall, George is a passionate and intense man who gives to the world his gift of art. Not everyone during his time is ready to receive that gift, but his art does stand the test of time and his gift is continued to be received well past his death. His secretive nature makes him hard to understand or relate to, but when he does reveal his more human side of his personality, everything becomes crystal clear as to why he is the way he is.

The Act II character of George gives the actor a little more artistic freedom because he is not based on any actual person. This character, though confined by the given circumstances, is open to more possibilities of interpretation than Seurat. The major part of the character will be created by the actor. Act II must also be analyzed and
broken down into acting beats and intentions. Table 2 illustrates the active verbs assigned to the beats that involve George.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>for presentation</th>
<th>to cover</th>
<th>to continue</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to inform</td>
<td>to prepare</td>
<td>to impress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to build confidence</td>
<td>to try to forget</td>
<td>to maintain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to butter up</td>
<td>to set limits</td>
<td>to express frustration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to recover</td>
<td>to placate</td>
<td>to justify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to put at ease</td>
<td>to grab</td>
<td>to release</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to schmooze</td>
<td>to smack</td>
<td>to express futileness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to connect</td>
<td>to correct</td>
<td>to suck up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to hide feelings</td>
<td>to stand up</td>
<td>to fume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get swept up</td>
<td>to focus</td>
<td>to intensify</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to tense</td>
<td>to guilt</td>
<td>to manipulate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to mother</td>
<td>to put up walls</td>
<td>to get caught up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to try</td>
<td>to feel connection</td>
<td>to hold at arms length</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to jab</td>
<td>to justify</td>
<td>to express grief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to dismiss</td>
<td>to find truth</td>
<td>to explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to lament</td>
<td>to express fear</td>
<td>to fear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to apologize</td>
<td>to frustrate</td>
<td>to admit mortality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to give up</td>
<td>to find out what’s going on</td>
<td>to question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to pout</td>
<td>to learn</td>
<td>to admit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be inspired</td>
<td>to rejoice</td>
<td>to relearn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to clarify</td>
<td>to feel inspired</td>
<td>to dream</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While both George and Seurat are artists, George stands in stark contrast to Seurat. He lives in the fast-paced world of the 1980’s. Personal image is far more important to George than the actual art product. George needs to make sure that his image is sleek and appealing so that people will fund his art and his lifestyle. Unlike Seurat, who came from a wealthy family, George must sign on backers to fund his art. He does not have the same freedom to create art that Seurat had. Due to George’s monetary needs, his mind is constantly on raising money and not on creating imaginative and inspired art.

George is clean, groomed, and trendy. He wears fashionable clothes and tends to his image more than he does his art. His true art is his ability to work a room and schmooze with the wealth and the art cognoscenti. He knows what each person wants or needs to hear in order to keep people on his good side. He charms people to get what he wants, be it money, notoriety, or positive critical response.

While George seems to be socially successful, his personal life is suffering. His been married and divorced, his parents are not a part of his life (either through death or estrangement), and his friends and associates are only on a surface level. The only person who wants any real connection with him is his grandmother, Marie. George has a tendency to push her away though because she is always pushing the idea that he is Seurat’s great-grandson.

Marie is trying to give him a connection to his heritage because he has no real connection to anything. George is lost in a world of hype and superlatives. He has everything that society calls success, but he is not fulfilled emotionally or spiritually. He
needs direction and guidance, but he turns away from anyone’s attempt to give it to him. He feels he must find his way on his own.

It is clear that George loves Marie. He cares for her, but he also uses her. While he does not quite completely buy-in to her stories of the Seurat lineage, he is not above using the possible connection and heritage to promote his art and use Marie as a publicity stunt. Joanne Gordon illustrates this difference between the main men and women in the show in her book *Art Isn’t Easy*.

Dot and Marie are far more warm, sensual, compassionate, and instinctive than the two Georges, who are seen as fanatical, intellectual, and creative. The women are the passive source, the men the active shapers. Marie has given George all she can. She has tried to teach him to love and to connect to his heritage, his “family tree.” (293)

It is only after Marie’s death and traveling to the Island of La Grande Jatte that George begins to feel the connection of which Marie would speak. Once Dot appears to him with the other subjects of the painting, George sees the possibilities that are before him for his life and his art. These possibilities were always there, but his eyes were never open to them. In his heritage George finds a potential artistic vision. It is important to note that George does not receive inspiration to create, but the possibility to do so. Just as Seurat at the top of the show, George finds his life to be a white, blank page or canvas, on which he can create anything. Nothing is impossible. The world is open to him. It is at this moment that George realizes his faults, accepts them, and decides that it is time for him to take the next step on his own. He is a man full of promise, initiative, and hope. With his head firmly held high, he is ready to face his future.

The appearance of Dot and her addressing him as Seurat creates an interesting character development. While Seurat is dead and gone, George corrects his mistakes for
him and tells Dot what she needs to hear. By Dot and George coming to a common understanding, Seurat’s journey is complete while George is just starting his.

Both men are complex and detail oriented and the actor playing them must infuse them with as much of both qualities as possible. Both of them are men with different qualities, but the same goal: connection.

**Director’s Concept**

When asked, after the show closed, about his concept for the production, director John Bell replied:

From the beginning, I knew the piece was about the struggles of the artistic quest. And I knew the piece would pose three major challenges:

1. Getting the story, the characters' struggles (of said quest) out to the audience with clarity and impact. Since such a struggle is most often internalized, this was no easy task. Ultimately, if I succeeded, it was by encouraging and goading the lead actors to move their work into riskier and more emotionally intense places. I do think we achieved that.

2. Taking Lapine and Sondheim's three-generation spanning story, told in such an unconventional structure, and I tried to accentuate its traditional structure as much as possible. If I succeeded at this, it was in shaping each scene with a clear arc and, most importantly, a strong a sense of scene punctuation (acting, lighting and music) as possible.

3. How to tell a musical story conceived for a proscenium stage on a thrust stage. In my mind the way to do this was to use the projections (fragments of the painting) as pieces of George's ownership of all events/scenes in Act One. This allowed us to approach the visual world of the production more suggestively and helped break me free of the need to recreate the literal painting on stage and allowed me to work the blocking in a more three-dimensional way. I think this worked, mostly. And for the Act One finale, it paid off tremendously.

I believe that we came very close, if not completely, to attaining his goals. Each show presents its own challenges and *Sunday* is no exception. The artistic quest was highlighted and the story was told in a clear and straightforward manner.
CHAPTER 5 – DEFINING A CHARACTER THROUGH VOICE QUALITY

Introduction

Seurat was a man in search of a scientific approach to art. He hypothesized that there was a quantifiable and reliable technique to the fine arts that could, by using logic, generate an emotional response for both creator and spectators. Pointillism is the technique he ultimately perfected and championed. He studied those who experimented with color before him and tried to create similar reactions. One such painter was Delacroix. Signac, a close friend of Seurat and supporter of his technique, wrote in *D’Eugene Delacroix au Néo-impressionnisme* of Delacroix’s influence on Seurat’s work.

[Delacroix] proved the advantages of an informed technique, that logic and method, far from limiting the passion of the painter, strengthen it . . . He demonstrates how inferior a dull and uniform coloration is to the tones produced by the vibrations produced by the combination of diverse elements . . . He pointed out the moral influence that color adds to the effect of a painting; he introduced them to the aesthetic language of tones and hues. He incited them to dare everything, never to fear that their harmonies might be too brightly colored. (41)

Seurat took bits and pieces of other artists’ work to inform and create his own. Many artists embraced Seurat’s theories and subsequently used bits and pieces of his work in their own.

While Seurat developed his theories, he likened the aesthetics of the painting world to the aesthetics of music and the harmonies it creates. He tried to apply the fixed laws of music to art. He thought that one media’s aesthetic values could be used to help define another’s. This author intends to show that two different worlds can combine in a meaningful aesthetic way, twice over. The first pair is the pair with which Seurat
worked: art and science. The second pair is unique to this thesis: The Estill Model and theatre.

**Delsarte**

This thesis does not represent the first attempt to try to find commonality between science and theatre. François Alexandre Nicolas Chéri Delsarte was a French musician and actor in Paris during the mid-1800s. He was concerned with and despondent over the state of acting during his time. To Delsarte, the acting was empty, arbitrary, and overly posed. After many hours of observation of humans, he created what he called the Science of Applied Aesthetics, an acting style that attempted to connect the inner emotional experience of the actor with a systematized set of gestures and movements based upon his own observations of human interaction. In an address before the Philotechnic Society of Paris, Delsarte spoke of the connection of science and art. “Science is the possession of a criterion of examination against which no fact protests. Art is the generalization and application of it” (Stebbins 64).

He thought that each emotion could be connected to the body through a prescribed set gestures to give the actor a more honest emotional response, both mentally and physically. The system consisted of a thorough examination of voice, breath, movement dynamics, encompassing all of the expressive elements of the human body. His approach was through the trinity of man: soul, life, and mind.
Other trinities that Delsarte observed appear in the table below. (Table 3)

Table 3: Delsarte's Trinities, (Ruyter 77-78)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Excentric</th>
<th>Normal</th>
<th>Concentric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>life</td>
<td>soul</td>
<td>mind</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>physical</td>
<td>moral</td>
<td>mental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>vital</td>
<td>spiritual</td>
<td>intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>voice</td>
<td>gesture</td>
<td>speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>feeling</td>
<td>loving</td>
<td>thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do</td>
<td>to be</td>
<td>to know</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limbs</td>
<td>trunk</td>
<td>head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lower</td>
<td>middle</td>
<td>upper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>front</td>
<td>side</td>
<td>back</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>opposition</td>
<td>succession</td>
<td>parallelism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beauty</td>
<td>goodness</td>
<td>truth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

He believed most options for acting came in threes and every response, or essence, was either mental, vital, or moral. Additionally, he felt each action of parts of the body could be represented as either normal, concentric, or excentric. Based on these
conclusions, most of his charts can be illustrated in a three-by-three square with the
different permutations represented. (Table 4)

Table 4: Delsarte System’s Basic Criterion Chart, (Stebbins 115)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Essence</th>
<th>Essence</th>
<th>Essence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mento-mental</td>
<td>Moro-mental</td>
<td>Vito-mental</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentro-concentric</td>
<td>Normo-concentric</td>
<td>Excentro-concentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essence</td>
<td>Essence</td>
<td>Essence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mento-moral</td>
<td>Moro-moral</td>
<td>Vito-moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentro-normal</td>
<td>Normo-normal</td>
<td>Excentro-normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Essence</td>
<td>Essence</td>
<td>Essence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mento-vital</td>
<td>Moro-vital</td>
<td>Vito-vital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Action</td>
<td>Action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concentro-excentric</td>
<td>Normo-excentric</td>
<td>Excentro-excentric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Delsarte would then look at each part of the body and apply it to his chart. The
following figures are a few examples of Delsarte’s observations.
C R I T E R I O N O F T H E E Y E S.

SPECIES.  

1  

1-II. Ecc.-conc.  

Firmness.  

Stupor.  

1-I. Ecc.-exc.  

Astonishment.  

GENUS.

2  

2-II. Conc.-conc.  

Contention of mind.  

Grief.  

2-I. Conc.-ecc.  

Disdain.  

III  

3-II. Norm.-conc.  

Bad humor.  

Passiveness.  

3-I. Norm.-ecc.  

Figure 75: Delsarte's Criterion of the Eyes
Figure 76: Delsarte's Criterion of the Face
**Criterion of the Profile of the Lips.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GENUS</th>
<th>I</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 77: Delsarte's Criterion of the Profile of the Lips**
Delsarte created a chart of symbolic colors, which bears an uncanny resemblance to Seurat’s notions of color, as mentioned in Chapter 2. (Table 5)

Table 5: Delsarte's Chart of Symbolic Colors, (Stebbins 334)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>mento-mental</th>
<th>moro-mental</th>
<th>vito-mental</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>plus</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yellow =</td>
<td>yellow =</td>
<td>yellow =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>orange</td>
<td>green (light)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concentro-concentric</td>
<td>normo-concentric</td>
<td>excentro-concentric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mento-moral</td>
<td>moro-moral</td>
<td>vito-moral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>red =</td>
<td>red =</td>
<td>red =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scarlet</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>purple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concentro-normal</td>
<td>normo-normal</td>
<td>excentro-normal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mento-vital</td>
<td>moro-vital</td>
<td>vito-vital</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yellow</td>
<td>red</td>
<td>blue</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in</td>
<td>in</td>
<td>plus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blue =</td>
<td>blue =</td>
<td>blue =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>green (dark)</td>
<td>violet</td>
<td>indigo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>concentro-excentric</td>
<td>normo-excentric</td>
<td>excentro-excentric</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Red = Love; Yellow = Intelligence; Blue = Power.

Delsarte never wrote a book about his theories, nor did his protégé, Steel MacKaye. The first book to be published about the Delsarte system, *The Delsarte System of Expression*, by Geneive Stebbins (a student of MacKaye’s) in 1885, was a significant success. So popular was the system that many teachers began instructing students without a full understanding of or ability to communicate the emotional connections behind the gestures. The result was that the method devolved into melodramatic posing, the exact opposite of what Delsarte intended. A happy accident of this misinterpretation of the Delsarte system is evident in the dance world. In America, erroneous applications of Delsarte’s system (i.e. Delsarte Gymnastics), inspired modern dancers such as Isadora
Duncan and Ruth St. Denis. Rudolph Laban and F.M. Alexander also studied and taught Delsarte’s system enroute to their own methods.

Application of Delsarte’s system, especially when used improperly, seemed to limit the actor, acting choices, and true, “in the moment” emotional responses. The merger of EVTST™ and theatre affords new possibilities to the actor, interpretations, acting choices and emotional responses.

The Voice and the Actor

It is generally agreed that the voice is one of the most powerful tools in the actor’s repertoire. It can be one’s best friend or one’s worst enemy. It becomes the actor’s responsibility to know his or her voice and apply it in such a way that it informs the character and aids in the storytelling. The physical nature of a person cannot be easily changed, but the voice is extremely dynamic and flexible (when trained and exercised properly). An audience’s perception of a character can be established or altered the moment that one opens one’s mouth. Imagine a large, muscle-bound, masculine man with torn clothes, a bloody lip, and glistening with sweat. An audience member will have a certain expectation of this character by visual information alone. Now imagine that this same character speaks his first line in a squeaky, feminine, breathy, quiet voice. All of that visual information contradicts this new aural information. The voice did not match the physical appearance, so the audience is confused and may well accept the aural information over the visual, or vice versa.

