So You Think You're In Charge: Women and the Mid-Twentieth Century Musical

Written by: McKenzie Smith

Submitted to: Department of Communication, Media, and Performance

Spring 2024

First Reader: Mark Cosdon

Second Reader: Michael Mehler

So You Think You're In Charge: Women and the Mid-Twentieth Century Musical

By

McKenzie Smith
Spring 2024

Submitted to the Department of Communication, Media, and Performance in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the Degree of Bachelor of Arts

I hereby recognize and pledge to fulfill my responsibilities, as defined in the Honor Code, and to maintain the integrity of both myself and the College as a whole.

_____
[McKenzie Smith]

Approved by:

_____
[Mark Cosdon]

_____
[Michael Mehler]

Table of Contents

Introduction....1
Chapter 1: Research and Background....4
Chapter 2: Rehearsal Process....20
Chapter 3: Reflection and Future Changes....25
Conclusion....29
Appendix 1: The Script....32
Appendix 2: The Sketches....34
Works Cited....40

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank everyone who helped me make this project a reality. Thank you to my voice teacher Wei En Chan for spending countless voice lessons working with me on the songs I selected. Thank you to my actors for taking time out of their busy schedules for late night rehearsals. Thank you to my directors for also taking time out of their schedules to be my eyes from the audience. Thank you to all of my professors for answering my numerous questions about how to prepare for a self-devised performance. Thank you to everyone who came out to watch one of the biggest performances of my life. Thank you to my partner Matt for always being there when I needed advice or someone to bounce ideas off of. Words cannot cover how much you have helped me. And a very big thank you to my parents and my sister Aliza. You guys have been my biggest supporters not only while I was at Allegheny, but throughout my whole life. There were several people who wanted to discourage me from acting, but you never let me quit, for that I am extremely grateful.

Introduction

Musical theatre developed mainly over the twentieth century, its roots deeply entangled with opera and other forms of theatre. Many theatrical productions were brought to America from Europe. Music has almost always been involved in theatre in one way or another; whether that was opera, which consisted of almost entirely musical numbers, or plays with music in a scene. It was not until the late nineteenth century that any music that was, "not dramatically justifiable" (Stempel 26) was removed from the stage due to the rise of realism in theatre. The first show that is widely considered the beginning of American musical theatre was *The Black Crook*, written in 1866 (Hischak 74). *The Black Crook* was not called a musical yet; it was called a music-dance-drama. Mostly, this show became known as the beginning of the Broadway musical by accident. The music and dances that amazed audiences were added after a ballet house burned down, and someone suggested that they add the now-homeless ballerinas to the show to spice up the melodrama (Hischak 74).

Unlike other forms of theatre that came together to create musical theatre, this form of theatre has had women at the center of attention since its creation. For example, up until the seventeenth century in England, women characters were played by female impersonators. Oftentimes, the female impersonators were young boys whose voices had not yet dropped. The fact that there were women on stage from the beginning of musical theatre is revolutionary compared to its predecessors. However, this is not the only way that gender makes musical theatre stand out from other forms of theatre. According to Stacy Wolf, "gender - the performed, embodied, and envoiced difference between women and men - is foundational to the very genre of musical theatre" (S. Wolf 6).

Women's roles in musicals have changed drastically since the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. During the early years of musical theatre, women were often depicted as wives or wenches. Some examples of these characters include Parthy from *Show Boat* (1927) and Mary from *Mary* (1920). Parthy is a housewife whose main concern is raising her daughter while her husband is away. Although *Mary* is named after the character Mary, her main purpose in this musical is to serve as a love interest for the male lead.

The term musical theatre did not become widely recognized until the 1940s. Richard

Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II were the first artists credited with this new form of theatre. Rodgers and Hammerstein started working together as showwriters in 1942 and continued working together for 18 years until Hammerstein's death in 1960 (Stempel 291). Before working with Hammerstein, Rodgers worked with Lorenz Hart for many years. Their working relationship was strained due to Hart struggling with being an alcoholic. After 25 years of working together, Rodgers informed Hart that he would find a new partner if Hart walked out on him. When Rodgers told Hart that he planned on working with Hammerstein, Hart's response was," I don't know why you've put up with me all these years… the best thing for you is to forget about me" (Nolan 5). After this, Rodgers left Hart to work with Hammerstein, and they became one of the musical theatre's most formidable partners.

A few notable musicals that these two showwriters created include *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Cinderella* (1957), and *The Sound of Music* (1959). *Oklahoma!* was the first show that Rodgers and Hammerstein created together, but it was originally titled *Away We Go!* According to Rodgers, "what happened between Oscar and [him] was almost chemical" (Nolan 7). This strong bond would explain how they were able to write and produce around 11 musicals in less than 20 years. Rodgers and Hammerstein unknowingly created the formula for musicals that many showwriters would follow for years to come.

From the 1950s to the 1970s, starting shortly after Rodgers and Hammerstein's first musical together, American musical theatre experienced a sudden boom of creativity and shows. This creative surge is often referred to as the Golden Age of Musical Theatre.

There are six shows that were produced during this time, starting from 1950 to 1979, that help an audience in 2024 glimpse into what the gender dynamics were of this era. A few shows that demonstrate these gender dynamics include *Guys and Dolls* (1950), *New Faces of 1952* (1952), *Wish You Were Here* (1952), *My Fair Lady* (1956), *Funny Girl* (1964), and *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1979). Although Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote none of the musicals I selected, the shows were strongly influenced by the work that these two showwriters completed. For a long time, the way that Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote their musicals was the standard that musical theatre would follow. Rodgers and Hammerstein realized that the music needed to expand a character, and then the character would expand the narrative of the musical. That is until Stephen Sondheim rose in the theatre world under the teachings of Hammerstein. Sondheim started working as an apprentice for

Hammerstein when he was a teenager (Swayne 5-6). In the 1950s, Sondheim started to work on his own shows, such as *Saturday Night* (1954), *West Side Story* (1957), and *Gypsy* (1959). In the 1960s, Sondheim moves away from the book musical and pioneers the concept musical. In other words, he does away with a plot-driven show and instead shifts to a theme-driven one. However, many argue about which was the first concept musical, *Company* (1970) marked when this form of theatre truly arrived, brought in by no other than Stephen Sondheim (Hischak 166).

