

Program Notes

The Non-Fiction Musical

There are many different sources for musicals: novels (*The Pajama Game*), plays (*Oklahoma!*) story collections (*Guys and Dolls*) even comic strips (*Annie*). Recently it seems as if popular films have been the main inspiration for Broadway musicals, but as often happens the exception belies the rule. Recent Tony winners have been *In the Heights* (original story) and *Spring Awakening* (a 19th century play).

Working is in a class almost by itself. It is based on Studs Terkel's best selling book, *Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do* (1974) which consists of a series of interviews with Americans across regions, social lines and racial divides. So a non-fiction musical. The only work comparable was the 1948 revue, *Inside USA* based on John Gunther's collection of essays about post war America. *Inside USA* had music and lyrics by Howard Dietz and Arthur Schwartz, whose songs were in last season's *Dancing in the Dark* here at the Globe. *Inside USA* was a traditional revue, a cavalcade of song interspersed with written sketches. It starred Beatrice Lillie, Clifton Webb and Perry Como so apparently ordinary Americans weren't part of the mix.

Stylistically *Working* is different in that it is the work of a number of song writers and though seemingly a revue, it has a strong thematic connection between the musical numbers. One worker's story blends into another's in a way to show how interconnected we all are. *Working* also presents working men and women in a more realistic manner than we are used to in a musical entertainment. The song writers use the workers' interviews and find the poetry and power in their words. It's rare to find a musical entertainment that depicts real, ordinary people in their own words as they reflect not only on their jobs which some love, some hate and some just tolerate but also their musings about the greater meaning of work and its place in our lives and in our society.

As you can see from these excerpts, the song writers who have contributed to *Working* have skillfully raised the words of the men and women that were interviewed for his book into the poetry of the musical theater without losing the connection to the spare and revealing and honest words that were originally spoken to Studs Terkel.

From Studs Terkel's interviews:



Maggie Holmes — Domestic Worker

When people come in the room — that's what bugs me — they give you that look: You just a maid. It do somethin' to me. It really gets into me. Lotta times I'm tellin' (my kids) about things, they'll be saying, "Mom, that's olden days." They don't understand because it's so far from what's happening now. Mighty few young black women are doin' domestic work. And I'm glad. That's why I want my kids to go to school. This one lady told me, "All

you people are getting' like that." I said, 'I'm glad' There's no more gettin' on their knees.

CLEANIN' WOMAN by Micki Grant

*I've got a daughter with a head on her shoulders,
Pretty as a picture too!*

*She ain't gonna hide that face and head
Behind doors, scrubbin' floors like her Mama do,
If my legs don't give out and my back hold up,
I'm gonna make her a better day
You'll never see her gettin' down on her knees,
Unless she's down there to pray!*

JOE by Craig Carnelia

*You wake at ten; Fold up the bed
You cook an egg; You toast some bread
You think about the day ahead; It's like I said
You take a walk; You meet a chum
You shoot the bull; You argue some
You lose at gin*

Joe Zmuda — Retiree

The day goes pretty fast for me now. I don't regret it at all that I've got all this time on hand. I'm enjoying it to the best of my ability. I don't daydream at all. I just think of something and I forget it. That daydreaming don't do you any good. I sleep late. I get up between nine and ten thirty in the morning. The first thing you do is take ahold of the coffee pot handle and you find out it's empty, so you gotta make coffee. I just had three soft boiled eggs about an hour ago.





Grace Clements — Felter

We work eight straight hours, with two ten minute breaks and one twenty-minute break for lunch. If you want to use the washroom, you have to do that in that time. By the time you leave your tank, you go to the washroom, freshen up a bit, go into the recreation room, it makes it very difficult to finish a small lunch and be back in the tank in twenty minutes.

MILL WORKER by James Taylor

*Millwork ain't easy
Millwork ain't hard
Millwork most often is
A goddam awful boring job
I'm waiting for a daydream
To take me through the morning
And put me in my coffee break
So I can have a sandwich and remember
And it's me and my machine
For the rest of the morning
For the rest of the afternoon
And the rest of my life*

THE MASON by Craig Carnelia

*He does his work
His workday flies
Quittin' time's a big surprise
And then it's one more stone
To get just right
It's always one more stone
Before the night*

**Carl Murray Bates —
Stone Mason**

It's pretty good day layin' stone or brick. Not tiring. Anything you like to do isn't tiresome. It's hard work; stone is heavy At the same time, you get interested in what you're doing and you usually fight the clock the other way. You're not lookin' for quittin'. You're wondering you haven't got enough done and it's almost quitin' time.



Rose Hoffman — Teacher

In the old days, kids would sit in their seats. If I had to leave the room for a few minutes, I'd say, "Will you please be good?" And they were. Today they have these multiple chairs instead of the pedestals, seats that were attached. The kids slide all over the room. Anything to make life more difficult. The language! I could never use some of the

words I hear. Up to five years ago I could never spell a four letter word. These children know everything. It's shocking to me because I think that anyone that uses that language doesn't know any better. They don't have command of any language. But maybe I'm wrong; because brilliant people use it nowadays too I must be a square.

NOBODY TELLS ME HOW

lyrics by Susan Birkenhead
*My children were always respectful
When the principal came, they would rise
If I had to leave for a minute or two
They always found something "constructive" to do
And everyone sat in their places according to size
But kids don't know how to behave anymore!
Ask them to rise and they ask you: "What for?"
We confiscate weapons and drugs at the door
No spitballs and comic books now
They want me to teach in a classroom like that
But nobody tells me how*

FATHERS AND SONS by Stephen Schwartz

*I heard a lot of songs say, "Where you goin' my son?"
Now I know they're for real,
Boy you never stop to think how fast the years run,
And the things they steal.
Now it seems I always knew,
Why I do the things I do
And the things I never did,
Why I worked my whole damn life,
So's I could give the better life
Than the one my dad could give me,
I give it
To my kid*

Mike LeFevre — Ironworker

This is gonna sound square, but my kid is my imprint. He's my freedom. This is why I work. Every time I see a young guy walk by with a shirt and tie and dressed up real sharp, I'm lookin' at my kid, you know? That's it.