Voice quality can inform a character’s age, location, background, socioeconomic level, genre of story, intelligence, nationality, class, culture level, gender, disposition, interest, and promiscuity, to name a few characteristic features. The table lists a few
more of the many character manifestations that can be informed by perceptions of vocal qualities. (Table 6)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Honest</th>
<th>Light-hearted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leader</td>
<td>Expert</td>
<td>Brave</td>
<td>Conceited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mischievous</td>
<td>Demanding</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
<td>Keen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bright</td>
<td>Interest</td>
<td>Pain</td>
<td>Courageous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Serious</td>
<td>Funny</td>
<td>Humorous</td>
<td>Sad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor</td>
<td>Rich</td>
<td>Tall</td>
<td>Dark</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Humble</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Short</td>
<td>Adventurous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hard-working</td>
<td>Timid</td>
<td>Shy</td>
<td>Bold</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daring</td>
<td>Dainty</td>
<td>Happy</td>
<td>Disagreeable</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simple</td>
<td>Fancy</td>
<td>Plain</td>
<td>Excited</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Studious</td>
<td>Inventive</td>
<td>Creative</td>
<td>Thrilling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Intelligent</td>
<td>Compassionate</td>
<td>Gentle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Proud</td>
<td>Wild</td>
<td>Messy</td>
<td>Neat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joyful</td>
<td>Strong</td>
<td>Light</td>
<td>Handsome</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pretty</td>
<td>Ugly</td>
<td>Selfish</td>
<td>Unselfish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-confident</td>
<td>Respectful</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
<td>Imaginative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Busy</td>
<td>Patriotic</td>
<td>Fun-loving</td>
<td>Popular</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Responsible</td>
<td>Lazy</td>
<td>Dreamer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helpful</td>
<td>Simple-minded</td>
<td>Pitiful</td>
<td>Cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lovable</td>
<td>Prim</td>
<td>Proper</td>
<td>Ambitious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Able</td>
<td>Quiet</td>
<td>Curious</td>
<td>Reserved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pleasing</td>
<td>Bossy</td>
<td>Witty</td>
<td>Fighter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tireless</td>
<td>Energetic</td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
<td>Smart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impulsive</td>
<td>Loyal</td>
<td>Active</td>
<td>Confused</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>Immaculate</td>
<td>Adventurous</td>
<td>Conscientious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faithful</td>
<td>Immature</td>
<td>Affable</td>
<td>Considerate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fanciful</td>
<td>Impartial</td>
<td>Affected</td>
<td>Fearless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impatient</td>
<td>Impolite</td>
<td>Fidgety</td>
<td>Courageous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affectionate</td>
<td>Afraid</td>
<td>Cowardly</td>
<td>Fierce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambitious</td>
<td>Crafty</td>
<td>Finicky</td>
<td>Impulsive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amiable</td>
<td>Critical</td>
<td>Inactive</td>
<td>Foolish</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Angry</td>
<td>Formal</td>
<td>Cross</td>
<td>Independent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cruel</td>
<td>Animated</td>
<td>Fortunate</td>
<td>Industrious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inimiable</td>
<td>Frank</td>
<td>Cultured</td>
<td>Annoyed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Innocent</td>
<td>Curious</td>
<td>Friendly</td>
<td>Anxious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reliable</td>
<td>Thoughtless</td>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>Tolerant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trustworthy</td>
<td>Pensive</td>
<td>Rowdy</td>
<td>Stubborn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saucy</td>
<td>Promiscuous</td>
<td>Stupid</td>
<td>Vivacious</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rash</td>
<td>Sincere</td>
<td>Thoughtful</td>
<td>Sly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Noisy</td>
<td>Obnoxious</td>
<td>Grouchy</td>
<td>Tired</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flirty</td>
<td>Young</td>
<td>Old</td>
<td>Cheerful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brilliant</td>
<td>Intense</td>
<td>Zany</td>
<td>Ill-bread</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upset</td>
<td>Shrewd</td>
<td>Content</td>
<td>Whimsical</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The preceding list is by no means all-inclusive. There are an infinite number of character traits and qualities that can be identified and voice qualities can aid in informing all of them.

In addition to defining character traits and qualities, voice quality can aid in intensify dramatic action, amount of change, amount of interest, and intentions. Voice quality can aid in defining the rise, fall, climax, and denouement of both individual characters and the overall dramatic action. The voice is also a powerful tool in revealing the amount of change within a character. The meek can become powerful. The powerful can become meek. Change and, by association, conflict (effects of the change or resistance to the change), makes a character and story interesting. The voice can be a device that demonstrates the speed and amount of change. As to amount of interest, the voice quality can enhance how much the character cares. From boredom to concern to any other marked change, voice variables represent the amount of interest a character contains within specific moments. Perhaps most importantly, the voice is central to each acting intention. If an actor’s voice quality does not support his or her intentions, he or she sends a mixed message to the audience, obscuring the story and confusing the objective.

EVTS™ offers the actor clear options that can be applied quickly and accurately to intentions. Each of the six voice qualities and permutations of each can relate to specific intentions and character qualities. As an actor approaches a role, specific choices that he or she makes can create a more credible character for an audience. The more
specific the choices, the more dynamic and detailed the character and the character’s reality. One approach to merging EVTSTM and acting follows.

**Creating a Character with EVTSTM**

It is important to note that EVTSTM is applicable to both the singing and speaking voice. The speaking voice is just as malleable as the singing voice and the voice should be approached as a total instrument. Informed voice use should be employed whether singing or speaking.

When approaching a role with EVTSTM in mind, the first thing that must be assessed is the actor’s vocal attractor state. It is not unlike the default state in a computer. Each person’s attractor state is different by virtue of environment or training. That is how we account for the different timbres, sounds, and dynamics of the voice. This attractor is the baseline from which any changes and effort are perceived and measured. A person with a naturally bright voice may find it much easier to play a character with a squeaky rather than deep voice. On the other hand, a person with a deep voice may find it much easier to play a character with an authoritative voice than someone with a naturally bright voice.

After the actor’s physical and vocal attractor states have been identified, the character’s attractor states must be established. The character’s attractor state may be drastically different from the actor’s. The more different the character’s attractor state from the actor’s, the more the actor must work at creating a corresponding voice for the character. Creating a clearly defined character is partially the responsibility of the director and his or her casting choices. The most acclaimed performances come from actors who have some kind of mental, physical, or vocal connection to the character. In
best-case scenarios, an actor will be connected on all three levels, and be that much more likely to be cast. That does not always occur, so that is when an actor must rely on training and vocal flexibility. EVTS™ guides an actor to finding and creating a profound connection to the vocal life of a character.

Speech Quality is the quality that is most commonly used by actors to create their characters because it is generally closest to the actor’s attractor state. This will aid the actor in creating a character with the most believable sound, who is less of a caricature. It should not be assumed, however, that Speech Quality is the character’s attractor state. Once the character’s attractor state is established, all emotional changes or new character traits that occur throughout the dramatic action are then measured from the character’s baseline.

Speech Quality can be applied to acting beats where the character is, for the most part, neutral, assuming the character’s attractor state is based in Speech Quality. Speech Quality is generally perceived as “calming,” “soothing,” and “effortless.” Again, it should be noted that this is measured in terms of the actor’s attractor state and Speech Quality and not the character’s. In singing, this quality may be used during text that is more expositional, much like recitative, and during passages that are conversational in nature. In speech, this quality can be used to ground the character in reality and truth. It is generally the least caricature-esque quality and would most often be used in the worlds of Naturalism and Realism. This is not to say that it cannot be used in other theatrical forms. Speech Quality may be used in many different genres, but it is the most like the general population speaks and sings and is the least amount in terms of heightened theatricality and perceived laryngeal effort.
Likewise, Falsetto Quality seems not to take much effort to produce. Falsetto Quality carries with it the characteristics of being “lighter” and “softer” than the other qualities and is perceived as “feminine” and “passive.” It is not a quality that should be used for a character who possesses a strong-willed personality and boisterous spirit. A character whose attractor state is Falsetto Quality might be described as “mousy,” “cowardly,” or “shy.” These suggestions are general, but they can help define a character in the eyes of the director and audience. While these may appear to be surface-level applications, the deliberation that goes into choosing these qualities is not. A great deal of character analysis must be done to find the appropriate corresponding voice quality. Falsetto Quality can also be used to great effect during moments of great emotional stress. If something is difficult for the character to admit, or relive on stage, Falsetto Quality could be the best choice for an emotionally charged moment or a very introspective moment.

Cry/Sob Quality has vocal substance than Falsetto Quality and basically describes itself when it comes to character. The type of character that would use this quality would be generally sad or depressed. Whiny might also be a word that describes a character whose attractor state is Cry/Sob. This quality is not used typically as a character’s attractor state, but more to delineate emotional thrust or change. This quality does not necessarily have to be used when a character is crying, but can be used to express mourning, depression, pain, or fear.

Twang Quality carries with it interesting character aspects. With the bright nature of this quality, it tends to be used by actors more in character roles than in leading roles. Twang Quality is a loud, piercing sound. The kind of characters that use this quality are
the kind that feel the need to be heard. Both urbanites and country dwellers could use this quality. The urbanite needs to be heard over the hustle and bustle and the country character may need to communicate orally over long distances. Characters that come from big families might also use this quality in order to be heard over siblings. A stereotypical character that could use this quality is the nerd. Twang intensifies the effect of sinus problems that a nerd generally has. More often than not, twang should not be used exclusively when creating a character. It can allow the character to become a caricature very quickly. When mixed in with other qualities, twang (AES narrowing) can be very effective to add the right amount of information to create a very well-rounded character.

Belt Quality, much like Twang Quality, is a very loud quality. It is considered to be the loudest voice quality due to its acoustic properties and can be very exciting for an audience due to the heightened emotional state of characters that use it. Belt Quality is heard more often in the singing voice than the speaking voice because in the speaking voice, where it perceived as shouting. Belt Quality is the best option when a character needs to shout, but it should be used in moderation. A character that would utilize this quality exclusively is perceived as “boisterous,” “extroverted,” and “wanting to be the center of attention.” This character would be noticed.

The sixth voice quality defined in EVTSTM is Opera Quality. Opera Quality could be considered the most “refined” quality. Due to its low laryngeal position, this quality has a certain antiquated feel to it. It sounds “deeper,” “darker,” and “masculine.” Women can easily use this quality within their range and sound quite feminine, but the low larynx can give the female voice a very mature sound. As with Belt, Opera Quality
is utilized more in singing than speaking due to the heightened emotional state that it needs to sound natural. This quality’s name is obviously genre specific, but it is not limited to operas. It can easily be applied to characters in all genres of theatre, but it may not be as effective if the character does not warrant it.

Table 7: Perceptions of Voice Quality Related to Character

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Voice Quality</th>
<th>Speech Quality</th>
<th>Falsetto Quality</th>
<th>Cry/Sob Quality</th>
<th>Twang Quality</th>
<th>Belt Quality</th>
<th>Opera Quality</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Communicative, Clear, “Normal”</td>
<td>Child-like, Sickly, Sinister, Vamp, Secretive</td>
<td></td>
<td>Pointed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each voice quality exists in a pure form, but different aspects of other qualities can be added to create permutations. As with any good work of art, there is a need for layers, textures, and mixing. The best represented characters are characters that are multifaceted and diverse. The voice qualities an actor employs to represent a character should reflect this multifaceted, diverse composition. At certain times, characters may be very animated, but a change may occur that causes them to become very subservient. Think of classroom of children that are not being watched by a teacher when suddenly the teacher appears. The moment and effect of the change is compelling to see on stage. A change in voice quality should aid in demonstrating this change. A character should not keep the same voice quality throughout an entire production. That character would
be static and boring. The character, and in turn, the voice, should be dynamic and ever changing depending on the set of circumstances the character is dealing with at any given moment.

When it seems that adding or changing voice qualities is too extreme for the dramatic moments of a production, there are other options. One of the first options is using subtle permutations. The more intense the situation, the more drastic the change may be. When the situation only calls for a small change, either greater or lesser, it could be represented via dynamics, diction, or support/anchoring. Another option is false vocal fold constriction, or laryngeal effort. This option is potentially traumatic to the true vocal folds and, as such should be used only judiciously. The right amount of false vocal fold constriction can give some climactic and poignant moments the right touch. It can speak volumes to the audience, so it can be very addictive to an actor. The actor’s training should come into play at times like that to make sure the vocal instrument is being handled with respect and reverence. An actor would be wise to use a Constriction Scale, much like the Effort Scale described in Chapter 2, to measure and control the amount of constriction. A scale of zero to five is suggested. One is the minimum amount of constriction and five is the maximum constriction. No constriction whatsoever at the level of the false vocal folds is represented by zero.

Finding the “Right” Vocal Quality

While each quality carries with it certain characteristics that may be of use to the actor, there is never an absolute “right” or “wrong” when it comes to creating a character’s voice. Some actors may have drastically different vocal concepts for the same role. Many times directors have significantly differing ideas than the actor and
collaboration must occur. This collaboration will be the happy medium that both director and actor can agree upon. The character traits that voice qualities seem to indicate may be the starting point at which a specific character can be found that pleases all parties involved.

One approach to determining the vocal quality or qualities appropriate to the character is to answer a character survey and analyze the answers with voice quality in mind. Questions and their answers are kept simple so clarity may guide the vocal quality choices. Some possible questions include:

**What is my gender?**

Generally, a male is going to have a lower voice than a female. This may not be true in all circumstances, especially pre-pubescence, but overall, it can be assumed that the masculine voice is lower than the feminine. Culturally, men will tend to have a lower laryngeal position than a women and a thicker vocal fold mass. Women will tend to have a higher laryngeal position and thinner vocal fold mass.

**How old am I?**

As another general rule, the younger a character is, the higher the laryngeal position. As a character ages, the voice becomes deeper, or the larynx lowers, to show maturity. Falsetto Quality, along with higher pitch, can be used on the younger side of the age spectrum while Speech Quality, along with lower pitch, can be used at the older end. As a character becomes extremely old, Falsetto Quality may become appropriate again to represent frailty, especially with the addition of slack vocal fold onsets, which does not harm the voice, to give the appearance of vocal fry. Mid-age ranges might be
represented by Speech Quality with aspects of Twang, Belt, or Opera to show vibrancy and health.

**In what time period do I live?**

This question becomes important in terms of style. The way the general population speaks in 2007 is different from the way it spoke in 1907 or 1807. It can be assumed that the general population was more formal in terms of speech the further back in time we look. Most of what we assume about the way people in the past spoke is found in recording or performances that represent that time period. We have no way of actually knowing what society spoke like hundreds of years ago, but we can make educated guesses. One thing that can be known for certain is today’s society is far less formal in terms of speech. To represent this formal attitude towards language, the voice quality may be Speech Quality with aspects of Opera. Characters in contemporary times will have far more Twang Quality because there is more noise with which the voice must compete. Twang Quality allows the speaker to be heard more clearly.

**Where do I live?**

This question can be important in terms of population as well as terrain. People who live in large urban areas generally display Twang and Belt Qualities in their voices, in order to be heard over the hustle and bustle of the city around them. Population studies reveal that those who live in rural areas also use a good amount of Twang and Belt in their speaking voices, not to be heard over the hustle and bustle, but to be heard over large expanses of land, as if calling from the house to the barn. Those who live in very
quiet suburban areas may have more Falsetto Quality to their voice since it may not take as much sound to be heard.

**Where did I grow up?**

Even if the character no longer lives in the area he or she grew up in which he or she grew up, there may be traces (sometimes subtle, but sometimes none too subtle) from the environment in which he or she learned to speak. The same generalities might be assumed in the question “Where do I live?,” but not to the same extent, unless the character still lives in the area in which he or she grew up.

**What is my level of education?**

Often overlooked by actors, level of education can have a significant effect on voice quality. In males, a stereotypical, less educated a character, like the “dumb hick,” might have a lower laryngeal position, high amount of twang, and lower pitch. In females, a less educated the character, like the “bimbo,” might have a higher laryngeal position, a high amount of twang, and high pitch. On the spectrum of education, the more educated a character becomes the closer to an Opera Quality the character may use, along with strong diction and strong presence. The most “educated” sounding quality is Opera Quality. The danger of using a consistent, unvarying Opera Quality is the character can easily sound pompous. Speech Quality colored with some aspects of Opera Quality is generally the best choice for an educated, but not necessarily pompous, character.
What is my nationality?

The nationality of a character is an important factor in informing the character’s voice, not only in terms of an accent or dialect, but in the kind of vocal quality applied by the actor. In general terms, natives of Eastern European countries may have a lower, more “guttural” sound than those of Western European countries. Some aspects of Sob Quality added to Speech will give the actor this lower laryngeal position, thinner folds, and wider vocal tract needed to create this throatier sound. Voice qualities based on nationality can vary greatly depending on the country origin. It is wise for an actor to find a recording of the language spoken in the specific country to analyze the voice quality traits that could be used. A great example of this is the French language. This language, in particular, may be nasal due to the nasality of the vowels of the language. If the character is a second-generation American with, say, German-speaking parents, the character’s vocal quality will not be as pronounced in the character as the character’s parents due to assimilation of culture.