These musicals have a unique way of displaying the rising tensions between men and women regarding a woman's role in and outside the home. In each of these six musicals, women consistently challenge what society deems acceptable. The musicals also began to question the role of gender on stage. For example, in *Funny Girl*, the lead Fanny Brice was a wife, mother, and actress. She was doing more work to support her family than her husband Nick Arnstein was, making the audience question the traditional gender roles in a marriage.

The six musicals I selected also reflect how women of the mid-twentieth century were standing for new standards and acceptance of beauty. *Funny Girl*'s Fanny Brice was a Jewish woman whose features deviated from those traditionally accepted as beautiful for women. In *My Fair Lady*, Eliza Doolittle is turned from a working girl on the streets of London to a "respectable lady." Yet, with this transformation, she states that she does not recognize herself.

Another traditional role challenged by the women in the musicals I selected was being more confrontational with their husbands or partners. In *New Faces of 1952*, there is a song called "Guess Who I Saw Today," in which a wife discovers that her husband is cheating on her, so she confronts him about it versus staying quiet about it.

My senior project includes a self-devised performance, which stages selections from each of these mid-twentieth-century musicals. Over the course of four months, I have been rehearsing these pieces in preparation for a senior comprehensive recital to be held on April 12th, 2024. Having taken voice lessons for many years and participated in the Allegheny College Choir and Soprano Alto Chorale, I focused my individual voice lessons on performance technique and musical theatre during my senior year. Weekly, with my voice instructor Wei En Chan, we rehearsed the pieces I selected and focused on vocal techniques to expand my singing range as well as abilities. I have been singing since I was young, but only in my senior year at Allegheny did my range and singing abilities truly begin to grow.

Chapter 1: Research and Background

In the six musicals I have selected to analyze from the Golden Age of musical theatre, I chose one song from each show on which to focus. These songs include "Marry The Man Today" from *Guys and Dolls*, "Shopping Around" from *Wish You Were Here*, "Guess Who I Saw Today" from *New Faces of 1952*, "Just You Wait" from *My Fair Lady*, "Don't Rain on My Parade" from *Funny Girl*, and "Wait" from *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Each song demonstrates how the women who sing them operate in their respective shows. These songs help us, as an audience in the twenty-first century, better understand the roles women played not only in society but also in their relationships.

Guys and Dolls is a musical that revolves around gambling and the relationship between men and women, or in other words, dolls. The title of this musical alone is enough to tell the audience how society in 1950 perceived women. The two leading women in this musical are Adelaide and Sarah Brown. Adelaide is a singer at a nightclub and has been engaged to Nathan for 14 years. This lengthy engagement was partially because Nathan would not give up gambling like Adelaide begged him to many times. Also, so many people around Nathan kept telling him that being married would be a shackle and that he would spend all of the money he worked for Adelaide, who would not work after she was married. Sarah Brown is a general of the Save-a-Soul Mission whom Sky Masterson is pursuing because of a bet made by Nathan that Sky could not take Sarah to Havana. Sarah is steadfast in her beliefs of right and wrong, and gambling is considered wrong in her eyes. When talking with Sky about why gambling is wrong, he asks Sarah what her perfect man would be. By changing from an intelligent discussion of beliefs to romantic interests, Sky undermines Sarah's thoughts simply because of her gender.

Unfortunately for Adelaide and Sarah, both Sky and Nathan are avid gamblers. Throughout the musical, they try to convince their men to give up gambling if they genuinely want to be with them. Unsurprisingly, Nathan and Sky do not give up gambling. While Adelaide and Sarah are frustrated with the situation, they bump into each other. In "Marry the Man Today," Adelaide gives Sarah the idea that they should, "Marry the man today/And change his ways tomorrow" (Loesser 77).

It takes a little convincing on Adelaide's end to make Sarah see the logic behind this plan. Sarah soon starts to get on board with Adelaide's plan, and the audience can see the progression of her thoughts as the two women start to echo each other. When Sarah starts to show that she likes Adelaide's plan, Adelaide echoes Sarah to encourage her forward:

SARAH: Marry the man today

ADELAIDE: (Marry the man today)

SARAH: Maybe he's leaving town

ADELAIDE: (Maybe he's leaving town)

SARAH: Don't let him get away

ADELAIDE: (Don't let him get away)

(Loesser 77)

At the end of the song, they know that after they have trapped Nathan and Sky in marriage, they can fix everything about the men they deem unseemly.

A musical such as *Guys and Dolls* was just one of the many ways this narrative of a woman manipulating her husband to get what she wants was available to housewives. Women's magazines were how most housewives would learn about what was happening outside their household. Most of the time, though, these magazines held nothing more than information about new cleaning supplies or tips about how to make their husbands happy, etc. In 1955, the monthly women's magazine *McCall's* published a story called "Almost a Love Affair." This article is about how a woman got into an argument with her husband because she was balancing a checkbook and feared that she was losing him. That night, "she hears a noise that might be a burglar; even though she knows it's only a mouse, she calls helplessly to her husband, and wins him back" (Friedan 47). Although the wife in "Almost a Love Affair" was already married, unlike Sarah and Adelaide, the idea of making the husband think he knows more than his wife is consistent between both works. The husbands would remain ignorant of their wives' true intentions while the wives maintained the image of existing, "only for and through her husband and children" (Friedan 47).

The role of the housewife is not talked about too much in *Guys and Dolls* since it primarily focuses on gambling and the chaos surrounding it. However, there is a song called "Guys and Dolls" where Nathan Detroit's friends, Nicely and Benny, point out the pitfalls of marriage, which revolve around the woman and the problems she creates. Nicely and Benny use

several examples of how a woman changes a man's life, and not always for the better. Nicely has a line that shows just how much he dislikes the idea of marriage. He tells Nathan that:

> When a bum buys wine like a bum can't afford
> It's a cinch that the bum
> Is under the thumb of some little broad.
> (Loesser 35)

What is not discussed about how women are expected to operate in a marriage in *Guys and Dolls* is that they lose all sense of themselves and are there to support their husbands and children. Adelaide and Sarah both have jobs that many women would not have if they were married. Whether or not they stop working after they marry Nathan and Sky is not explicitly stated, but the audience can infer that that was these women's next course of action. The reason why most women would leave their jobs or school when they get married is that society was telling these women that if they continued working and living the life of a "career woman," then they would be denying their femininity (Friedan 46). If Adelaide and Sarah were to continue working after marrying Nathan and Sky, they would be seen as selfish for not using that time at home to raise their children or tending to the house.

