

BROADWAY

Broadway

THE AMERICAN MUSICAL



Feature

In Their Own Words

Sometimes the backstage theater stories are just as compelling as the shows themselves. Following are just a few of the many personal recollections offered by theater legends in on-camera interviews featured in **BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL**.

Stephen Sondheim, composer/lyricist, on Oscar Hammerstein

“He was a surrogate father to me from the age of 11 to 15. Oscar saw in me somebody he could pass knowledge onto...My major memory of my teens is when Oscar took me to New Haven to see the first night of *Carousel*. I was so moved at the end of the first act that I cried into Dorothy Hammerstein’s fur...”

Julie Andrews, performer

When I was about 19 years old, I auditioned for Richard Rodgers, and I belted out my aria and sang it as loud as I could...Mr. Rodgers came up on stage and he said, ‘That was absolutely adequate.’ And I went, ‘Uh, oh, really.’ And then he cracked up and said, ‘No, it was wonderful’...”

Bob Fosse, choreographer

“I suppose if you repeat something enough times it’s called ‘a style.’ I started with the hats because I began losing my hair very early. I’ve always been slightly round-shouldered, so I started to exaggerate that. And I don’t have what the ballet dancers call a turnout, so I started turning my feet in, and I guess that’s the ‘style’ they talk about.”

Agnes De Mille, choreographer, on making *Oklahoma!*

“I remember so well the triple row of [servicemen’s] uniforms in the back. The men watching this folksy show...with the tears streaming down their cheeks because it symbolized home and what they were going to die for.”

Jerry Mitchell, choreographer/director, on *A Chorus Line*

“I was in the last row of the last balcony...I went back to my teacher and said, ‘You’ve got to teach me...the opening combination.’ Two years later I audition, I got the show, and I went on tour with the show. And when I went on the first time, I was doing the opening combination and I remember

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thinking to myself, ‘I wonder who’s in the back row.’”

Dana O’Connell, former Ziegfeld showgirl

“The showgirls carried those beautiful costumes, and they had to learn a certain walk in order to balance the hats...‘the Ziegfeld Walk’...I felt marvelous...Ziegfeld just captured a certain something.”

Galt MacDermot, composer, on writing *Hair*

“I’d never seen a Broadway musical when I wrote *Hair*...People still come up to me and say that it changed their life...”

Jerome Robbins, choreographer, on making *On the Town*

“We were all novices. We really were. We didn’t know a g—damn thing about doing a show.”

Patricia Morison, performer, on *Kiss Me, Kate*

“Broadway was always breaking barriers. My first line in *Kiss Me, Kate* was, ‘You bastard,’ and when I finally said it, in the theater, the gasp from the audience was incredible – ‘Oh, no!’ It’s slightly different nowadays, isn’t it?”

Arthur Laurents, on directing *La Cage aux Folles*

“In the beginning, when all these guys in drag came out onstage, the men who had been dragged to see it by their wives covered their faces. At the end of the show, they were standing up and cheering [these] two men dancing off into the sunset. I thought that was quite an accomplishment.”

James Lapine, writer/director, on *Sunday in the Park with George*

“[the workshop]...was just like watching a painting come together...dot by dot, and as each song came in, as each lyric came in, the picture became more focused and the storytelling clear...it literally didn’t come together ‘til a day or two before the critics arrived.”

Ben Vereen, performer, on *Hair*

“Every singer, dancer, hippie, panther, you name it, we were all on line waiting to audition for the show. And we went into a series of rehearsals like I’d never seen before...We did a lot of exercises dealing with caring for one another, loving one another, in order to be loving to the audience.”

Al Hirschfeld, artist, on Broadway’s future

“Oh, I’ve been hearing about Broadway disappearing ever since I put on long pants. I mean, it’s been the fabulous invalid. But it survives, it survives...”