What is my socioeconomic status?

Socioeconomic status may have an influence on vocal quality. Someone of a lower socioeconomic status will not have as “refined” a voice quality as someone of a higher status. This refinement could be represented by Speech with aspects of Falsetto and Cry/Sob Qualities. Lower amounts of refinement could be represented by Speech with aspects of Twang and Cry/Sob Qualities. Socioeconomic status for the actor is completely subjective in terms of the character since it can easily change throughout the course of a production, so one should be cautious in letting this be a deciding factor in
voice quality. One must ask how important this status is to the character to find how much this might affect voice quality.

**What is the size of my family?**

The size of the family can make a large difference in the vocal qualities chosen by the actor for the character. In general, large families create a greater amount of noise, so one must speak louder in order to be heard. Voice qualities that include thick vocal fold mass will allow the actor to use a louder voice. Twang Quality will also create a louder, more “pointed,” or “piercing” voice for the character. If the family all spoke at the same time, the level of this thick vocal fold mass and Twang Quality may be more severe. The inverse is also true. If a character comes from a small family that speaks only one at a time, then the voice quality is going to be much softer (unless he or she was spoiled – this may influence the quality to be more of a Twang or Sob Quality). Speech Quality with stiff fold mass may fit the bill for a character from a small family. Additionally, the status one holds within the family unit can affect voice quality. If a character is the older brother who is in charge of the household, then the voice will be more authoritative, as in Belt or Opera Qualities. If a character is the youngest member of the household who is used to taking and following orders, the voice quality may be Falsetto, even though the character may come from a large family.

**What is my occupation?**

Two important factors about a character’s occupation that affect vocal qualities are environment and status. The environment of a character’s occupation can range from a quiet office to a noisy factory floor. A character must be heard, even over a large
amount of noise. The more a character has to contend with while speaking, the thicker
the vocal fold mass and the greater use of twang. This may also be the voice quality used
if the character must speak to large groups of people as part of his or her job. The head
of a major corporation is going to speak (in most cases) with more authority than the
mailroom worker. Belt and Opera Qualities can help characters achieve the sound of
authority in their voice. Status, however, is a relative term. A character may assume a
position of authority in the mailroom, but when his or her superior appears for a visit, the
vocal quality may be altered to appear a little more subservient.

How is my health?

On a scale from healthy to death, there are many levels of health or illness along
the spectrum. Armed with this criteria, an actor must make an informed decision on how
health affects the character’s voice quality. If a character is weak and frail, Falsetto
Quality, mixed with slack vocal fold onsets may create the desired sound. If the
character is healthy and vibrant, then Speech Quality may be all the character needs to
convey this information to the audience. A certain amount of healthy constriction may be
used to show the degree of health or illness. The illness may cause a great deal of pain or
severe vocal symptoms. In terms of vocal pathology, an actor must recreate the
symptoms without actually causing the damage those symptoms represent. Constriction
must be used sparingly and only at appropriate or climactic moments so vocal damage
and trauma does not occur.
**Am I shy or outgoing?**

As with degrees of health, there is a large spectrum between the introvert and the extrovert. The shy, mousy character may use a Speech Quality with more aspects of Falsetto than the confident, outgoing character that may use Speech Quality with aspects of Belt or Twang Quality, especially in terms of AES narrowing and thick vocal fold mass. An actor must decide where his or her character falls on this spectrum and adjust the voice accordingly. The director can be a valuable resource for feedback to find out whether or not the intended voice quality is conveying exactly what the actor intends.

**Are my mannerisms masculine or feminine?**

As discussed under gender, there is a certain set of vocal cues the audience expects to hear based on the sex of the character. Sometimes a character does not quite act in the way an audience expects. There may be a female character that acts extremely masculine, or vice versa. For the female character that acts masculine, a lower laryngeal position and thick vocal fold mass, as found in some permutations of Speech and Opera Qualities, may convey the right information. For a male character that acts feminine, a higher laryngeal position, thinner vocal fold mass, and higher pitch applied to Speech or Cry/Sob Quality may convey the correct message. If an actor does not want to change pitch, the breathiness of Falsetto may be the best option.

**What is my cultural level?**

It is generally agreed that the most highly cultural sounding voice quality is Opera Quality. It could also be said that the least cultural sounding voice quality is Twang Quality. These descriptions are very stereotypical and extremely generalized, but they do
convey a certain amount of cultural information. An actor must assess where the character falls on the cultural spectrum and choose a voice quality accordingly. The actor should be aware, though, that sometimes this character trait can be misleading. There may be a character that has a very Twang Quality based speaking voice due to growing up in, say, Kansas, but may have a very high cultural level, however, the enculturation process usually “equalizes” speech to closer to neutral.

**How promiscuous am I?**

Along with the level of promiscuity, the aggressiveness of said promiscuity must also be established. If a character is promiscuous and aggressive, he or she may use a thick vocal fold mass, glottal onsets, a narrow AES, and low laryngeal position (along with a sexual character intention) to create the desired “come hither” voice. If a character is promiscuous, but a little more aloof in the aggressiveness, then a thin vocal fold mass, aspirate onsets, a wide AES, and a mid to high laryngeal position (once again, along with a sexual character intention) may create the perfect “playing hard to get” voice. Lack of promiscuity may also have an effect on vocal quality. A character that is “prudish” might use a voice quality that is a blend of aspects of Speech and Twang Quality, depending on the aggressiveness of prudishness.

**What is my general disposition?**

A character that is generally happy might use Speech Quality throughout to convey this information. Cry/Sob and Falsetto Quality can be used by a character that is generally depressed, upset or tired most of the time. Belt, Opera, and Twang Quality can be used to show an angry disposition. The actor, in a collaboration with the director,
must assess the disposition and severity of disposition in order to determine a corresponding voice quality. While it may not be one of the primary factors that determines voice quality, it should definitely be considered to help color it.

**Do I have any great pains or stresses? If so, what are they?**

Pain and stress can affect voice quality and the amount of constriction found in the voice. If these stresses or pains are something that hurt a great deal, Cry/Sob Quality can be added along with slight amounts of vocal constriction to communicate this pain. Alternatively, a character might handle the pains or stresses by bottling it all up, which can be represented by adding either stiff vocal folds or a narrowed AES. Another character may lash out vocally as the pains or stresses affect him or her and Belt Quality may be entirely appropriate. Pain and stress are traits that should be embodied judiciously and with the approval of the director.

**Have I just discovered any important things?**

There are no established rules or guidelines for physical or vocal manifestation to follow when a character discovers important or new information. What is paramount to this discovery is change, and its effect on the character. He or she must react in some way that reveals its effect to the audience. The voice is a dynamic instrument and should be used just as much as the body to reveal information and character mindset. Depending on the degree of discovery, the change may be very subtle or profound.

**What genre is the play?**

Just as the actor must determine the time frame or period of the play, so too must he or she assess the play’s genre as it informs voice quality. Opera Quality is used more
in Opera and Operetta than in a contemporary musical. An Absurdist work may encourage the use of very different qualities depending on the needs and requirements of the script and score. The more Classical and antiquated the style of the script, the more an actor would be wise to use Opera Quality. Speech Quality is generally most appropriate and fitting for contemporary styles of theatre. It should be noted that this does not refer to the year the script or score was written, but in the intended style of the script and score. A director might opt to place a Classical-style show in a contemporary setting, so decisions about voice quality should reflect that adjustment. The actor must be aware of influences on the voice from the total production, not just in terms of character traits.

**Are there any other specific character traits that define me?**

This question can be posed to see if there are any important character traits that were not addressed in the preceding questions. Are there any hobbies that the character has that could affect the voice? Is the character a drug or alcohol user? Is the character allergic to anything? These are small but important questions that can be raised in a thorough analysis of the script and score. The script and score are an actor’s guide. What does a character reveal about himself or herself? What do other characters say about him or her? What do the stage directions imply about him or her? All of this information, coupled with close collaboration with the director, is vital in creating a well-rounded and honest character. The voice must reflect this analysis of a total character to create a broad palette of voice variables. An actor who recognizes the impact of real-life experience on voice quality can draw nearly limitless parallels to the vocal life of a character.
This is by no means a complete list of questions, but it is a definite starting point. If these questions are answered, an informed decision may be made in regard to the vocal qualities. After the questions are answered, an actor should remember that the more profound the life experience, the more weight it might have in determining voice quality.

**Translating into EVTS™**

A challenging aspect of creating a character using the EVTS™ is collaborating with directors and musical directors who are not familiar with the system. The savvy actor can learn to translate director feedback into EVTS™ vocabulary. Voice quality has been assessed using many descriptive terms. Table 8 represents just a few of the words that have been used to describe the voice.
Table 8: Word-Descriptors for Voice Quality

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>abrasive</th>
<th>affected</th>
<th>baby</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>bad</td>
<td>beautiful</td>
<td>bell-like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>blanched</td>
<td>bleaty</td>
<td>breathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>bright</td>
<td>brilliant</td>
<td>bubbly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>burnished</td>
<td>buzzy</td>
<td>cello-like</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>chesty</td>
<td>clanky</td>
<td>clear</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>coarse</td>
<td>confident</td>
<td>constricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cool</td>
<td>covered</td>
<td>crude</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>cutting</td>
<td>dark</td>
<td>deep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dead</td>
<td>dry</td>
<td>dull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>effeminate</td>
<td>effervescent</td>
<td>edgy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fearful</td>
<td>flat</td>
<td>feminine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fluttering</td>
<td>forced</td>
<td>glassy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>golden</td>
<td>good</td>
<td>gravelly</td>
</tr>
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<td>harmonious</td>
<td>harsh</td>
<td>heady</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heavy</td>
<td>high</td>
<td>hoarse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hollow</td>
<td>husky</td>
<td>immature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>insecure</td>
<td>intimidating</td>
<td>light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lovely</td>
<td>low</td>
<td>macho</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>masculine</td>
<td>mature</td>
<td>mellow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>melodious</td>
<td>metallic</td>
<td>monotone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>nasal</td>
<td>open</td>
<td>pointed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pinched</td>
<td>pingy</td>
<td>pleasing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>powerful</td>
<td>quivering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relaxed</td>
<td>resonant</td>
<td>rich</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ringing</td>
<td>rough</td>
<td>round</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>scratchy</td>
<td>sexy</td>
<td>shallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sharp</td>
<td>silken</td>
<td>silvery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smooth</td>
<td>sophisticated</td>
<td>stentorian</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strident</td>
<td>sultry</td>
<td>thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throaty</td>
<td>tight</td>
<td>timmid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tinted</td>
<td>velvety</td>
<td>warm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>waverer</td>
<td>wet</td>
<td>whining</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>whiskey</td>
<td>white</td>
<td>yodel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Perceptual terms that describe voice quality are subjective and, as such, exact meaning can vary from person to person. It is the actor’s responsibility to find the best quality or permutation that matches the director’s perception. Each descriptor carries with it a certain connotation that has a corresponding “recipe” in the voice. It can be a
process of guessing and checking, but once a voice quality has been found to satisfy the descriptor, it becomes a new baseline from which variations can be determined. For example, if a director asks an actor to make his or her voice more purple, the director does not actually mean the voice should represent the color, but rather the feeling the color engenders. To satisfy the request, the actor may analyze the color purple as “deep,” “dark” and “stately” and then translate those perceptual terms into physical reality. If the voice were to mirror those traits, a lower laryngeal position, thick vocal fold mass, a relaxed AES, and a tilted thyroid would create the appropriate vocal conditions.

Likewise, if the director were to ask for the voice to sound more yellow, the actor might analyze the color to be “bright” and “light.” A mid to high laryngeal position, thin vocal fold mass, and a narrowed AES might satisfy the request. It is important to collaborate about meanings and interpretations so that the communication from director to actor, and vice versa, is clear. It may not be necessary to speak to a director in EVTS™ terms if he or she is not familiar with the system. The actor who is well-trained in EVTS™ can bring specificity to the seeming vagueness of perceptual terms. When a director is satisfied and the “recipe” is determined, the results can be repeated consistently.

Justin Fischer, the music director for the UCF production, is not trained in EVTS™, but is aware of the messages conveyed via voice quality. I purposely asked him not to try to adapt and use EVTS™ terms, but rather stay true to his own directorial style so that I might be challenged to take his words and feedback and translate them into EVTS™. The actor/musical director collaboration was a success. For the most part, Mr. Fischer and I were musically on the same page when it came to musical and character interpretation. What was most compelling, in terms of this thesis, were those instances in
which we did not share the same interpretation and the true collaborative process was realized to its fullest potential.

Mr. Fischer and Mr. Bell both have a large and distinct lexicon. Their adjectives are never chosen casually and they seem to find the most appropriate word to describe a situation. I took note of some of the more colorful perceptual terms Mr. Fischer and Mr. Bell chose when referring to my voice. Some of their musical suggestions and their EVTS™ solution appear in the table below. (Table 9)

Table 9: Specific Vocal Notes and EVTS™ “Fixes”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocal Note</th>
<th>EVTS™ “Fix” Used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legity</td>
<td>Opera Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mezzo</td>
<td>Opera Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meaty</td>
<td>Thicker Vocal Fold Mass</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More Weight</td>
<td>Thicker Vocal Fold Mass/Lower Laryngeal Position/Opera Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuller</td>
<td>Thicker Vocal Fold Mass/Lower Laryngeal Position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocal Vomit</td>
<td>Speech Quality/Over-Articulated Diction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conversational</td>
<td>Speech Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gooey</td>
<td>Speech Quality/Falsetto Quality/Slacked Diction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timbre-ly Brassy</td>
<td>Twang Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lighter</td>
<td>Falsetto Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Less Weight</td>
<td>Falsetto Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ballad Singing</td>
<td>Speech Quality/Cry/Sob Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moving</td>
<td>Cry/Sob Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lullaby</td>
<td>Cry/Sob Quality/Speech Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quiet Intensity</td>
<td>Falsetto Quality/Glottal Onsets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Popped Phrases</td>
<td>Belt Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of Point</td>
<td>Less Twang Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raised</td>
<td>More Twang Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Energized</td>
<td>Over-Articulated Diction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lugubrious</td>
<td>Cry/Sob Quality/Speech Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discombobulated</td>
<td>Cry/Sob Quality/Constriction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open</td>
<td>No Constriction/Belt Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Release</td>
<td>Belt Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excited</td>
<td>Belt Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fraudulent</td>
<td>Twang Quality/Falsetto Quality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One of the first notes I received about my interpretation of Seurat (Act I) was that I could not be heard clearly from the house. This was easily remedied. While narrowing the AES can be used to make the voice more audible, this was not a viable option, since I was saving the addition of twang for George (Act II), and keeping Seurat more rooted in Speech and Opera Qualities. The second choice was to make sure I was peaking and singing with thick vocal folds. I found that on the sections I received notes about being too quiet, I was not using thick vocal fold mass. By switching from a thin vocal fold mass to a thicker one, I was able to be heard more easily. I kept the acting intentions very introspective, but the voice was now heard. It is important to maintain this condition even when delivering asides or when a section of dialogue was strictly representational.

Mr. Bell gave an interesting note near the end of the rehearsal process that resonated with me in a profound way. He told me that he wanted Seurat to be more “tormented” by the end of Act I. Seurat was already established as having a low laryngeal position and speaking or singing in Opera Quality, so showing this torment was going to require a deviation from Seurat’s attractor state. The first thing that I attempted was widening the AES and raising the tongue position, to communicate more aspects of Cry/Sob Quality to the voice. Mr. Bell told me that I was closer to his vision, but not quite there. The addition of constriction satisfied his image. The constriction was not only at the level of the larynx, but also in the lips and jaw, which caused the dialogue to be spoken through clinched teeth. The laryngeal constriction was not severe at all, as to not allow any vocal damage or trauma. By allowing the sound to be trapped in and
forced from the filter, optimum conditions were maintained at the source and the desired effect was achieved.