Interestingly, a movie version of *Guys and Dolls* was filmed in 1955. Some songs from the original musical did not make it into the movie version, including "Marry the Man Today." Without this song, Adelaide goes straight from being upset that Nathan was not eloping with her because he was running a gambling game and Sarah just found out that Sky lied about taking Sarah to Havana. By removing this duet between Adelaide and Sarah from the movie, the audience concludes that there is nothing wrong with how the men are acting and that they should not have to change if the "dolls" genuinely wish to marry them.

I will perform this duet with Madison Boring; I will sing Adelaide's part, and Madison will sing Sarah's part. I selected this song to show how Adelaide and Sarah go about getting what they want, a marriage while plotting against their soon-to-be husbands. The way that Adelaide and Sarah work together is integral to the type of duet they are singing. Female duets can typically be separated into two categories: collaborative and pedagogical duets. A collaborative duet is when the two women work together on a plan or emotionally support one another. A pedagogical duet is when one woman convinces the other to change her mind, and the song ends with a lesson being taught/learned (S. Wolf 33). Adelaide and Sarah are singing a collaborative

duet since they are developing a plan to make sure that Nathan and Sky will act as they deem appropriate. When Adelaide and Sarah sing their duet, "the musical's attention radically shifts to accommodate the two women, and their song displaces the heterosexual couple" (S. Wolf 33), all while letting the men believe that they still hold power in the relationship. This power shift is in drastic contrast to the rest of the musical since the men always see "their" women as "dolls." Neither woman has much power over her situation until this moment. Adelaide is frustrated about how she and Nathan are still not married after 14 years, and nothing she did seemed to encourage Nathan to marry her any sooner. One of the main reasons that they were waiting so long was because Nathan would not give up his gambling addiction. For Sarah, she had to do whatever the Save-A-Soul mission wanted her to do. Now that the power has shifted to Adelaide and Sarah, they can explore their feeling of camaraderie and focus on how they are alike in their situations. When these two women sing together, they often build off each other's ideas, completing a phrase the other started.

It is also important to note that "Marry The Man Today" is one of the last musical numbers of *Guys and Dolls*. Having this duet very late in the show, the two female characters' connection, "provides a representation of intense homosociality that dislodges the heterosexual couple's already fragile union" (S. Wolf 33). This is also the first time Adelaide and Sarah are seen on stage together without Nathan or Sky. Having the sole focus be on Adelaide and Sarah also draws power away from the heterosexual couple and highlights a new, special attachment. If Adelaide and Sarah become housewives, they will not interact much outside of their household. This new relationship that they build on the eve of such a life-changing event will be something they think about, even if they never see each other again.

"Shopping Around" from *Wish You Were Here* also deals with the complexities of marriage, but in a much different way than *Guys and Dolls*. Adelaide and Sarah decide that they need to trap their men in marriage. However, Fay, the character who sings "Shopping Around," does not want to marry someone and then regret it later. *Wish You Were Here* takes place at an adult summer camp called Camp Karefree. Fay and her friend Teddy came to Camp Karefree because Teddy had second thoughts about her upcoming marriage to Herman. This trip was recommended by Teddy's doctor, who thought she just needed a change of scenery to help relieve her of any marriage jitters. Fay decides that it would be best for Teddy to take off her engagement ring so she can truly relax while at camp. Teddy soon realizes that Fay has her eye

on every available man in camp, which is when Fay confesses that she loves flirting. In our current society, flirting does not seem unusual. “But in the 1950s and early 1960s, playing the field was regarded as somewhat fast, or at least reckless” (Collins 35). Unlike most women in the 1950s and early 1960s, Fay did not care what others thought of her flirting so much; she was merely looking out for herself and ensuring that if she did marry someone, she would not be caught off guard if she found out, something undesirable about her new husband. To help Teddy understand her thought process regarding flirting, Fay tells her that:

> A girl must compare men for wear and for tear before she buys.
> If she wants the best then she just has to test
> All kinds of merchandise.
> (Rome)

In this case, men are the merchandise, and by testing them before she buys, Fay ensures that her future husband will, “last [her] a lifetime through” (Rome). Viewing men as merchandise was almost unheard of in the 1950s. Traditionally, women were the ones that were seen as capital and would pass from one man to another, such as from their fathers to their husbands. Our society, “is based upon the exchange of women. Without the exchange of women, we are told, we would fall back into the anarchy (?) of the natural world, the randomness (?) of the animal kingdom” (L. Wolf 59). Laurie Wolf argues that this tradition of exchanging women between fathers and husbands has been justified by claiming that we would no longer be civilized if we stopped this exchange. This justification is only meant to serve as a way of controlling the women who are being traded so the men who created this structure can continue to act as they please. Since most women in the 1950s would have grown up with this mentality taught them by their fathers, they would know no other way to live. Not only would this mentality that women are meant to be exchanged in order to maintain a civilized lifestyle enforced by family members, but also through the media that these women are consuming. Magazines, books, TV shows, movies, and musicals would support this stereotype that women were nothing more than property to be handed off. As a result, many women would get engaged as early as college. Many students felt there was an expectation, “that you’d be engaged for a year and then you’d get married as soon as you graduated” (Collins 38). These women never had the chance to experience life independently since they went from living with their father while at school directly to living with their husbands after graduation. Even though they were at college and arguably away from their

families, they were still not living and working on their own. At the end of *Wish You Were Here*, Fay is still not engaged, which suggests something new to the audience. Fay suggests to all the women in the audience that they do not need to get engaged as soon as possible to be happy. Not only is she suggesting a new way for women to view marriage, but Fay is also breaking the stereotype of women being exchangeable goods and using the logic of the patriarchy against the very people who created it: men.

Teddy initially seems hesitant to take Fay's advice but soon finds herself a few suitors at Camp Karefree. Soon, Teddy finds herself falling for one of the men, Chick, who works at the camp. When Chick tells Teddy that he loves her and wants to marry her, she reveals that she is already engaged and cannot call off the wedding even though she loves Chick too. Now that Teddy's secret is out about her engagement, Fay gives her back her engagement ring. A few days later, another man, Pinky, who is interested in Teddy, decides that he must have her, so he gets Teddy drunk and takes her back to his cabin. Because Teddy is so drunk, she falls asleep before anything can happen between her and Pinky. Teddy's fiancé Herman comes to camp the following day to bring Teddy home. Herman hears Pinky accept congratulations about what "happened" between him and Teddy but decides to forgive and forget and still wants to marry her. The couple leaves the stage, but not for long. Herman returns with two suitcases just before Teddy runs and throws herself in Chick's arms. Herman then gives Chick Teddy's engagement ring, which Chick promptly places back on Teddy's finger. Now Chick and Teddy are to be married.

After seeing Teddy's happy ending, the audience is meant to feel happy about how *Wish You Were Here* ended and leave the show knowing that Teddy is marrying someone she truly loves. Unfortunately, this is not as happy an ending as some would like to believe. Teddy has once again been exchanged between two men. First, she was exchanged from her father to Herman, and now she is being exchanged from Herman to Chick. This exchange from Herman to Chick is quite visible since Teddy is seen running from the arms of Herman to fall into Chick's arms. There is also the ring exchange, where Herman gives Chick the same ring that Teddy wore to symbolize her engagement with Herman. This physical tradeoff of Teddy from one fiancé to another creates a visual demonstration for the audience of this social construction of exchanging women. Laurie Wolf states that there are three social roles imposed on women in their exchange. The social role placed on Teddy is the virginal woman. As Laurie Wolf writes, "she is nothing

but the possibility, the place, the sign of relations among men. In and of herself, she does not exist: she is a simple envelope veiling what is really at stake in social exchange" (L. Wolf 63). The physical tradeoff of Teddy from Herman to Chick solidifies her social role as the virginal woman. She is the envelope, the message for the audience about what is truly happening behind the closed doors of men.

On the other hand, Fay has a different social role imposed upon her. One of the other three social roles that can be forced onto a woman is the prostitute. Fay's way of thinking of men as merchandise is, "explicitly condemned by the social order, she is implicitly tolerated. No doubt because the break between usage and exchange is, in her case, less clear-cut" (L. Wolf 63). Because Fay does not think of flirting like Teddy does, her views fall outside of what society deems to be acceptable for a woman. Fay's lack of conformity to the social order contributes to why there is no apparent exchange of Fay, and why she is left unengaged at the end of the show.

New Faces of 1952 differs from any other show I have selected because it was performed with "new faces." *New Faces of 1952* was open for less than a year but was performed 365 times. One of the most significant differences between *New Faces of 1952* and the other shows I have selected is that *New Faces* was a musical revue. A revue is a series of mini-performances that could follow a thematic structure but do not have to tell a complete narrative like regular musicals. For example, for several songs in this revue, someone would set the scene and describe to the audience what is happening since the setting would often change from song to song.

Additionally, *New Faces* was not just one musical revue; seven shows were titled *New Faces*; however, the 1952 edition was the most celebrated. The first one was produced in 1934 by Leonard Sillman, who was also the producer for the six other *New Faces* that followed. Sillman first thought of *New Faces* in 1933 at the Pasadena Playhouse, and then it was brought to Broadway the following year. When looking for his cast, Sillman said that, "the idea was just that; round up some young (and eager to work for bare-minimum-or-less) actors and give them something to do" (Suskin). Many of these eager-to-work actors were new to performing and saw this as a chance to get their name out to the acting community.

"Guess Who I Saw Today" was written for *New Faces of 1952* and performed by June Carroll, Sillman's sister. In addition to performing several songs in *New Faces of 1952*, Carroll wrote four songs in that musical revue. Those songs include "Love Is A Simple Thing," "Penny Candy," "Monotonous," and "He Takes Me Off His Income Tax." She was also known for

writing the book and lyrics for several Broadway shows, such as *All in Fun* (1940) or *If the Shoe Fits* (1946). In “Guess Who I Saw Today," Carroll sings to her husband, who has come home after being out at “work” all day. She greets him as he comes in and offers to fix him a drink. She then goes on to tell him all about her day and who she saw while out. Carroll paints a very detailed picture of a young couple at the bar of a cafe. She tells him:

I saw two people at the bar who were so much in love
That even I could spot it clear across the room.
(Boyd and Grand)

Only at the end of the song does she finally tell her husband that he was who she saw at the bar, hinting that she knows about his affair. Although Carroll was the one who was a victim of adultery, she holds the power by taking her time to reveal to her husband that she knew the truth about his unfaithfulness. By keeping a calm demeanor, she shows her husband just how little power he has over her when he hurts her.

When I perform “Guess Who I Saw Today,” Anthony Swanson will be my scene partner/husband. He has no spoken or sung lines, indicating that my character holds all the power in this conversation because there is nothing to distract the audience from what she is saying. For the duration of the song, until the final line, when the wife reveals that she knows that her husband has been cheating on her, Anthony will pay no attention to me. Because the wife recounts how her day went, this conversation does not appear out of the ordinary for the husband. Although it is not directly stated, the wife that Carroll is portraying is likely a housewife since that was the most common “occupation” for women in the 1950s. Since a housewife does not have anyone to talk to during the day when, presumably, her children are off at school, and her husband is off at work, “she waits all day for her husband to come home at night to make her feel alive” (Friedan 29). So, when the wife is recounting her day to her husband, this is likely a nightly routine for them. Since this is a nightly routine, and the husband in “Guess Who I Saw Today” is already having an affair, the reason for the lack of attention he pays to his wife becomes more apparent by the end of the song when she reveals that she saw that he was with another woman.

“Guess Who I Saw Today” is essential to include in examining women's roles in musical theatre because it presents a new idea to audiences. The wife is being more confrontational with her husband, which was not widely portrayed. By having this song included in *New Faces of*

1952, Leonard Sillman suggests to the female members of the audience that if there is something they are unhappy about in their marriage, then they should have a conversation with their husbands regarding the matter. This idea of a wife confronting her husband was uncommon in 1952. Betty Friedan describes this way of thinking as the feminine mystique, which she named the feeling many women could not name. A feeling that, according to Friedan, "kept us from using our rights, that made us feel guilty about anything we did *not* as our husbands' wives, our childrens' mothers, but as people ourselves" (Friedan 7). The feminine mystique, the feeling that made women feel guilty about defying their husbands' wishes, was what kept women from confronting their spouses about a serious matter such as infidelity. The wife in "Guess Who I Saw Today" acknowledges that it is ok for a wife to be angry when her husband is unfaithful and that she should stand up to him.