While an actor may prepare and analyze every aspect of a role, there are unknown variables that are always present when performing on stage. These unknown variables are the surprises, discoveries, and immediacy of live theatre. It may present itself in the form of other actors’ spontaneous or varying response to rehearsed lines, audience reactions, or technical glitches. When a character receives new stimuli or reaction, the character must, in turn, respond honestly and accurately, not in a planned response. There is a certain amount of consistency to a performance, but the actor must be emotionally available and reactive, especially in terms of voice quality. This may impact the consistency of voice quality from one performance to the next.

**EVTS™ in Application and Performance**

To demonstrate the manner in which I used the Estill model in preparing the vocal “life” of George Seurat, a new paradigm for analyzing voice quality as it informs character follows. The song “Finishing the Hat” occurs in the plot when Seurat lets his guard down to reveal his unguarded emotions and feelings about art, socialization, and Dot. On the score below, I have written notes on acting intention (marked in red), musicianship (marked in green), and recipes for voice variables following EVTS™ (marked in blue). All three components are considered as a symbiosis with each other to create a thorough, honest portrayal of Seurat at this pivotal moment in the plot.
Take chances, daring, go toouden places.

+ Constriction (soprano) False to Spoken to Speech/Cry/Sob

+ Constriction Filter Constriction

Always turning back too late. From the grass or the stick. Or the dog.

Pulling away from her.

to regret

a little Opera
— or the light,— How the kind of woman willing to wait’s. Not the kind that you want to find waiting to return you to the night.

DISSY from the height.

Cry/Sob/Speech

Stud-y ing the hat.

to manically analyze
**Twang** (for intensity)

Entering the world of the hat...

Reach...ing through the

world of the hat... Like a window...

Back to this one from that...

**Falsetto**

To fantasize

**Falsetto**

Stud...ing a face...

Step...ing back to

look at a face...

Leaves a little space in the way...
* Correction to the score from the script
Belt

by.

Mapping out the sky.

Speech / Falsetto

Speech

To mourn

Cry / Sob

(Setting sketch to Fiji)

Speech / Cry / Sob

Finishing a hat...

Look, I made a
Figure 78: "Finishing the Hat" Full Analysis
One striking example of symbiosis can be found in measure 45, on the lyric, “And how you’re always turning back too late from the grass or the stick or the dog or the light.” The acting intention assigned is “to regret” and the music reaches its most intense level. The music informs the actor of this intensity by way of the accented notes in the accompaniment (circled in green) and the high placement in the vocal range; the lyrics inform the actor of the regret, and the choice to use Belt Quality with some thyroid tilt is the strongest representation of this intensity and regret in the voice. Each component justifies and feeds the others.

The video embedded below (click on the image to start the video) is of a live performance of “Finishing the Hat” from the University of Central Florida production of *Sunday in the Park with George*. (Media 1)

**Media 1: “Finishing the Hat” – UCF *Sunday in the Park with George* Production**

Following the conclusion of the production, I recorded “Finishing the Hat” while undergoing VLS exam. A small, spaghetti-like endoscope was inserted into the middle leatus of my left nostril and through the velopharyngeal port in order to obtain the best view of my larynx. Kerrie Beechler Obert, MA, CCC-SLP, Clinical Voice Pathologist and Director of Medical Studies at the Ohio State University Voice and Swallowing Disorders Clinic, performed the examination. The result of that examination appears in the video below (click on the image to start the video). (Media 2)
The image is of the superior perspective of the larynx. As such, the anterior side of the head would be located at the bottom of the screen and the posterior would be at the top of the screen. The image below identifies some of the major anatomical structures of the larynx. (Figure 79)
The video proves anatomically that, as the laryngeal structures move to produce different voice qualities, the qualities defined in Figure 78 are, indeed, being executed. The example stated above about the symbiosis of music, acting and EVTSTM can be found in the video at approximately 1:06. From information gleaned in the video, one can identify glottal onsets (like on the lyric “always”), the false vocal folds are retracted, the true vocal folds are thick, the thyroid cartilage is vertical, the cricoid cartilage is tilted, the AES is narrowed, and the larynx is high. What cannot be seen in the VLS, but is apparent in the live performance video is that the tongue is in a high position, the jaw and lips are in the mid position and the head, neck, and torso are engaged and anchored. This set of conditions is described by EVTSTM as Belt Quality. Numerous examples just like this one can be found throughout the video.
Conclusion

Performers constantly strive to give consistent, emotional, healthy, and honest performances. In a world in which eight shows a week is the industry standard, absolute consistency is unattainable. It is this author’s opinion that EVTSTM provides a uniquely effective tool for coming closer to attaining that absolute consistency. Further, when EVTSTM is applied in the rehearsal and performance process, artistic success can be repeated. The most significant part of the actors work starts before he or she steps in front of an audience. As with any craft, once EVTSTM is explored thoroughly and applied consistently in rehearsal, the audience is unaware of any technique that is being used during the performance. Likewise, the execution of technique becomes second nature to the actor. Vocal expertise is only one component an actor is expected to achieve for total performance. EVTSTM does not necessarily guarantee or assure these circumstances, but it does certainly give the actor more specific tools, if he or she chooses to apply them to his or her performance. Vocal health is paramount to EVTSTM, so an actor trained in the system will not suffer vocal damage or trauma. By assigning specific vocal qualities to every moment of the performance, the actor is empowered to take each audience on the same emotional journey performance after performance. Armed with this ability, the actor is free to be “in the moment,” available, vulnerable, and honest.
APPENDIX A: REHEARSAL JOURNAL
Tonight was the first night of rehearsals. We began by introducing ourselves around the room. There were only a few faces that I did not know. Bob Fetterman then gave his scenic design presentation. It is an interesting exploration in visual minimalism. The basic design is whites and grays on the floor with scrims and rolling canvas that will have projections placed upon them. The idea is that the projections will show the process in which Seurat worked. Projections will start with rough sketches, move into more refined sketches and finally end with color renderings. Seurat and George also control the locations of the canvases, so George is in control and creates the playing space.

Bob Fetterman has also taken me under his wing and is teaching me the techniques that Seurat used to sketch and draw. This will help make my movements more realistic and help place me closer to his mindset. Bob assigned me two projects. First, I am to find a picture that I would like to draw and turn it up-side-down to draw it. This will force me to not make any assumptions and really look at how things are put together. Second, I am to draw white eggs on a white sheet of paper. This will force me to look at highlight and shadow. I will use pastel paper and conté crayons. These are the tools that Seurat would have used. On an interesting side note, conté crayons leave the fingers and hands with black smudges. I hope to incorporate that in someway into my character.

John also shared the Chromolume slide show presentation that is being created by students at UCF’s film department. It was a fantastic rough draft that showed bits and pieces of Seurat’s life, times and process. It was very informative, visually stimulating and will help the story along at that point of the show. With all of these slide shows and
projections, it made me realize that I will have to work very hard to not let the audience start looking for new projections, but rather stay in the story. I want the two elements of acting and technology to work in harmony.

Since our costume designer, Katie Strand Evens, lives out of town, John Bell informed us that she is excited by what she has found and that she feels that she has found costumes that approximate the costumes found in the painting. This is great news and makes us all very excited to see what she has and if it fits. Dave Upton, our lighting designer, was also absent. John said that he is excited to see what Dave brings to this production. He is not afraid to use a lot of instruments and create some very visually stunning stage pictures. It should also be noted that Dave is a UCF graduate.

I was somewhat relieved to find out that we would not sing through any of the songs tonight. We would just read through the script and speak the lyrics out loud. It seems to me that it is better to work the music before you try to sing it in front of the entire company. Hearing just the lyrics read helped me in my process. It allowed me to find out what intensity I would say the lyrics and then start to think towards which voice quality I would use in its place. Findings were as one would expect. In the more emotionally intense sections the voice was more intense. There were a few times with Dot that Seurat would use an emotionally intense voice that was quiet. Just hearing the lyrics also allow the music of the language to become more apparent.

There also came a section of the script that I felt when read aloud, suddenly made an impact on me as it pertains to my thesis. It is the scene in Act I when Jules comes to George’s studio to look at the painting. George, in defense of the painting and his technique, says, “Science, Jules. Fixed laws for color, like music . . . Why should I paint
like you or anybody else? I am trying to get through to something new. Something that is my own.” I felt like that George’s words here mirrored my own thoughts in this process. I would like to show, through science, that there are some fixed laws of voice that can help create character. I want to create something new and give it back to the theatrical community at large.

After the read through, I had some new ideas about the differences between Seurat and George. Seurat is quiet, intense, talented and somewhat misunderstood. George is somewhat of a Harold Hill. He is a fast talker who is not completely confident of his talents. Both Georges are trying to connect. If they could both connect to each other, they would create a great artist who could promote himself. This George III might be what is created in the song “Move On.”

Part of why I was thinking this way was because of the meeting I had with John Bell earlier that day. I wanted to meet with him after I had sent him my Brief Thesis Abstract and my Thesis Outline. He was concerned that it might be too large. He said that he felt like he “Gets lost in it.” I helped clarify why I had put so much in the outline. I had followed the Departmental Guidelines and we discussed that they were just a suggestion. I probably should discuss most of what the Guidelines suggest, but if it doesn’t fit in the structure, then maybe I should consider removing it or only touch on it briefly.

John and I also discussed how this approach could be applied to the actor versus the character. The actor can use these voice qualities to help define character and the character can use these voice qualities to show emotion. Ultimately though, these all would come from the actor.
John was concerned that my thesis would focus too much on Seurat. I can see how he felt that way after reading my outline. I had just included George as another character. I need to place more importance on developing Seurat and II equally. How are they alike? How are they different? I have a meeting with John on Monday to help clarify these two different characters.

I also wanted to reassure John that this thesis would not make me go into my head too much. I explained to him that I will be thinking of the voice qualities, but I will also be relying on my instincts and his and Justin’s input. I can then translate, after the fact, into the voice qualities. That is part of what I want this thesis to offer.

After the read through, we enjoyed some cookies that John provided and took a tour of all the facilities. The stage management staff handed out schedules and rehearsal folders. We then adjourned for the evening. I will spend the weekend preparing for music rehearsals next week.

2/13/06

“White. A blank page or canvas. So many possibilities . . .”

Tonight we began working on the music. The full cast was assembled and it was a glorious sound that we started to create. There is a definite emotional response when hearing a large group of mostly graduate level trained voices singing Stephen Sondheim’s music. While working on “Sunday,” there was a moment that almost left me breathless. In measures 56 through 58 then men sing “And parasols,” and the different timbres of the voice created a magnificent sound. The whole situation of mounting a production of
Sunday in the Park with George suddenly became very real and very achievable. It helped alleviate some of my anxiety.

Justin ran his rehearsals as I would expect. He was precise and quick. He expects that we have done our homework and those who have not should have the fear of God put into them once they realize the speed and accuracy at which he rehearses. While rehearsing, I have been making small notes in the margin to myself as to which voice qualities I seem to be using. I have also been taking notes of words that Justin has used (either in addressing me, another actor or the entire group) to get the desired sound. Some words so far include “legity,” “mezzo,” “meaty,” “more weight” and “fuller.” I will try to keep a running list of these descriptions and the sounds or voice qualities that seem to satisfy them.

I had an hour long meeting with John tonight to discuss character. I loved it. John and I have discussed George in the past, but he has not really given me many of his ideas. Tonight was a meeting of the minds. He finally shared some of his thoughts on where we might take George. I can tell with John, as well as with Justin, that this piece has a significant personal value. This piece has spoken to me as well, so I know that the three of us hold it with a great deal of reverence and we want to give it the attention to detail that it deserves.

John and I discussed this idea of Seurat and George connecting in “Move On” and creating this George III. John seemed very open and excited to the idea. I expressed my concern that the audience might miss this “transformation” of sorts. He discussed with me how “Move On” was a moment when things truly become very abstract and conceptual. If I attend to the fact that George is put into this situation and begins to play...
the part given to him, the audience can take this journey with George. If George accepts his surroundings, but not too quickly, the audience will accept along with him. I do not need to worry too much if the audience gets the idea that a George III is created. We don’t know if this George III is successful, just that now he has every possibility set in front of him, where before, he was blocked.

We had a great deal of discussion on how Seurat and George are similar and dissimilar. There is a great deal spoken about each character by other characters. We must sift through and figure out which are accurate and which are gossip or jealousness. One must note that there is a kernel of truth in each comment though.

We also discussed the lack of parents of George. I need to find the answers to what has happened to them. I am of the mindset that George’s parents did not support his lineage to Seurat. That will help with the battle George works through to find his history and connection.

John and I had different ideas on the relationship between Seurat and Jules. We both saw it as a bit of a brotherly relationship, but John saw Jules as merely a conduit to exhibitions. I saw more of a connection there. Seurat wants Jules to understand and join him. They went to school together and George wants his approval and support. It would be the confidence he needs to be more forceful with his artwork on a public scale. He does not get it though.

John noted that most every other character in the show has a duality of sorts. Seurat seems to be truthful and, for lack of a better word, one sided. He is what he is and does not apologize for it. George is much of the same, but has a little more complexity to
the social aspects. Together they may just be the duel-nature that all the other characters have on their own. This is another strong suggestion that the George III could be created.

We discussed how “Color and Light” was really a metaphor for sex. I had thought of the sexual aspects of the song, but had never thought of the act of the song being sex. This adds a whole new layer that excites me. It will also have a strong effect on the voice quality choices.

I was surprised at the end of the discussion when I realized that we did not talk much about Dot. The conversation never seemed to move towards it, but I am okay with this. I want some of these discoveries with Dot to be just that, with Dot. I am excited to see the choices that Chris will make and how they affect George.

John and I seem to be on the same page for this show. I was pleased to hear that he did not have a lot of differing ideas that would cause any rough passages through the rehearsal process. I know that we will have them along the way, but I don’t foresee too many. John has asked that I go scene by scene and map out my objectives, obstacles, actions and tactics. This was something that I was planning on doing anyway, but knowing that John is doing the same makes me feel safe and that the combination and collaboration of ideas will create another layer to George.

2/14/06

When I left my music rehearsal with Justin tonight, I noticed something that I have not ever remembered about myself after a music rehearsal before. I was sweating. I felt like I just performed the whole show tonight and I just worked on some of the songs.
Tonight we worked on “Color and Light,” “Finishing the Hat,” “Putting It Together” and “Lesson #8.” Once again, as we worked I took note of the voice qualities I was using and the words Justin used to describe the sounds he wanted.

“Finishing the Hat” was the song with which I felt the most confident. It was the song I used to audition for the role and the song to which I feel (at this point in time) the most connected. There have been many times that I when I get into the creative process that suddenly everything else takes a back seat. I don’t attend to the duties and responsibilities that I should. This obsession can manifest itself in many different ways and for George; he is channeling his obsession for the art and for Dot in his painting. He realizes this, but is helpless to prevent it. This song is a lamentation for George. The basic voice qualities that dominate this song are Speech, Falsetto, Cry/Sob and Belt.

“Color and Light” is a short song (we did not work on the duet section), but is not easy. There is that small passage that is constant eighth-notes and a stream of consciousness thought process. Once that section is memorized, I will feel a little more at ease with this song. I have been trying to drop in this sense of sex to the song and it added a great deal of urgency to the entire song. I have been trying to score it with the sense of foreplay, sex, climax and pillow talk. Basic voice qualities that dominate this song are Speech and Opera.