When World War II ended in 1945, there was a shift in musical theatre. Due to the seriousness of the war, the musical comedy made a comeback since so many people needed a change from the drab reality that was the aftermath of World War II. Audience members wanted an escape from the real world and turned to musical comedy. Musical comedies often revolve around, "subjects and settings remote from their audiences in time, or place, or both" (Stempel 413). *My Fair Lady* is a musical set in Edwardian London. Not only is the setting around 40 years before the musical was written but it is also set in a different country. This musical is meant to, "ridicule England's class system" (Stempel 350). Although the other musicals I selected that were written before *My Fair Lady* have comedic elements, *My Fair Lady* relies heavily on comedy to connect with its audience.

The source material for *My Fair Lady* is a play that Alan Lerner adopted into a musical called *Pygmalion*, written by George Bernard Shaw. *Pygmalion* is a story based on the ancient Greek legend of the sculptor Pygmalion, who loved a statue so much that the gods were moved to bring her to life (Stempel 350). The characters and the story from *Pygmalion* and *My Fair Lady* are the same. Lerner wrote the music for *My Fair Lady* to fit Shaw's original play.
My Fair Lady opens with Eliza Doolittle, a flower girl with a heavy Cockney accent, being observed by Henry Higgins, a professor of phonetics. Eliza's accent sets her apart from "other ladies" because she speaks unladylike. Her Cockney accent is a marker for the uneducated. Higgins overhears Eliza speaking and tells her just how upsetting her voice is to hear, calling her an, "incarnate insult to the English language" (Lerner 173). While Professor Higgins belittles

Eliza for her accent, he meets Colonel Pickering, a fellow linguist. In front of Eliza, Higgins boasts to Pickering that in six months, he could, "pass her off as a duchess at an Embassy ball" (Lerner 172). That night, Eliza imagined how nice it would be to have a room for herself. She realizes that if she takes lessons from Professor Higgins, she might be able to earn a living for herself by working at a florist's shop instead of selling flowers on the corner, which would allow her to buy a room for herself. Not long after she arrives at Higgins' home, Eliza realizes that Higgins is a misogynistic, self-absorbed man who sees no flaw in his actions.

For weeks, Professor Higgins continuously insults Eliza and drills her on saying her vowels correctly. Most of the insults comment on her economic status since Eliza comes from the streets of London, where the lower class sells vegetables and flowers. Some of the insults Higgins uses include "squashed cabbage leaf" or "draggle-tailed guttersnipe" (Lerner 173, 182). Since there is a 40-year difference between the setting of *My Fair Lady* and when it was first performed, more female audience members would have a job. According to Gail Collins, "by 1960 there were as many women working as there had been at the peak of World War II … more than 30 percent of American wives were holding down jobs, including almost 40 percent of wives with school-age children" (Collins 15). However, there was still a stigma around working women and what that said about their economic status. Many people ignored that there was a large percentage of housewives who had jobs because, "working women tended not to be well-represented among upper-income families" (Collins 16). The audience would have an easy time recognizing that Eliza came from a lower-class family since she was working, let alone on the streets.

"Just You Wait" is the song that Eliza sings that illustrates her colorful fantasies about killing the professor after she has had enough of his insults and the consistent drilling of vowels. I chose this piece because of how blatant Eliza is when speaking her feelings for Higgins aloud. Even when Eliza describes herself as a lady in high society, she paints a gruesome picture of Henry Higgins' death. Eliza imagines herself with the King of England, who is offering her anything she wants. Her response is:

"Thanks a lot, King," says I, in a manner well-bred;
"But all I want is 'enry 'iggins 'ead!"…
As they raise their rifles higher,
I'll shout: "Ready! Aim! Fire!"

(Lerner 197)

In some of the other musicals I have selected, *Guys and Dolls*, *New Faces of 1952*, and *Wish You Were Here*, the women were more coy than Eliza about how they would manipulate their male counterparts into doing their bidding. Although Eliza is not singing "Just You Wait" to anyone in particular besides the audience, the fact that Eliza's thoughts are given a voice speaks volumes about a cultural shift in gender dynamics during the 1950s. Many women at the time had a feeling of terror when faced with, "the freedom to decide her own life, with no one to order which path she will take" (Friedan 76). Originally, Eliza is not confronted with this same feeling of terror. Instead, she is enraged that Higgins believes he can order her around. Higgins does order Eliza around when it comes to phonetics lessons, but he does not dictate what she should do with her life after the six months are over.

At the end of *My Fair Lady*, the audience sees that Eliza has finally had enough of the belittling comments from Higgins and decides to leave Higgins and his phonetics lessons behind. In the song "I've Grown Accustomed to Her Face," Higgins and the audience realize that he grew to like having Eliza around his home. The audience is not left with the idea that Eliza went to find bigger and better things. Instead, she returns to Higgins' home not long after telling him that he will never see her again, and the first thing that Higgins says to Eliza is, "Eliza? Where the devil are my slippers?" (Lerner 254) Many critics and audience members have questioned what this ambiguous ending means for Eliza and the professor. Bernard Shaw, the writer of *Pygmalion*, heard of the theories about how the play ended and claimed, "Higgins is an entirely inappropriate mate for Eliza, and that she could never marry a 'confirmed old bachelor with a mother fixation'" (S. Wolf 26). While Shaw left room for hope that Eliza would continue to stand up for herself against Higgins' misogynistic comments, Alan Jay Lerner, the librettist of *My Fair Lady*, did not reciprocate these thoughts. Instead, when Lerner was questioned about *My Fair Lady's* ending he, "audaciously responded, 'Shaw and Heaven forgive me - I am not certain he is right.'" (S. Wolf 26). If Eliza's return to Higgins is truly meant to represent that there could be a romantic relationship between them, then it undermines everything that Eliza achieved. Eliza stood up for herself throughout the musical and never let Higgins insult her without objecting when his belittling became too much. If *My Fair Lady* were to continue with Lerner's sentiments on Eliza and Higgins' relationship, then Eliza would likely have fallen victim to Betty Friedan's feminine mystique and do whatever her husband wished of her.