“Lesson #8” was the song with which I felt the least comfortable. I knew the melody line, but I wasn’t hearing the correlation between the accompaniment and the melody. Justin suggested that I do a chord analysis of the piece. It is short enough that this will not take too much time. Justin functions on the idea of finding the notes by knowing what other notes are in the chord. Some work by hearing the notes from the
accompaniment or other sections of the melody. With Sondheim, I think that a combination of the two will be most effective for me. Justin and I also discussed that “Lesson #8” is George’s “Finishing the Hat.” The basic voice quality that dominates this song is Falsetto.

The tour de force song of Sunday in the Park with George is “Putting It Together.” I have decided to attempt this song in sections. I will not try to look at the overall arc of the song until I am ready to put it all together. (No pun intended). This song will be easier to digest in smaller portions. A point comes in this song that one starts to ignore the accompaniment and just barrel on with the melody. Thank God Sondheim gives the melody a repetitive structure because the lyrics are the real challenge. The lyrics, like many Sondheim songs, are the driving force and are often similar, but different. I will have to work this piece like a monologue for a while before I will feel a sense of comfort. The basic voice quality that dominates this song is Speech.

I enjoyed working with Justin. He put me at ease and challenged me. He did not give me too many words to add to my list. Tonight was just about getting through it. He allowed me to record all of these songs so that I can work independently on these songs with the accompaniment. I prefer this to working with the CD so I don’t imitate, but create.

2/15/06

I was not called for rehearsal tonight, but worked at home.
Tonight was the first night that we worked on the duets in the show. We rehearsed “Color and Light,” “We Do Not Belong Together,” “Move On” and “Beautiful.” “Beautiful” was rehearsed with Old Lady (Debbie Tedrick) and the rest were rehearsed with Dot (Chris Staffel). I was excited to be singing with someone else in my music rehearsals. I finally had a scene partner in the songs other than the audience or myself.

While “Color and Light” is considered a duet, it is as if the two voices never recognize or hear one another. If this song is a metaphor for sex, what does that say about their sex life? We had both rehearsed this song independently already, so it was just putting the puzzle pieces together. This was definitely the most polished song of the evening for the two of us.

The song “We Do Not Belong Together” is the emotional climax of Act I. Seurat is not one to speak at great length about his emotions, but Dot forces him verbalize his emotions. He is much better at painting them. So when he does try to say it, it all comes out wrong. Justin’s words were that “George’s head is exploding” and “it is his vocal, or conversational, vomit.” When it does not come out right, he stops and Dot finishes the song. It reminds me of the days in undergraduate school when I was taking a Marriage and Family course. When men argue, there comes a point when they shut down completely. This is Seurat’s shut down moment. There is much he wishes he could say, but he cannot make it work. The basic voice qualities that dominate this song are Speech, Opera and Belt.
“Move On” might be the most important song in the show and also the most difficult for the audience. This song takes all of the motifs in from “We Do Not Belong Together” and makes them work for both characters, where before it did not end happily. In this song, George is attempting to connect to his past in order to move on to his future. I had a short discussion with Justin as to why it was in the key of B. He said that it is possibly because sharp keys tend to sound brighter and faster. The reason that I ask is that “We Do Not Belong Together” is in C. This song is technically very difficult. It is not hard to sing, but to put the two parts together is extremely difficult. Something that Justin gave us to think about was that the faster moments in the music is the frustration “pent up in the text and then is released in the long notes.” They should be “gooey.” Dot is teaching George how to connect and finally line up. The basic voice qualities that dominate this song are Speech, Falsetto and Opera.

The song “Beautiful” is just that, beautiful. For some reason I really connect to this idea of the son trying to keep the mother around and the memories vivid. I know that Deb has some very definite ideas about her character, so I need to have a discussion with her to make sure that our ideas don’t conflict in this song. I love how this is a total role reversal of the child now teaching the parent, but there is still a lesson being taught by the mother. Seurat is becoming the caretaker with her that he is with no one else. Is it because he doesn’t think that she is lucid? The basic voice quality that dominates this song is Falsetto.

We also worked on “The Day Off” where Seurat imitates Spot and Fifi, the dogs. For some reason the silliness of this song comes very easily to me. Justin seemed surprised that I was navigating this song as much ease as I was. He wanted to make sure
that I wasn’t doing anything that could be harmful to my voice. I assured him that I was not. Thank you, Estill Voice Training! The basic voice qualities that dominate this song are Speech, Twang and Falsetto.

Tonight was a very tiring rehearsal. We were ahead of schedule so we worked on other songs for the next night so we wouldn’t have to come in as early. It was a good idea on paper, but I hope I don’t get too fatigued from working too hard to early.

2/17/06

Tonight we put together the songs that I have been working on my own and the chorus has been working through. The songs were “Putting It Together” and “The Day Off.” I was very excited to hear how these songs sounded when everyone was involved. It was wonderful. I was also relieved to see that most of the rehearsal time was not in fixing my stuff. I was worried that I would dominate the rehearsal and everyone would look at me as if I was under-prepared. Luckily that was not the case.

It was very difficult to keep my concentration in the sections where everyone else was singing something different underneath me. I found it very funny that the most chaotic section of underscoring is with the lyric “Even if you do have the suspicion that it’s taking all your concentration.” It was taking all my concentration. This role is going to test me and push me to limits that I thought impossible before. Very exciting!

The biggest thing on my radar right now is the sing-through of the show on Monday. I will spend the weekend preparing for it.
The entire company was assembled tonight for our first sing-through of the entire score. A more appropriate name for this evening would be a stumble-through of the entire score. This music is so extremely difficult and complex that even after a week of rehearsals there is a great deal that still needs to be done. It is now the responsibility of the actors to correct things on their own.

This sing-through really exposed to me the areas that I need to focus a good deal of my attention on. The problem songs for me were “Beautiful” and “Move On.” These songs need some musical attention. I think I have neglected them somewhat. The other songs have small details that need to be fixed and need a good deal of memorization, especially “Putting It Together.”

I have never been afraid of a role, but this role frightens me a little. Maybe frighten is not the right word. I have a great deal of anxiety about this role. I want it to be the best it can be and there is a lot of meat to this role. The sing-through didn’t relieve any of that anxiety. If anything, it built it up a little more. It became very apparent how much of this show depends on me. I love that, but I must respect that at the same time.

I didn’t get a chance to speak with John after the sing-through. I wanted to hear his take on how things went. I will try to catch up with him tomorrow and find out what he thinks. Justin was very supportive and did not give notes afterwards. He said that we all know what needs to be fixed and he is counting on us to do it. I have a lot of work ahead of me.
Today started with some bad news. John had to leave for the week due to a family emergency. We will be without him till next Monday. Justin will take over rehearsals and start a rough blocking. The idea of these rehearsals will be to advance the show musically and in character development. The blocking will most likely change once John returns, but it is important that we start to explore the characters on our feet, thinking of them as 3-D rather than keeping them 2-D by reading them off the page.

Justin prefaced the beginning of rehearsal by saying that he is in no way stepping into the role of director, but will start to give some more “acting” type suggestions as to continue to develop the characters and the action. He was a little worried that we might resist this, but taking into consideration the situation, we should have no problems. I just hope that John’s absence won’t put us too far behind.

Tonight we put “Sunday in the Park with George” and “Color and Light” on their feet. I was amazed at how little Seurat moves. He is so solitary and still. His focus and concentration is such a nice contrast to Dot’s inability to focus and concentrate. I need to be aware that while Seurat does get into his own world, I must still share the dialogue with the audience. I cannot allow the nuances of the acting to create a barrier between the audience and Seurat. I can help the situation by adding more Twang voice quality to Seurat’s speaking voice and being sure that I attend to the principles laid out in *Diction at a Distance*. I have also started to discover that Seurat is very soft spoken, but has a quiet intensity about him. When he does need to raise his voice, he is not shy to do so. Seurat is not mousy by any means.
Seurat is not into fantasy. He is into order, structure and reality. When Dot starts to fly off in her fantasies, George is there to ground her. He does love her, but doesn’t want a frivolous companion. It is my job to make sure that these corrections and jabs that Seurat gives Dot does not come from a hurtful place. Seurat does not intend harm from these comments. If Dot, or anyone else for that matter, takes it that way, then it just goes to prove further that he is so misunderstood. Should Seurat act this way? No. Does he? Yes. That is just who he is.

In “Sunday in the Park with George,” the scene is set to show that George, while very attentive to Dot, is not connecting with her on the level she would like. He is not listening and is getting frustrated by her inability to connect with him on the level he would like. He is very polite and does thank her for the work she does, but only on the level that anyone else would speak to a stranger. To Seurat though, that is a very big step.

If one looks at La Grande Jatte, one will see that through the entire huge canvas, no one is looking at each other. Everyone’s attention seems to be elsewhere and no one is making a “connection.” Many times throughout the show, it seems that Sondheim and Lapine have illustrated this idea. “Color and Light” is no exception. Both Seurat and Dot are engaged in activities that titillate them and get them excited for the other. Dot is preparing her body and Seurat is preparing his canvas. Justin and I spoke about Seurat’s intensity in this scene and how the accompaniment figures inform the actor. We both agree that he is always trying to get into the “zone” and when the accompaniment moves into the tone clusters, like in measures 50-62, Seurat is in this creative and productive place.
We also discussed the idea that each color and each stroke should have a specific emotion. The basic idea that I am trying to follow right now is that each of the warm colors (red, orange and yellow) have a stronger intensity and the cool colors (blue, green and violet) have a somewhat more relaxed intensity. None of the colors make him truly “relaxed,” but the colors inform the delivery and the intention behind them. We also spoke about that as Seurat gets more intense, he becomes more physically in control. My initial reaction was to go to a more physical place, but after feeling that in my body and discussing the feedback Justin gave me, it does seem that Seurat would become more intense on a more specific, smaller scale. Since he is working in small areas and small “dots,” his attention would be very focused and not at all haphazard or out of control.

We also discussed the importance of the melody Seurat often hums, as found in measures 38-39. I told him that I thought of it as a lullaby that has been with him since he was a child. I know that I have a song (“You Can Learn a Lot of Things from the Flowers” from Alice in Wonderland) that has stayed with me from my childhood that I hum sometimes without even knowing I am doing it. Justin liked this idea and suggested that I could take it a step further and write out the rest of this melody to help inform me of the whole song.

We also made some great breakthroughs in Part IV. There is an interesting dichotomy that I had not quite connected into. Many of the phrases that Seurat states could be about the painting or about Dot. I think that the choices are far more interesting if they are not obvious. The first “Damn” is more interesting if Seurat messes up the painting and the final “Red” is more interesting if it is connected to Dot. After all, she is his muse.
We started rehearsal tonight on the songs and scenes starting from “The Day Off Part II.” This is the first opportunity we get to see Seurat observing his subjects and how he relates to each of them. The Horn Player’s tune at the beginning is almost Seurat’s call to arms and idea for the painting. Seurat states the purpose of the painting in measures 5-16. The line “And that interesting fellow looking over . . .” has always confused me. I have not had a chance to speak with John about this line, but I found myself tonight connecting it to the Horn Player who has come onto the stage. When John stages the scene, the Horn Player may not even be there anymore. It did create an unexpected connection to this character though that I felt made the scene more cohesive.

After the Horn Player, Seurat turns his attention to the nurse. His connection to this woman is that she is the caretaker of his mother. His attention then moves to the Celestes and the Soldier. He observes the start to a very proper and cordial courting. Seurat then observes Franz and Frieda, a somewhat dysfunctional relationship since Franz wants to have a tryst with the Nurse. Seurat gets into the zone sketching these servants and Jules breaks him out of it. The scene that follows, I believe, shows the brotherhood of artists that even Seurat belongs to. He is upset that Jules has bothered him and criticized him, but still wants to share his successes with him about the new work. Seurat is secretly jealous of Jules’s ability to be a social creature. He knows that he did not handle the meeting the way he should have, which draws him to the other “social outcast,” the Boatman. The first meeting that Seurat has with the Boatman, the Boatman attacks him verbally and he just takes it. This encounter, they seem to share the
rage. Seurat then starts to put the whole picture together, but Dot enters with Louie, so Seurat must retreat.

During these sections, Justin and I had talks about Seurat actually always being in control of what is going on while he is sketching. It is the only time he really connects with his subjects. When they all actually approach him, he does not interact well with them, but when he observes, he is confident and sees their secret selves. He draws (no pun intended) these performances out of them.

Tonight was very intense and I thought that each character took a step forward. If we can continue in this manner, things will be fine (hectic, but fine) when John returns.

2/23/06

This rehearsal was just with Justin, Chris and me. We focused on “Finishing the Hat” and “The Day Off Part I.”

Neither Justin nor myself know how “The Day Off Part I” is going to be staged. We know that there is not going to be any dog cutouts, so the question becomes whether or not there are going to be dog projections. Regardless, Seurat must embody these two dogs, Spot and Fifi. Spot is a Black Labrador Retriever and Fifi is a Pug. I have owned a Black Lab before and I currently own a Pug. I have a lot of memories and situations to pull from.

The important thing to give these two dogs is different internal tempo rhythms. We discussed how Spot’s legs would move slowly and have a sense of gravity around him. Fifi’s legs would move much faster and have a sense of lift. This scene needs a careful merger of human and dog characteristics. Seurat moves into these dogs’ mind
just as he moves into the other characters’ mind. He is in control of these dogs, where he is not in control, at all times, of the other characters. He feels like he can let more of his guard down with these dogs. This is a glimpse into another part of George’s creative mind. He immerses himself in his work. I won’t be able to truly explore these characters until I am off book for this song. This song is going to be all about the physical actions of these dogs.

“Finishing the Hat” is Seurat’s lament for Dot. He speaks of being misunderstood by everyone, but he thought that maybe Dot would be the one to see through all the dysfunction and see the man she wants him to be. He wishes he could walk through that “window” and be a part of the rest of the world, but his paintings are where he belongs and where he lives. He loves Dot by painting her. That is the highest form of compliment he can give. He has these two worlds to live in and one makes him feel comfortable and confident, the other awkward and uncomfortable. He knows his boundaries and exactly how far he will move into each world. If Dot can’t accept that, then there is nothing he can do. He gives what he gives and there will always be a hat.

Justin gave me some great imagery for this song. He told me to think of it as if everything is huge at the top, but as the song progresses, everything is moving in on me and by the end it is something so small that the audience wonders what I have. A dot? A pixel? This really helped the tension of the song and also helped Seurat attempt to break free in some of the more soaring moments, only to be pressed back into the world of his creation.
Tonight was a short rehearsal, but very productive. I can’t wait for John to come back and start his tweaking. I am sure that there are MANY more insights that will come as we all keep on this journey towards *Sunday in the Park with George*.

2/24/06

We found out today that John will be gone another week due to his family crisis. Nick Wuehrmann will come in next week to continue the character work and Justin will be able to concentrate on the music and playing the piano. There are also rumors that Lester Malizia might come in to help out as well. Dr. Steve Chicurel came in this evening to play piano and help out. We are a theatre community and we help each other out when we are in need.

The majority of the rehearsal tonight was review of music and scenes that we have worked on before. We are still following John’s basic schedule as a guide.

I had been ill today and so I did not have my normal rehearsal energy. Chris (Dot) had also been sick, so energy was a little low. Most of the music review was for the full cast and my solo numbers were not run.

We ran the park scene and it was great to get some continuity to it, even if it wasn’t the “real” blocking. Things are starting to feel far more manageable and I want to take the role as far as I can before John gets back and needs to address many other things. John did call us tonight and had Justin say a few things for him. The basic message was that things are going alright for him and that he is relying on us to do our work while he is gone.
The new scenes worked on tonight were the scene when Jules comes to see the painting and Dot leaves and the scene with Seurat’s mother. We were running out of time towards the end of rehearsal, so these scenes did not get the delving that some of the other scenes did. That was alright though, considering the circumstances.