Funny Girl revolves around the budding career of an up-and-coming female actress. *Funny Girl* follows the true story of an amazingly talented young lady named Fanny Brice, a Jewish woman who many claimed, "had no beauty" (Goldman 29). Since Brice was not widely recognized as beautiful, *Funny Girl* challenges the beauty standard by presenting a talented young woman rising above the harsh criticism she received due to her looks. For example, a critic wrote after seeing the 1921 *Follies* that the star was, "no candidate for the Ziegfeld beauty prize, but an archly humorous woman with a gorgeous sense of burlesque" (Goldman 104). In the musical *Funny Girl*, Fanny is not the type of person to take no for an answer and will do whatever she must to get her way. The first time the audience sees this determination is at the beginning of *Funny Girl*. Fanny auditions as a chorus girl, even though she struggles to follow the choreography, which, in turn, causes the other chorus girls to trip over her. The director, unhappy with this display, fires Fanny on the spot. It seems like all hope is lost for her until she charges back inside the theatre, ready to show her true talents to the director. He loves what he sees and decides to give Fanny her first big break. On her opening night, she could not perform the chorus number due to her lack of coordination, but the audience loved her so much that she stayed on stage to perform the big number that the lead was supposed to perform. That night is when she met Nick Arnstein, a gentleman and a gambler, who wanted to congratulate her on her performance.

Six months later, Fanny is asked to work for the big producer, Mr. Florenz Ziegfield, in his production of *Follies*. He asks her to sing two songs, one at the beginning and one at the end of the show. Fanny feels uncomfortable singing the last song because she has to sing about how beautiful she is as a new bride. This concept of beauty is a central theme for Fanny because she does not believe she is beautiful. Hence, she makes herself out to be the funny girl because if they are laughing with her, then they are not laughing at her. Mr. Ziegfield would hear none of her concerns and told her to sing the song regardless of her feelings. Fanny decides minutes before going on stage to make herself look like a pregnant bride. Although Mr. Ziegfield does not like this stunt she pulled and says that he should fire her, he lets her continue performing the number the same way because the audience loves Fanny. Nick once again shows up at her dressing room door and asks to take her out for the night. Fanny declines, saying she has a party to go to that her mother is hosting. Nick joins her at this party, and Fanny feels embarrassed at

how quaint her home must seem to him. Unfortunately for Fanny, Nick has to leave again to pursue another gambling endeavor.

It is not until one year later that Fanny finally sees Nick again when she is in Baltimore on tour with the Follies company. Fanny is originally upset with Nick since he promised to call her but never did so. However, that night, Nick invites Fanny to a private dinner where they catch up on their time apart and explore the spark they felt a year ago. For a little while, all seems to be going well for Fanny, until Nick has to leave again. Fanny at first resigned herself to saying goodbye and waiting for the next time that she could see him. Then, she realizes she wants to have a life outside of Mr. Ziegfield's theatre and follows Nick on the boat to New York. Fanny realizes that she is in love with Nick Arnstein and that he might be her one chance at happiness outside of the theatre. She leaves the Follies to follow Nick to New York. However, Mr. Ziegfield does not approve of her choice to leave the tour to follow Nick. He is adamant that she forgets the nonsense involving Nick Arnstein and that she focuses on the tour. Fanny, of course, ignores what Mr. Ziegfield wants and follows her heart. In her song "Don't Rain on My Parade," Fanny tells all of her cast mates and Mr. Ziegfield that she will not sit back.

Historically, young women were consistently told that they were inferior to men. It was a common notion at the time that women, "were not meant to compete with men, to act independently of men, to earn their own bread, or to have adventures on their own" (Collins 7). Fanny does not conform to this notion when she and Nick first get married. Fanny continued to work for Mr. Ziegfield and act in his shows, and her career blossomed. This was partly why Mr. Ziegfield did not want Fanny to leave the tour. He knew that most women would sit at home all day after getting married, completing the duties of a housewife. If Fanny were to do this, she would be wasting her talent, and Mr. Ziegfield would lose his biggest star. Fanny's response to her boss's disapproval was, "don't tell me not to live" (Merrill 1). Although many women were content with men telling them how to live their lives, Fanny was not one of them. She was willing to defy her boss's wishes to seek her own happiness. Shortly after Fanny caught up with Nick, they were married.

There are many ways that Fanny Brice presents an image to *Funny Girl*'s audience that did not align with what was socially acceptable for a married woman in the 1960s. Around the same time *that Funny Girl* was written, TVs became more commonplace in homes across the United States. The image of women and wives that were being presented to families through TV

was, “that once married, a woman literally never left her house. Even if the viewers knew that this really wasn’t true, many did accept the message that when matrimony began, working outside the home ended” (Collins 15). Fanny Brice refused to stay at home and end her career. Even after she became a mother, Fanny continued to work for Mr. Ziegfield. By not giving up doing what she loved just because she was married, Fanny was suggesting to the audience that they did not need to sacrifice their happiness for the sake of their husbands.

However, this happy marriage did not last for Fanny and Nick. As Fanny’s career progressed, Nick’s luck in gambling seemed to decline. Fanny does not care about his streak of bad luck and is willing to help Nick pay for whatever he needs. This did not sit well with Nick. Traditionally, the male head of the house was the one who brought home the highest income, and the family depended on him for any monetary need. In *Funny Girl*, these roles were reversed. Fanny represents many of the women who wanted to have something more in their lives: a career. Alternatively, as Betty Friedan called them, career women. Actresses were often the topic of women’s magazines, but primarily as housewives. According to Friedan, “You never showed her doing or enjoying her work as an actress, unless she eventually paid for it by losing her husband or her child” (Friedan 53). At the end of *Funny Girl*, Fanny loses her husband because he needs to be free again. As revolutionary as the rest of the musical might be, it is still telling its audience, particularly any female audience members, not to become the breadwinners of the family. Or else if a woman so much as dares to seek out a job and enjoy it, then she too can lose her husband.

Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street is a musical written by Hugh Wheeler, and the lyrics by Stephen Sondheim set in England in 1849. The musical is based on the play written by Christopher Bond. Sweeney Todd is an English barber, previously known as Benjamin Barker, who was sent to jail for a crime he did not commit. The man who sent him to jail, Judge Turpin, wanted to have Todd’s wife, Lucy, and daughter Johanna to himself. Fifteen years later, Todd returns to England to seek vengeance not only on those who wronged him but on everyone because he believes the world is full of evil people.