The biggest thing that stood out in my mind for the Jules scene was how Seurat is almost begging Jules to understand. He then takes his frustration with Jules out on Dot. It gets to a certain point with the fight that Seurat just shuts down and lets her leave. It is not what he wants, but he knows it is what is best for Dot and the child.

Justin then had us move seamlessly into the scene “Beautiful.” It really added a great texture that allows George to not feel sorry for himself. The song still needs a lot of work on my end. It is just as I feared that this song has received less of my attention than some of the other bigger or more difficult ones.

2/27/06

This past Sunday we drove to Orlando for preliminary costume fittings. It was really interesting. None of the costumes that I tried on were what I had envisioned for either George. I need to speak with John about them before I start to make any decisions on how they will affect my approach.

Nick Wuehrmann led rehearsals for us tonight. We started by sitting in a circle and discussing what this show means to us. We also shared moving theatrical or artistic experiences and how they relate to Sunday in the Park with George. It was a nice bonding experience for the entire company. With the events that have surrounded the rehearsal process thus far, we need all of the bonding we can get. When John returns and
gives us turbo blocking, we will need each other to count on. This bonding will make the nervousness and trepidation of those rehearsals less stressful.

During an exploration of “Putting It Together,” Nick had the cast explore the entire space during the song and dialogue as if we were all really at a cocktail party. What was most striking and frustrating for me is that everyone else was making great connections, but my head was stuck in my book with the lyrics. Every time that I would get out of the book to make connections, I would lose the words and have to dive back in. Every time I was in the book, I longed to make a connection. It really made me see a new side of George. He is longing to make a connection, but has to work the room to make sure that he survives, literally and artistically.

During the Act I finale “Sunday,” Nick had the entire cast walk in a circle and play a bit of follow the leader. Nick allowed me to walk around and manipulate the cast as I please. I tried to affect the circle by standing in different places and seeing if I can be the rock that changes the flow of the river. I started to feel a personal connection to each of the characters. As the song started, I pulled characters out one by one and placed them where I thought they should be in the composition of the painting. Some characters seemed relieved to be out of the circle and finally find their place in the painting. I left Dot for last. Before I moved her, I stopped in front of her and made her stop. We looked long into each other’s eyes and then, together, I placed her in the painting. We held a gaze for a while longer and then I felt the need to run away. It really reminded me of Viewpoints.

Tonight was a really nice exploration of the characters and the company. I feel like I know the actors and characters a lot better after tonight.
2/28/06

Nick Wuehrmann returned to help again tonight and brought Lester Malizia with him.

The first scene we worked on was Act II when Dennis and George are setting up for the Chromolume on the island and George sings “Lesson #8.” The main focus that Lester and Nick influenced was that George was losing a collaborator and a friend. Lester had a way of describing things that really raised the stakes and his sideline coaching was very informative. I felt a connection with Dennis I had not felt before. I was losing a friend and felt a sharp pang of betrayal. I then realized that he was releasing me so that I could go on to do bigger and better things. This really propelled me into the song. Once again, I was stuck in the darn book and wanted to make a lot of bold choices, but I was thrown out of the scene by having to look for lyrics. This coming weekend is going to be pivotal in memorization.

The next scene was “Color and Light.” Lester and Nick both coached from the sidelines and gave some great little bits. The best advice was not to start a new idea or beat until the last has been finished. Seurat is fighting the distractions that Dot is providing to stay focused and paint.

In “We Do Not Belong Together,” the best idea that I took away was that Seurat emerges himself in the work because the painting and the art is the only thing that has never left him. He does not have to fear rejection within the painting. It is only outside this “window” that he can hurt. He wishes Dot would join him in the painting and is hurt and mystified when she tells him that she does not know how he feels. It was a great
insight into their relationship that I really want to be able to keep and show in performance.

3/1/06

Tonight was a review of the Act I park scene under the guidance of Nick Wuehrmann. The first time we showed what we have been preparing and working on our own. I tried to make new choices and create new ideas within the scene, but we were already starting to “set” some things. Nick felt this and came up with an idea to break our mold and keep things fresh till John returns.

Nick’s idea was to have the entire cast sit or stand on the perimeter of the stage while not the focus or on stage. When someone in the middle, who was the focus of the scene, tried to make contact with someone on the outside, the outside people would refuse to make eye contact.

This exercise really helped highlight who was the focus of the scene and who was not. When you were in the middle of the circle, you worked really hard to keep focused on the other people in the middle with you and when you were alone, you had to fight to try to get anyone’s attention. It was an interesting exercise. It also caused some drastically new choices. The scene with Jules was a lot more directly confrontational and thus the scene with the Boatman was more intense as well.

Probably the most striking feeling I felt was when I was not on stage for “Everybody Loves Louis.” I found myself hiding from Dot, who was looking for me. As soon as she found me I would move and hide behind other characters. I found this to be a
startling insight on how Seurat “hides” behind the characters in his canvas as Dot
searches for him and a connection with him.

I look forward to John’s return and our newly focused work on *Sunday in the
Park with George*.

3/2/06

No rehearsal today due to the South Eastern Theatre Conference.

3/3/06

No rehearsal today due to the South Eastern Theatre Conference.

3/6/06

It has been very refreshing and a bit of a relief to have John back for rehearsals.
We started with page one and really dug into it. I have been slightly hesitant to make too
bold of choices or to “set” anything until I have had a chance to run anything by John.

Tonight’s rehearsal basically revolved around using the entire cast to its fullest
potential. That meant that I was not completely involved in all of the blocking and
discussion. I was usually present in all of the scenes, but John’s major focus was not on
me. This was fine by me because I have never experienced John as a director before.
This actually left me available to still be instructed by him, but also available to observe
his directorial style.

From my observations thus far, I have noticed that John is a director that truly
trusting his actors. He expects us to make our own decisions and he does not want to
micromanage every little thing that happens onstage. This was a great relief to me. I enjoy being left alone to create and receive feedback on what I have performed. I feel like a much larger part of the collaboration and process when this occurs. John has also trusted that we have done a great deal of character development in his absence.

John has been moving me in the direction of creating a Seurat that is far more creatively intense than my initial thoughts. I had envisioned him with a quiet, simple, low energy. John has pushed me in the direction of creating an intense, focused energy that is creating a lot more opportunities for Seurat to be socially awkward and artistically demanding. It is also helping with projection, which I had identified as a problem with the quiet mumbling with my initial interpretation. I am very excited by this new direction and I have noticed that it changed my vocal interpretation. I have added a great deal more twang into Seurat’s speaking voice. This should spill over into some other areas of his singing. I have a feeling that a lot of the original falsetto areas will become more intense and full. They will most likely move towards Speech quality or a Twangy-Falsetto.

I am very encouraged by the direction that John and I are taking for Seurat. It seems that we are already on the same page and quickly creating a shorthand for conversation. It is always heartening when something like that happens early on in the process. I feel that John is pleased with the steps we took in his absence and that we are clearly building on that foundation from here on out.
As we dove into rehearsals this evening, one thing became very clear to me. With the use of moveable canvas, the burden of creating each scene seems to be mostly up to me. That makes sense to me on a conceptual and artistic level, but it does add a great deal more work and concentration to the role.

I had another surprise when we started blocking “Sunday in the Park with George.” I had always thought that I would have a stool during most of these beginning scenes. I do not get one at this time. John says it will come into play later. At first I was a little afraid of what this would do, but what I realize is that it frees me up physically. Seurat is such a still character, so any movement I make must be important and motivated. The absence of the stool gives Seurat a lot more reason to move and find a new angle.

We also blocked “Color and Light” and it was just as I imagined it. There were not too many curve balls in this song. John did pump up the intensity and the clarity of action. It really helped to raise the stakes to a song that is mostly disjointed from the other scene partner. John did give me permission to take a long time before going back to the painting at the end of the song. It really helped clarify the weight of that moment.

John also said something that was almost verbatim of Lester. He said that the painting is the only thing that has never left me. I agree and I feel that part of Seurat’s obsessive nature comes from this fact.
Tonight we reviewed most of the park scenes. It was a helpful reminder and solidified movement. No big changes in this section.

There was a significant surprise to me during “We Do Not Belong Together.” John has Seurat retreating back to his painting when Dot starts singing “we do not belong together.” I had always pictured Seurat staying and listening, but not reacting. We played with the moment and found a happy compromise. I will stay to hear part of it, but get flustered and go back to work. I will then return just in time to see her leave. I think it will be a very poignant moment, but only if we are both committed to it. It is something WE will have to make work, not just rely on the text and music.

Something interesting happened this evening during “Beautiful.” As the stakes were raised, the voice quality was no longer Falsetto. It moved towards a Speech or Twang. I had a discussion with Deb afterwards about the scene. I had always thought of it as Mother drifting away with some form of Alzheimer’s, but Deb suggested that it be the mixture of getting older and some blindness. I thought that it was really evocative and positive. If she is losing her sight and I am a visual artist, there are no higher stakes to play. It also informs the shape of the scene and the moment when Seurat says “Look! Look!” It creates a very powerful moment.

At first glance, the rehearsal schedule for this evening looked pretty light. Boy, was I wrong. When we had achieved everything on the bill, we went further. I was so glad. We delved into some great moments this evening that had been somewhat glossed
over on the first blocking. It was great to work them alone and feel like we could explore. With our shortened timeline, this evening was a real luxury.

We started with “George’s Day Off,” where he imitates the dogs. He retreats to this world after being confronted by the knowledge of Dot’s new man is Louis the baker. He needs to feel comforted and cheer himself up in this imaginary world. John has given me free reigns in this section. He’s allowing me to manipulate the dogs and really create relationships with them. This section also allows Seurat to be more animated and vivid in this creative world.

“Finishing the Hat” was staged center sitting on a stool. It is very minimalist visually, but it is hardly sedentary emotionally. This is the crux of Seurat’s emotional journey. The voice qualities were heightened and they all seemed to get a little more Twang in them. We’ll see as this song continues to grow in rehearsal.

We then revisited “Sunday in the Park with George,” “Color and Light” and “We Do Not Belong Together.” These scenes and songs became more comfortable and more vivid each time we ran it. We received great information from John and I really felt a true collaborative process. I feel that we are doing something important, artistic and stimulating. Not often does this happen so early. I have great hopes for where this production could take the company and the audiences.

3/10/06

The most important aspect of this evening’s rehearsal was the brilliant staging of the song “Sunday” as it closes Act I. I was very unsure of how this moment was going to be handled, but I was very relieved when it was done tastefully and with great care. Dot
is revealed during the beginning and then Seurat commands the rest of the scene. He places, he adds and he subtracts until his composition is just as he wants. It is exhausting.

I found that performing all of this stage “magic” made it so I was not singing as much I would just standing still. I was quite out of breath. I did find that I was making some stronger and more informed connections during this song. Things started to make sense with why Louis is leaving with Dot. Mr. and Mrs. are taking them back to America with them.

The bit of the song “Sunday” that I was thinking of doing my overall analysis with now has an added layer. The section I am referring to is now a moment where Seurat gives his mother the gift of a constant nurse for the rest of eternity. He will always have someone there to care for her, even when he is gone. What a beautiful gift.

Now it is time for Spring Break and it is important that these characters and situations continue to grow on our own. When we get back there is not much time left. It is a little bit scary, but exciting at the same time. Act II will be blocked when we return and then we have a week of runs and then we are into Dress Rehearsals.

3/20/06

Over the break, I had some time to work on line memorization. I typed out all of my cue lines and my lines and emailed them to my fiancée, Alissa. She is integral to my process of line memorization. I noticed something very interesting while she was helping me. Alissa has very little knowledge about the show and its music, but when she read the lyrics to the songs, she gave almost the exact same value and pace to the lyrics as if she
were singing them. I asked her if she knew the songs and she said she didn’t. That either speaks to Alissa’s genius or Sondheim’s.

This evening we blocked “Putting It Together.” I was about 90% sure of my lyrics for this song. I felt that it was in a good place with understanding of intention, but I had to know what I was saying before those intentions could be clarified and polished. John blocked the scene in such a way that George is disjointed from the group most of the time and addressing the audience. I had envisioned it this way as well. We are not using the “cut-outs” that the Broadway version utilized. I think that this will not hurt our production in the least. The song is now less about fancy technical theatre and more about the false nature of the art world today. It is also about how many balls George can keep in the air before his loses it. The pressure, much like George, is now on me to make it work. John has added some nice “group reaction” moments, like laughter or applause, that help punctuate George’s journey.

I am excited to see how this song morphs and grows through the rehearsal and performance process. I must remember that stillness can sometimes be just as frenetic and powerful as massive movement.

3/21/06

This was the last session with John that was to be mainly just Chris and me. We had a great deal of Act II to block and not a lot of time to get through it.

“Lesson #8,” for some reason, is very hard for me to memorize. There are a lot of fragmented thoughts and similar words. There have also been some longer, more elaborate songs that have taken up most of my attention and this seemingly simple song
has not received the attention that maybe it should. That being said, the staging for this song was very simple. Mostly it is George alone, looking around. John has left a great deal of it open to my interpretation. I was not able to fill it immediately, so I need to spend some more time with this song and make it my baby.

The blocking for “Move On” was quite poetic and simple. It allowed the text to land and a new relationship between Dot and George to be created. As we work this song, which musically is also not quite where the rest of the show seems to be on our part, I am very interested to see if my theory of a George III is correct, or at least hinted. I hope that our truncated rehearsal period allows time for those discoveries and revelations. I great deal of the work is to be our own, but I really would like John’s guidance for some of these moments. I need eyes outside of the situation giving me feedback. I know what I want some moments to be, I just don’t know if they are landing.

We quickly blocked the presentation of the Chromolume, which was basically standing at a podium, and “Children and Art.” I thought the blocking for these two sections spoke well of George and Marie’s relationship and added that sense of attachment that I think they need. Marie is giving guidance to the reluctant pupil. She starts his conflict in this act that is resolved with Dot’s guidance to the eager pupil.

3/22/06

Tonight was a review of “Putting It Together” with some minor tweaks and changes. My basic blocking was not changed. We did add some elements of “being seen” and publication with the photographer, which I think added some urgency and
more objective to the scene. I am excited by this scene progress, but I need to have this so inside me that I could do in my sleep.

The last piece of new blocking was for the “Sunday – Finale.” I was very surprised that John did not try to mirror the finale to Act I really at all. This song is its own entity about connections. There are connections to people, to the past, to art and, in a way, to humanity. As Seurat says, “I guess we will all be back.” I have not quite figured out the ending of this show. I understand it, but I am not sure what I want to do with it. John gave me some great things to work with, not the least of which is Dot saying the last line of “So many possibilities.” Is that a lesson? Is that a reminder? I have many things to mull over now and start working my way through to the strongest choices.

3/23/06

The most important realization I made this evening as we did an Act I stumble-through was that I can do this. This role is so large and the circumstances surrounding the rehearsal process that I must admit that I was starting to doubt. This rehearsal helped me build some more confidence. It also was the first time that the whole act was worked in sequence. The journey was clear and the arch began to present itself.

I noticed, more than anything, that I did not do as much imitation of character as I had originally envisioned. It is more of a coloration of voice to give the impression of character, but not a full on impression. Seurat is finding his way through the journey with all of these characters. He is living, at times, through them. This only goes to show
that Seurat is putting himself into these characters, so an impersonation would be incorrect.

General notes from this evening where mostly about technical things, such as blocking or memorization, but there were a few on keeping a high pace and energy at the top of the show. Also, it is our job to share all of this with the audience. For me, tonight’s rehearsal was about survival. I survived, so now it has to be about art.