Todd finds his old shop, which is in a loft above Mrs. Lovett, a woman who bakes “the worst pies in London” (Sondheim 338). At first, Mrs. Lovett is unaware of who Sweeney Todd is, and she talks to him like a regular customer. After hearing Mrs. Lovett out about her meat pies, Todd asks Mrs. Lovett why the loft above her shop is still empty. She tells Todd the

unfortunate story of Benjamin Barker and his family, who are still unaware of his true identity. Not only did Judge Turpin send Todd away to have Lucy and Johanna, but Turpin assaulted Lucy. According to Mrs. Lovett, Lucy poisoned herself after the assault, and Turpin has been raising Johanna as his ward. When Todd hears about the downfall of his family, he loses control of his anger and reveals to Mrs. Lovett that the story about the poor Barker family is his story and his plans for revenge. Mrs. Lovett, however, does not shy away from Todd's bloodlust. Rather, she gives him the very tools to bring about the Judge and his "beadle," Beadle Bamford's demise, and his old barber's razors.

For 15 years, Sweeney Todd was thinking about how he would get revenge on Judge Turpin and the Beadle, leaving him less than patient in seeking out his victims. Not long after moving back into his old loft, Todd comes across another barber in the town square who challenges Todd to a shaving competition. To Todd's great pleasure, he spots the Beadle at this competition and makes him the judge. Todd wins this shaving competition and invites the Beadle to his barber shop for a free shave. Soon, Todd becomes agitated about how long it will take for Beadle to visit his shop. Before Todd can do anything rash, Mrs. Lovett calms his rage, encouraging him to be patient.

Mrs. Lovett sings "Wait" to distract Todd from his current impatience for vengeance. To the audience, Mrs. Lovett would appear as a calming presence, just like many wives were to their husbands. Instead, Mrs. Lovett's real purpose for singing "Wait" is to, "establish his motive to 'wait' on the proverbial grounds that revenge is a dish best served cold, and that he enjoys playing with the Judge the way that a cat does with a mouse" (Sondheim 354). Mrs. Lovett is as calculating as Sweeney Todd is, if not more so at times. She is so calculating that she comes up with an ingeniously maniacal way to get rid of the bodies of Todd's victims while also benefiting them financially. Mrs. Lovett suggests that they take the bodies and turn them into her meat pies so as not to let the "meat" go to waste (Sondheim 356).

There are several ways that Sondheim is taking the traditional roles of women and twisting them to fit his gruesome narrative. One traditional role that women held was to cook and provide meals for their husbands. Although Sweeney Todd and Mrs. Lovett are unmarried, she still cooks for him. One of the first things she does when Sweeney returns to town is offer him a meat pie. Sondheim takes the domestic role of cooking a meal for a loved one and creates a twisted version where the loving act of caring for someone becomes an evil act for personal

greed and revenge. Another traditional role that many women and wives were expected to hold was making sure that their house was clean. Sondheim twisted this everyday chore into something gruesome and grotesque. Since Mrs. Lovett is taking the bodies of Todd's victims and turning them into her meat pies, she is cleaning away the evidence of his crimes. If not for Mrs. Lovett, Sweeney Todd would likely have been arrested not long after he killed his first victim. Mrs. Lovett is relying on the madness that already lies in Todd to benefit her and her shop while telling Todd that this will be good for both of them.

Now, having analyzed these six songs from their respective musicals, on the evening of Friday, April 12th, I will perform a self-devised recital demonstrating the ways that the women in these songs were able to manipulate the men in their lives while still allowing the men to believe they were in charge. To demonstrate the research I have conducted to my audience, I will be talking in between a few songs to explain the context of the piece, as well as hinting at the research I have completed. Additionally, the staging is an important element in portraying the strong will of the women featured in these songs.

Chapter 2: Rehearsal Process

I had selected most of the songs I am performing in Spring 2023. I started working on these songs in the Fall of 2023 to ensure that I would know the pieces I selected well enough so I could devote more of my time to research and planning the performance. I have been working on these songs on my own time and in private voice lessons. One of the biggest things I have focused on while preparing these songs is ensuring that my tone of voice represents the message I am trying to convey to the audience. When listening to recordings of women singing these pieces, especially "Guess Who I Saw Today," their voices are light and airy, portraying the character as frail or unsure. In reality, the wife is confident and sure of her next decision. To help ensure that I would not have this light tone, I have been working on strengthening my voice and learning to belt healthily. I have been working on strengthening my voice through different warm-ups. One such warm-up requires the use of a straw and singing through it. Using the straw creates a smaller opening for the air to pass through. This smaller opening makes it more difficult for the air to pass through and creates more pressure against my vocal folds, so I have to work harder to get more air out. I have been learning how to belt healthily by changing how I breathe. When you breathe, muscles in your back extend around your ribcage to expand them outward. These muscles are called the intercostal muscles. There are two sets of intercostal muscles, the internal and external. These muscles are engaged when there is proper diaphragmatic breathing, and it can be exhausting for a singer who does not use these muscles often (Anatomy of the Voice). Focusing on expanding the ribs out allows the diaphragm to move freely, allowing for stronger support to push more air out.

Another technique that I have been using to expand my singing capabilities has been to use my whole body while singing. For example, when I am just practicing singing and not including staging, I will stand, sit, lie, or roll around while singing. This type of movement is called gross motor movement, so I am engaging large muscles in my torso, legs, and arms. Using gross motor movement has been helpful, especially when I am breathing with a more activated ribcage, which results from the work I have been doing with the intercostal muscles around my ribcage. By using gross motor movements, the air and the sound can come out more freely since the intercostal muscles are now more accustomed to expanding outward.

After working for approximately two months on just singing, I started to work on my staging and movements for the performance. I sketched out the stage in Ford Chapel to start staging each song and determine what I would do for the blocking. I sketched the stage for each song so I could write stage directions on each paper. I want to keep the set pieces minimal since I will not have a run crew to change the set for me, and there is also a limited amount of time between each piece. Having a set change happen behind me while setting up the next song would be too distracting for me and the audience. I will have a table with two chairs and a basic setup on top of the table that will remain on stage throughout the performance. However, I will not make the table a part of every song. To do so would feel like I was overusing the table. The only moving element I will have will be a single chair that I will bring out at the beginning of my last piece, "Wait" from *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. This chair is the one that Mrs. Lovett says, "was [her] poor Albert's chair" (Sondheim 350). I will also use the podium in the chapel for "Guess Who I Saw Today." The back of the podium is hollow, so I can hide prop pieces inside. To add movement to the scene, I will cross to the podium, where I will have a French press and a coffee mug to serve Anthony. Adding the stage cross will make the song feel less static. Additionally, offering Anthony a cup of coffee is an affectionate gesture that will make his character, the cheating husband, feel more secure in his lies before the wife rips the rug out from under him.