3/24/06

A stumble-through of Act II was a very accurate description of the evening. Act II was not in the place that Act I was, but it was not bad. I know that I have a great deal of work with memorization and clarification of action in this act. I think this is a problem because of the non-linear action of this act. We seem to jump around, acknowledge an audience, then ignore it and then time travel in this act. This was the first time we worked all the way through sequentially. I had to feel what that was like and survive it before I start to shape it.

I had originally thought that this show was built like a four act play, but now I am not so sure. I am now kicking around the idea that the show might follow this structure:

- Prologue – White. A blank page or canvas . . .
- Act I – No. Now I want you to look out at the water . . .
- Epilogue – “It’s Hot Up Here”
- Act II – I almost did not recognize you without your beard . . .
While seemingly this looks like a four act structure, it is my belief that the Prologue and Epilogue would be, in essence, part of Act I. I also now think that the creation of a George III is erroneous. If there is a new George, then there is nothing learned by George by the mistakes of Seurat. It is still George, but a wiser, more inspired George.

More memorization and technical notes were given this evening. John also began to call me out on moments that were not full to the brim with meaning and intention. I am so thankful for that, but it is a little frightening at the same time. I have a great deal of homework still to do and not a lot of time to do it. Each rehearsal I am taking a step forward. That is all I can hope for right now. I cannot afford to take a step back.

3/27/06

Tonight was a very successful and interesting rehearsal. I think that my character took some great strides forward and connected more deeply to the situations and the relationships. If I can continue on this path of discovery, we will be in a very exciting and invigoration place by opening night. I was far less in my mind about memorization tonight.

Dr. Steve attended this evening’s rehearsal and took some notes for Justin. I really enjoyed this because it was great to hear feedback from an outsider who is also my thesis chair. Most of Dr. Steve’s notes attended to diction. We must allow there to be space before and after the consonant sounds. They must be precise and full. If there is no silence, we cannot differentiate a change in sound. He also gave some great notes on vocal and phrase contour for “Color and Light.” The high notes emphasize themselves. I do not need to help them out.
Justin’s best note of the evening was to not forget the sense of the first time. It is a very simple note, but it is good to be reminded of it and I am always amazed at the changes that occur with that in mind. People start trying new things and then other people react and it becomes a chain reaction of new, vibrant moments.

Most of John’s notes for me this evening spoke to creating and sustaining a higher energy for Seurat, but it must be specific. I felt what he was speaking about and I look forward to exploring it in the next few rehearsals.

3/28/06

Once again, I felt that this rehearsal was another step forward. I will say that I was exhausted today though. All day long I felt as if I had not received enough sleep. I slept my usual amount, but it seemed everyone today was a little worn out. Lester Malizia told us that we all looked a little “crispy” today. That seemed an accurate description.

We worked through “Putting It Together” twice and I really liked what started to happen the second time around. The stakes were raised and the intentions were far more specific. I need to have that start happening the first time around. John and I discussed that in the next few rehearsals I could start playing with the blocking to put George back into the party a little more and make it less linear. I hope to do the same with “Lesson #8,” which really worked well this evening at a slower tempo. I felt that I could get all the acting and intention into it without rushing.

“Move On” was a bit of a disaster tonight. That song is very hard to keep straight because it borrows from every other song in the production. We worked on it after
everyone else had been dismissed and I think it helped solidify some things. Chris and I agree that this song may be the song we come in and run-through every day before rehearsals and performances. It just needs that attention.

Some new buzzwords today for vocal quality notes were “Timbre-ly brassy,” “lighter,” “less weight,” “ballad singing” and “moving.”

Notes this evening were getting more specific. We were told to not let anything slip. Why be okay when you could push through to something stunning? Tension and build are so important to this show. That must be in the back of our minds (or sometimes the front) during this whole show. It can never drop.

There is still much to work out, but new discoveries and decisions are being made every day. I feel the end is near, but it doesn’t scare me as much anymore.

3/29/06

This was the first attempt at a full run-through of the show. It kind of snuck up on me. We have been working in small sections for so long that now that the larger arch is in place, I wasn’t quite ready for it. I have always been thinking of this full arch, but I have not had the chance until tonight to actually to take a shot at it.

Overall, I would call this rehearsal a success. The actor playing George gets little to no time to rest or gather his thoughts. From the first lights-up, every ball must be juggled and juggled well. Once you slip, just a little, it is almost gone.

One thing, with voice qualities, that I noticed tonight was that I have given the two Georges different singing and speaking voices. I was somewhat aware of this, but performing them back to back has given me greater clarity. Seurat has a more Opera
quality to his voice and speaking, while George has a great deal more Twang. I justify this by explaining that to a modern audience, the Opera quality can add weight, age and sophistication to a voice; something that the 1800’s would suggest. Since George is of the 1980’s New Jersey/New York era and area, the twang would suggest a big city, metropolitan attitude.

Most importantly, I did not fail tonight. I could sustain the show. It takes a little more energy and focus than I anticipated, but I can adjust and continue to grow with the full arc of the show.

Since we are now in run-throughs, John opted to write our notes out and give them to us before the next show. I applaud this due to our schedules and I like to have the full notes in the director’s voice, not my interpretation. It helps when I return to them later.

3/30/06

Last night we started the practice of me actually sketching on stage. I must begin to juggle that ball as well. I cannot start sketching and forget to act and be present in the moment. I find it somewhat humorous that one time I actually got lost in my sketching world, as Seurat does so often.

I started to feel more and more like these characters are taking on their own lives and personalities. The more I can make the Georges different, the more I feel they are connected. Each must be his own entity, but the frustration and complications involved with creating art is what binds them.
The song with Spot and Fifi took a huge step forward today. Seurat got lost in the need to escape with these dogs. It was so much fun to let him get lost. I credit the sketching a little bit in this because it is a constant reminder of creation and art. Through a suggestion from John, a howl now ends the number. It is actually very effective.

John has been taking very specific notes for me these past few rehearsals and I really feel that George is moving into a place that I feel like I am finally doing justice to the role. I hope to continue this growth through the rest of the run.

3/31/06

The two major things I want to write about tonight are lines notes and vocal care. Rehearsal went fine without too many notable things, so I thought I would write about these two things.

There is something depressing about receiving line notes. It is as if someone follows you around all day and at the end of the day says, “Oh, by the way, here is everything you did wrong today.” Ultimately, if I had done everything right, I wouldn’t have line notes, but it is a bit of a Catch 22. I do want everything to be word perfect, but I cannot be in my head constantly editing myself. It takes me out of the moment. I will try my best, but not become consumed.

I have fairly healthy throughout this entire experience thus far. It is a vocally demanding show, but because I am approaching from the standpoint of defining a character through voice, I have been very aware of what works and what does not. I credit this to vocal health. If anything, this thesis, thus far, is a proof of vocal health by the Estill method.
4/1/06

Tonight was a fantastic rehearsal to end on before sitzprobe and technical rehearsals. Each of the two Georges were really living in the moment and connecting with every character around them. Dot and I connected on levels only hinted at before.

John seemed very pleased with the show’s progress and what direction we are still headed in. The notes have been very detailed and about details. We are all looking forward to hearing how things change with adding a full orchestra and all the visual elements. Not to be too cliché, but “bit by bit” we’re “putting it together.”

4/2/06

Sitzprobe was a tremendous success. The orchestrations are full and beautiful. They will only elevate us further. Justin should be complimented on his outstanding arrangement.

The only song that really stuck out as different to me was the Spot and Fifi song. It was very sparse, so I will have to be aware of keeping a much stricter internal tempo than I have in the past. I don’t think I will be able to hear it well on stage. We will find out.

All of my work on vocal accuracy is now going to pay off with a full orchestra following me, or vice versa. I cannot jump around and be too rubato. Things have not fallen into too many patterns yet and the orchestra has not quite congealed, but I have a feeling we will all be taking these steps together in the next few rehearsals.
4/3/06

This might be the first show that I ever jumped right into technical rehearsals without the benefit of a cue to cue rehearsal prior. It added a little pressure, but it also added a little magic. When I would say things would happen, they did. When certain characters appeared, they did so in full costumes that I haven’t seen and in lighting that made each moment seem special. The show took a large step forward tonight.

There were some missed cues, mixed-up lyrics and such, but really with all the new things being thrown at us, those are to be expected. We need to buckle down and focus all of our attention and energy on performing the show that we know we are all capable of.

I’ve noticed that my entries have become smaller as time wears on. I think that is fine. We are starting to make small adjustments in technique and character, so there are not a lot of large revelations to write about. That is how it should be. Things are getting more solid and more consistent.

4/4/06

I had an awful rehearsal tonight. I made one small mistake at the very top of the show tonight and could never recover. My focus was all over the place. The more I tried to concentrate, the more I became distracted. There were some nice moments of clarity, but they were few and far between.

The one thing that I learned from this rehearsal is that this role is unrelenting. You cannot casually approach it and have it serve you well. You must give over to it and allow every facet of your being to be involved in its creation and evolution. It will not be
kind to you under any other circumstances. It ate me whole tonight. I plan on rectifying this by tomorrow.

John is aiding in this process. Because of technical issues, some of the canvases I have been moving around on stage have been cut. I really like this because it will help streamline the beginning and take a little of that pressure off of me. With that pressure gone, I can really focus in on character and not scenery. While I will miss these visual elements, their elimination will ultimately make this a cleaner, more effective show.

4/5/06

I had a meeting with John today about my poor rehearsal. I initiated the meeting and hoped that John could give me some feedback to help me get back to the Georges that I was tapping into before technical rehearsals.

The key word that he gave me was “torment.” Both of these men are tormented in some way by art, society or both. I needed to hear about the path I was on before to remember what it was like. John is so helpful in these situations and I feel like he is there to help, guide and demand nothing less than the best I have to offer.

The result was an amazing rehearsal for me. I let everything roll off my back that wasn’t related to the show and just focused on the task at hand. Seurat became very tormented and almost a little demented. It became clear that this man was not alright and could not handle living in an artistic and a social world at the same time. His stakes were much higher and his choices even more lamentable. I liked where he ended up.

I realize at this point that I have not spoken about costumes. The costumes have been very nice and Seurat’s beard has been very effective in not only creating the illusion
of facial hair, but giving Seurat one more barrier to the rest of the world. I really like it. It also helps in creating two distinct, different characters.

George, by Seurat’s contrast, became alive with a completely different energy that propelled him forward into the end of the show. The ending felt inevitable and right with the world around it. I was exhausted by the end of the rehearsal.

We re-ran a few things with the orchestra at the end of rehearsal, but my brain was fried. I was trying to keep things going, but some of the wrong words were coming out and I could not figure out the right ones in “Putting It Together.” I am not worried though, I am chalking that up to extreme fatigue.

Overall, I feel like the rehearsal process is ending on a very high note and propelling me forward into performance. I am ready for an audience and to share this powerful story and message with the masses. I am very proud of this role (though it could drive a person crazy) and I find it to be very thesis worthy. Here’s to a successful opening!
APPENDIX B: PERFORMANCE JOURNAL
Opening night was absolutely exhilarating. I was very anxious all day long and I used a lot of the day to try to center myself and focus on my performance. I think that my performance was exactly what I was looking for. George took another step forward and the new adrenaline rush of opening night helped create a greater intensity, rather than take away from the total performance.

There were a few moments that were not quite with the orchestra, but I felt like I was still in control and able to assess the situations and correct them. Another new element of this evening’s performance was the proximity of the audience. I was aware of the chairs when I was rehearsing, but now that there were people sitting in them, it was a whole new ballgame. I had to really go into my character and not see the people that were two feet away from me. In scenes like “Putting It Together,” having a full audience took it to the next level. Now I had someone to relate to and communicate with.

I was very proud of this performance. I felt like I was thinking ahead and thinking vocally. I was playing the part, not letting the part play me. I was making precise choices and living in each moment fully. I felt that this is what a thesis role should provide. This role has taught me a great deal about acting, singing and who I am. I will cherish each performance of this run.

On an interesting note, Judith Moore (who originated the role of “Nurse/Mrs./Blair Daniels” on Broadway) was present for our opening night. It added just a little bit of healthy pressure. Ms. Moore told me that my performance of “that dog song” was the first time that she thought it was entertaining. It had always been
something that she “endured” about the show, but thought my performance made it work in the context of the show. I was extremely flattered.

4/7/06

Tonight’s performance was still a step forward, but things started to settle. We all became a little complacent after opening night. This show must be performed to its highest extent. You cannot lose focus for a single moment. There were a few moments that were just a little bit off tonight. The Spot and Fifi song had some difficult moments where I jumped ahead of the orchestra, but things got back on track. Also, the mustache was giving me a little trouble because I was sweating so much. It wanted to fall off, so I might have been a little more careful with my facial choices so I wouldn’t lose my moustache. I will try to really spirit gum it tomorrow night.

I also noticed some vocal fatigue in myself and my cast mates. We all might have enjoyed a little too much after show partying the night before. It can be difficult on a show weekend with visitors in town. This is where I must go into my voice and define the character with my voice in a healthy and appropriate manner. I will be able to make this whole run on a difficult and demanding role because I am performing the healthy way and not changing things for an audience.

This performance also had an interesting challenge because of the Arturo Sandoval concert being performed in the large theatre. The concert bled over every once in a while, so we as an ensemble had to work harder to create and keep our world alive. The performances are coming along nicely, but we must never let our guard down. The minute we do, this show will rise up and bite us.
On a personal note, tonight was very special for me because my parents, Ken and Sue Swickard, and my fiancée, Alissa Fox, were present.

4/8/06

I had a pretty good show tonight. It was a step further than last night. (My moustache was firmly attached.) It was a rather small house; smaller than I expected it to be. It was also a very quiet audience. I’m not sure if they were really into it or didn’t know what to make of it. From the response at the end of scenes, I would think the former to be true.

“Move On” had its difficult moments tonight. Chris has been experiencing some of that vocal fatigue that has been going around, so things were a little different tonight. While I don’t think that the audience noticed, “Move On” was in enough trouble that Justin asked us to come in early tomorrow and work on a few things.

Just also posted some musical notes for the entire cast to help remind us to keep things trim and musically tight. We cannot get lazy when working on a Sondheim score.

As this role has grown in performance, I have felt the arch and flow of the show becoming far more present. Each George has some wonderful personal growth in their respective acts, but now I truly feel the connection between the two and how Seurat pushes forward into George and George picks up the ball and runs with it.

There were a few times this evening that I felt “other voices” in my head. Most of the time they were my own editorial comments on my performance, but I quickly pushed them out of my head. I tried to use this frustration that all actors experience in the line
“When voices that come through the window go until they distance and die.” I thought it made for a very effective moment.

4/9/06

The rehearsal beforehand was very beneficial. It gave me an opportunity to run a few trouble spots without the pressure of performance. I felt a marked difference in performance. Justin is very tuned in to the needs of his performers and this was just what I needed.

I would dare say that this was some of the best matinee singing I have ever done. I felt that all the tools at my disposal with my voice were fully present. Some of the vocal fatigue still continues to linger in some of the other cast members. I have yet to experience and don’t plan on ever experiencing it. One must be aware of the needs of the voice and how one uses it. I really think that using the Estill technique is making it so I don’t experience a lot of fatigue. I know exactly what I am doing with my voice and that each note is being created in a healthy and safe manner. This is going to come in handy when we have to perform a double next Saturday.

I felt both Georges were on top of their game today. I felt connected to the art and let it fill me up to create this two men. While this may be the most difficult role I have ever undertaken, I will be sorry to see it go. As I write this, I realize that I am at the halfway point in performance. Some roles you are happy to see go, but this one has really challenged me to go outside my normal boundaries and explore new things that I never knew about myself. This is the perfect graduate experience; just what I signed on
for by coming to UCF. I am proud to have *Sunday in the Park with George* as my thesis role and my final UCF performance.

4/13/06

Taking a few days off presents interesting challenges. There is a sudden new sense of the first time in everything one does. These performances that are in the middle of a run, but the beginning of a week, take the most concentration because everyone around you is in the same boat. I took it upon myself to lead the way. If we set the standards high, then we wouldn’t fall back into bad habits and continue to let the performances grow and intensify organically.

On an interesting note, this evening we had Pati Sayers filling in for Dr. Chicurel on the second piano. For me, there was a noticeable difference. It was not good or bad, just different. I had to be in more control of most of my songs and let there be a little less collaboration and a little more dictatorship. I also didn’t want to take to many rubato liberties, as to not confuse anyone. This has been my “straightest,” or “squarest,” show to date.

With all of these new things thrown at us, I feel we still took a step forward. Some are still complaining of vocal fatigue. I wonder how much rest was accomplished on the days off. I still feel fine and healthy with my voice.

4/14/06

This was my best performance to date. I felt completely invested in every moment and every scene. My voice was agile and able to change as the emotional needs
called for them. This was a very special evening for me because my dear friends and
employers at the Southern Colorado Repertory Theatre, Fred and Harriet Vaugeois, were
in attendance. They have not seen me in many dramatic roles, so this was a chance for
me to show them what I have learned in graduate school and my versatility.

There were also many student friends in attendance. With all of these people that
I care about in the audience, I felt that it helped take my performance to the next level.
This was an emotionally charged performance. Both Georges felt a great loss and
George felt great hope. The arch between these two men is getting more defined and
dramatic with each performance.

We were asked to stay after the show for a quick announcement. The artistic staff
doubted that two performances tomorrow would be in Chris’s best vocal interest. They
decided to cancel the matinee. I am disappointed.

4/15/06 – Matinee

This performance was cancelled due to Chris’s vocal fatigue.

4/15/06 – Evening

This performance was the pinnacle of the run. So many productions seem to peak
sometime during performance or even before opening, but this production grew every
night and I felt that this last performance was the one performance that let all of the
elements align and create a truly collaborative performance.

During the Act II “Sunday,” I turned to see everyone bow to me and everything
became very real. It was the apex for George, the closing night, the last performance for
me at UCF and maybe, the last performance with some of my classmates. I could not help from crying. The tears just flowed freely from my eyes. The last line, when Dot finishes it for me, had a whole new meaning because George could not finish it on his own.

This is my proudest moment on stage. I am going to miss this show and will always remember the religious experience on stage that I felt tonight.

The house was fantastic tonight. They all were invested in the characters and the plot. They were ready to receive this show and pick up on all of its subtleties. I also knew that I was in the zone tonight. I said part of a wrong line during “Putting It Together” and I quickly fixed and made it make sense. It did not through me off and my head stayed in the story, rather than letting it take down the rest of the performance.

We had a rather lackluster KC ACTF response this evening, but I did receive the Irene Ryan nomination for my efforts. The best response I received was from a student who saw the show. She had been studying with Dr. Chicurel this past semester and she had no idea what my thesis project was about. She spoke with me about my onsets and my vocal qualities. I knew that I had succeeded when another Estill student appreciated what I was doing.

Overall, this has been a life changing production for me. I cannot think of any better way to end my MFA career than Sunday in the Park with George. It was the right meeting of all of the right people at the right time and at the right place. This kind of production is one in a million and I am so proud to have been involved in this amazing piece of theatre. Everyone who worked on this show with me will always have a special place in my memory and my heart.
In order to have a thesis project approved, the student must write a brief abstract to explain the parameters of project. My abstract was as follows:

Defining a Character through Voice:
A Structural Analysis of the Character “George” in Sondheim and Lapine’s
*Sunday in the Park with George* using the Estill Voice Model

I intend to use the role of “George” from *Sunday in the Park with George* by Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine as my thesis role, in compliance with the outlines of a Master of Fine Arts, Musical Theatre Thesis Role Project Accompanied by Monograph Document as laid out in the University of Central Florida, Department of Theatre, Master of Fine Arts, Thesis Guidelines.

I will use the Estill Voice Model, in particular six voice qualities (Speech, Twang, Falsetto, Cry/Sob, Belt and Opera) and their permutations, to define character, character traits and emotions. Traits and emotions that specific voice qualities can influence are, but are not limited to, location, age, background, socioeconomic status, genre, intelligence, nationality, class, culture, gender, promiscuity, disposition, pain and revelations. I will use voice qualities to show specific human qualities of the character George and the people he imitates in his painting by letting the characters’ given circumstances (textual and sub-textual), the way other actors portray the characters and the director’s and musical director’s input inform the choices in voice quality.

By using the specific technical aspects of the Estill Voice Training System™ and combining them with the limitless aesthetic aspects of theatrical character, I hope to show that this new structural analysis does not pigeon hole an actor, but rather it makes one more aware, accessible, adept and flexible to the needs of the character and the spontaneity of each new performance.
Part of the requirements of the thesis project at UCF calls for outside observation reports from the thesis committee chair to chronicle and give feedback to the student’s thesis process; Dr. Steven Chicurel’s reports are as follows:

Spring 2006 – At various points during the early part of the semester, I met with Michael Swickard to discuss the scope, development, and process of his thesis role as it will pertain to his monograph.

The early stage of my work with Michael was serving as a sounding board as he described his design for the project. Through numerous animated and productive conversations, we developed a plan of action that would provide Michael with tools and activities he would need during the rehearsal process of “Sunday in the Park with George” which he would ultimately “parlay” into his research and writing.

Rehearsal 1

In late February, I attended a staging rehearsal of “Sunday in the Park with George.” While it was early in the creative process, Michael already displayed a good amount of character growth that was a reflection of his pre-rehearsal research and preparation. As a focus of Michael’s monograph is on character development and voice quality, I was pleased to hear him experiment with variations and options in his vocal delivery of the text. This was evident not only in sung sections of the score, but in spoken lines of script as well.

Michael was totally immersed in his work. He was focused, serious, and quite intent on making the most of the rehearsal period. Additionally, he had chosen to wear a suit jacket as part of his exploration of the physicalization of Georges, his character.

Michael held his script/score, but was already well on the way to being off-book for the section of the play being rehearsed this evening.

At the end of an arduous rehearsal period, in which only a few brief scenes were staged and rehearsed, Michael and I met briefly for notes. He received my comments very well, and he was eager to process them and use them to experience more growth as he fleshed-out his character.

Rehearsal 2

I attended the first dress rehearsal, in which the full orchestra was added to the proceedings. Elements of costumes and lighting were also incorporated for the first time.
One thing that struck me immediately, upon observing Michael’s first entrance, was that, in fact, he had come to embody the character of Georges. This was manifest in Michael’s visual and oral representation. He “landed” successfully important words and lines of text. His relationship with other characters with whom he interacted was fully developed and entirely credible.

The work Michael had done in choosing aspects of vocal variety, ensuring healthy vocal delivery, even when using “character voices,” and in working towards a consistent performance has yielded a successful product.
APPENDIX E: LIST OF MUSICAL MOTIFS
"Sunday in the Park with George" Motifs

Creation Motif

Sunday Motif

Hot Motif

Dizzy Motif

Hello George Motif

Finishing the Hat Motif

Jules Motif

Painting Motif

Observation Motif
Elizabeth Maupin made the trip to Daytona Beach to review *Sunday in the Park with George*. Her review follows:

'Sunday in the Park With George'
Smaller scale "Sunday" succeeds with ingenuity, talent

Elizabeth Maupin | Sentinel Staff Writer
Posted April 7, 2006

It's a good time in local theater when shows by two of the greatest living musical-theater practitioners are onstage at the same time -- and both of them produced by UCF Conservatory Theatre.

I've only heard good rumors about *Falsettos*, William Finn's quirky masterpiece, which is on this weekend and again April 19-23 on UCF's main campus. Meanwhile, a small-scale version of *Sunday in the Park With George*, at Daytona Beach's News-Journal Center through this weekend, proves again why this heady musical about art and creation won Stephen Sondheim (and book-writer James Lapine) a Pulitzer Prize.

With *Sunday in the Park*, director John Bell has taken on a massive challenge -- how to turn an expansive musical about a piece of two-dimensional artwork, Georges Seurat's "A Sunday Afternoon on the Isle of La Grande Jatte," into a smaller musical on a thrust stage where the audience sits on three sides.

That Bell has mostly succeeded is a testament not only to his ingenuity, and that of scenic designer Robert Fetterman and lighting designer David Upton, but also to musical director Justin Scott Fischer, his seven-piece orchestra and a talented 17-member cast.

Ever since its 1984 Broadway debut, *Sunday in the Park* has scared off other producers. Partly, I suspect, you can blame its cerebral subject matter, and partly the original scenic design, in which the cast members and pieces of scenery formed a grand tableau that brought Seurat's great painting to life. That's an idea that's more easily said than done, and on a thrust stage, where some of the audience is looking at this two-dimensional "painting" from the sides, it doesn't entirely work.

But that's only one moment of the musical, which examines the obsessive creativity and failed human connections of the short-lived Seurat (1859-1891) and the efforts of an apparent descendant, also named George, to find his own artistic way. The conceit is that the same actor plays both Georges and the same actress...
their muses -- an artist's model named Dot and, 100 years later, her daughter Marie.

From the musical's first notes, it's clear that Michael Swickard will make a terrific Georges: He sings with absolute authority and grace. Swickard looks less like a struggling artist than like a round-faced choirboy, and when he's playing Seurat the cord is visible that attaches his realistic-looking fake beard. But Swickard has a rich, glorious voice, and he makes the artist's single-minded intensity utterly real.

As Dot and later Marie, Chris Elaine Staffel has a similarly lovely voice. (In fact, she sounds at times like the young Bernadette Peters, who originated the role.) But although Staffel is a pretty, humorous presence, she doesn't show the depth of a woman who is attracted to Seurat because of his paintings. And Staffel's delivery of "Children and Art," Marie's quiet number, is too deliberately old-lady-like to be pleasing to the ears.

Yet there are little gems of performances among the cast (especially Timothy Ellis and Rebecca Johnson as a pair of supercilious art connoisseurs), and the ensemble as a whole, backed by Fischer's crack orchestra, sings gorgeously: I could listen to the soft, sweeping "Sunday" all night.

If there's a way to show the creation of order from chaos, Sondheim and Lapine brilliantly do just that as their Seurat imagines the lives of the shopgirls and soldiers he sees relaxing in the park -- and then reimagines them in perfect harmony as dots of contrasting color on an enormous white canvas.

UCF's production has its minor failings, from some washed-out projections to a mispronunciation to an unfortunate costume in the second act. But by reimagining this difficult musical on a little Daytona Beach stage, Bell shows that he and his company get exactly what Seurat was all about.

Elizabeth Maupin can be reached at emaupin@orlandosentinel.com or 407-420-5426.
From the April 15th performance, what follows is the written response from our KCACTF respondent, Charles Sirmon.

University Of Central Florida
Sunday in the Park with George
Directed by John Bell
Daytona Campus
4/15/06

The production of University of Central Florida's Sunday in the Park with George was prefaced with a beautiful display of lights and color in a stunning new thrust theater. Once the lights dimmed I was in for a wonderful evening. A combination of spot-on casting, grand singing, great character portrayals and iconic acting on the parts of the leads, provided me with a beautiful night at the theatre.

Sunday in the Park with George a musical in two acts with book by James Lapine and music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim has been known to be a musical challenge. With innovating direction under the superb leadership of John Bell and the amazing talents of musical direction of Justin S. Fisher they shared moment of sheer beauty.

The evening however belonged to second-year MFA Michael Swickard. Swickard's performance, pitch and diction quality shinned through out the evening. His strong presence was a delight for me and the audience. His clarity and connection with George in Act One and Two was superb. What Swickard and his cast did especially well, through facial expression and body language was not just singing the songs, but act out the emotions and actions underneath Sondheim's music and lyrics.

Act One introduces the painter, his model and mistress played well by Ms Staffel, and the various characters. All actors really brought the painting alive well before we ever saw them as the painting. When the action of Act Two moves forward to a resent time, the challenge of character develop from Act One was sublime. The growth and movement by the actors under the direction of Mr. Bell was exciting to watch although the raised thrust stage at times became very noisy when lots of movement accrued, maybe because of the great acoustics but a little distracting. Clarity was a definite player in the production and very well executed by the players. From movement and placement most transitions worked beautifully. Outstanding supporting roles of Paul Gebb (great believability in Act Two), Katrina Williams and Courtney Winstead transformed from scene stealer in Act One to beauty and sophistication in Act Two.

The set of small rolling canvases and simple set pieces carried on by the actor were very affective. Light was used to convey time, place and emotion. Light
being the strong design element of the production also caused for some small problems. At times the actor and or tech would be in the direct pool of light from behind the well used cyc and caused a small distraction when light was blocked. Also above my GREAT seat there was much squeaking and noise during Act Two- so much as I and the people around me looked up and hoped nothing might be loose above us or fall. I understand there were a few lighting problems during the opening of Act Two. These minor problems in no way take away from the set's superior aesthetic quality and functionality.

There were very VERY few moments of the night I did not enjoy. I had to remind myself to make notes, so engrossed my John Bells work and pace and the evenings performance and of course your beautiful space. (My pen keep not wanting to write- must have been a sign). This was truly a great night out at the theatre. I look forward to more productions with UCF.

Irene Ryan Nominee: Michael Swickard

Charles Sirmon
Director of Theatre
Chipola College
APPENDIX H: COMPANY LIST
Director – John Bell
Musical Director – Justin S. Fischer
Choreographer – Gary Flannery
Technical Director – Guy Wright
Scenic Designer – Robert Fetterman
Lighting Designer – David Upton
Costume Designer – Katherine Strand-Evans
Digital Design – Robert & James Dastoli
Sound Design – Jason Hoffman
Stage Manager – Hannah Kugelmann
Assistant Stage Managers – Jennifer Blancas & Barkley Finsterbush
Assistant Director – Leah Page
Assistant Costume Designer – Carol Casey
Assistant Lighting Designer – Natassia Jimenez
Production Manager – Robert Fetterman
Master Electrician – Chris Hill
Assistant Master Electrician – Lisa Hendershot
Electrician/Follow-Spot – Ryan Hauenstein
Wardrobe – Kristen Myrick
Wardrobe – Heath Williams
Carpenter – John Uterhardt
Carpenter – Jon Shoger
Box Office Manager – Donna Rahman
Louise/Party Guest – Elise Benzing
Jules/Charles Redmond – Timothy Ellis
Soldier/Dennis – Paul Gebb
Horn Player/Photographer – Matthew James
Yvonne/Harriet Pawling – Rebecca Johnson
Nurse/Mrs./Naomi – Josephine Leffner
Franz/Alex – Jesse LeNoir
Mr./Robert Greenberg – Patrick Moran
Woman in the Park/Waitress – Leah Page
Boatman/Lee Randolph – Rockford Sansom
Dot/Marie – Chris Elaine Staffel
Frieda/Betty – Madison Stratton
George – Michael Swickard
Louis/Billy Webster – Kip Taisey
Old Lady/Blair Daniels – Debbie Tedrick
Celeste #2/Waitress – Katrina Williams
Celeste #1/Elaine – Courtney Winstead
Piano – Dr. Steven Chicurel
Violín – Kathleen Beard
Violín – Zoriy Zinger
Cello – Laurel Stanton
Horn – Pamela Titus
Percussion – Justin Steger
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Ruyter, Nancy Lee Chalfa. The Cultivation of Body and Mind in Nineteenth-Century

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REFERENCES