As I cannot see what my staging looks like from an audience perspective, I have asked Sydney Mitrecić and Mycah Quevillon, two of my colleagues with experience directing, to be my assistant directors. I am not relying on them to completely direct my songs. Instead, I asked them to point out areas with room for improvement in my original staging. Having Sydney and Mycah as my extra set of eyes has been incredibly helpful because they can see holes in my performance that I cannot. I have met weekly with my assistant directors and actors to rehearse the songs and staging. Every week, the scene develops in ways that I did not expect. I originally planned on not including any props in the scenes since I had no one to take them on and off stage. Now, I will use the podium that is already in the chapel to hide some of the props. Then, since I do not have a stage crew to change the scene for me, the actors will take off their prop pieces after bowing.

A large part of my rehearsal process has been examining the lyrics of each song and finding the motivation behind them. Finding the motivation behind the lyrics aids in what the

staging will be. There are many possibilities about how each line can be delivered, and depending on how the performer wants to present the piece, that motivation can change from one rendition to another. I have done a lot of work with *Wish You Were Here's* "Shopping Around" to paint a picture for the audience. In this song, Fay is telling her friend Teddy why she flirts so much, essentially saying that you have to test out a product before you fully commit to it. In the middle of the song, Fay says:

> You don't buy the first pair of shoes from the clerk.
> You don't buy perfume till you spray it.
> You don't buy a clock till you're sure it'll work.
> You don't buy a piano till you play it.
> (Rome)

When determining my motivation for these lyrics, I saw them as Fay giving Teddy examples of gifts that her past boyfriends or flings had given her without testing them first, so each time she opened one of these gifts, she was disappointed. So Fay adopted this thinking to her love life and ensured she knew every aspect of the man she would marry.

Determining the motivation for the lyrics of *My Fair Lady's* "Just You Wait" revolved around how animated and over the top Eliza Doolittle is. In "Just You Wait," Eliza imagines several ways she can kill Professor Higgins. Her fantasy includes the entrance of the King of England, telling her that he will do whatever she requires of him. Her only request is that the King execute Henry Higgins. Eliza's imaginary King's response is:

> "Done," says the King, with a stroke.
> "Guard, run and bring in the bloke!"
> Then they'll march you 'enry 'iggins, to the wall
> And the king will tell me: "Liza, sound the call!"
> (Lerner 197)

Because Eliza's fantasies are so outlandish and creative, the motivations behind the lyrics of "Just You Wait" are clear. My main focus when deciding how to stage this song is how to embody Eliza as she describes what she is imagining to the audience. I decided that the King needs to have a distinct stance to indicate to the audience who is speaking in the song. The stance is simple: my feet are shoulder-width apart, and my hands are fists on my hips. Whenever Eliza sings as the King, I snap into the "King's pose." By having the "King's pose" in this song, "Just

You Wait" stands out from the other songs I am singing because there is little to no physical comedy in the other songs I am singing.

Similar to "Just You Wait," *Funny Girl's* "Don't Rain on My Parade" features a very opinionated woman. Fanny Brice is as outspoken about her unhappiness with her boss, Mr. Ziegfield, as Eliza is with Henry Higgins. However, Fanny Brice does not create elaborate fantasies where the King of England comes to execute her boss. Therefore, I cannot create a different pose like the "King's pose" to use during "Don't Rain on My Parade." The gestures and movements for this song need to be much grander to express how demanding Fanny Brice is. To create a strong and demanding presence, my entrance for this song must differ from any other song I am singing. I will enter from the side double doors at the bottom of the stage right when I start singing. I am not using the double doors at any other point during my performance so that it will be unique to Fanny Brice.

Another part of my rehearsals is deciding the order in which I will perform the songs I have selected. Initially, I planned on performing them chronologically and talking in between each piece. However, I have decided that I do not need to talk in between each piece for a few reasons. One reason is that warming up the voice by talking and singing are two different types of warming up. When you warm up the voice by singing you, "increase blood flow to the larynx [and] adjust your usual speaking voice to a singing one" (Adams). This increase in blood flow allows me to use my voice differently than if I were speaking. You have muscles you use for singing that you do not use as much for talking, such as the abdominal muscles. While you need to use your abdominal muscles to speak, it is minimal compared to the extent you need them while singing. When the abdominal muscles are engaged, the diaphragm can be controlled more, which is crucial to controlling air flow (Anatomy of the Voice). In "Guess Who I Saw Today," from *New Faces of 1952,* the song goes up to a high F, the highest of all the songs I will perform. Going directly into "Guess Who I Saw Today" after finishing "Shopping Around" from *Wish You Were Here*, I can ensure that I have the best chance of being adequately warmed up since my abdominal muscles will already be engaged.

Another consideration when creating a script for my performance is which songs need an introduction and which can speak for themselves. This is another reason I will not introduce "Guess Who I Saw Today." Part of the drama of the song is that the wife does not reveal to her husband until the very end that she knows he is having an affair. By not setting up the song for

my audience, I will also create an extra element of drama because they will hear the reveal at the same time as the husband.

There is one other song that I will not be introducing: *Funny Girl's* "Don't Rain on My Parade." This song has become so well known that even if someone has not seen *Funny Girl*, they are likely to have heard of this song. To introduce "Don't Rain on My Parade" in a performance setting and over-explain it would take away from the power that the song holds. An audience does not need an in-depth description of *Funny Girl* or the characterization of Fanny Brice to understand that Fanny is unwilling to lie down and let her boss tell her what she should do with her life.

Throughout my rehearsal process, many people gave me feedback about where I might improve my performance. I have received feedback from my assistant directors, my voice teacher, other voice teachers in voice seminars, and my actors. I originally wanted to get as much feedback as possible because I thought the more voices, the better. However, I have learned that more is not always the correct answer. I need to be more selective in whom I ask for feedback. Not only should I have considered whether the people giving notes had experience with that, but I also should have considered who was there to watch my progress from start to finish. When I had someone give me notes approximately one week before my performance, the notes were very critical, and they did not have any prior knowledge of what the scenes looked like. Going forward, I will be more aware of who I ask for advice.

Although I am not telling my audience a large portion of my research, I want to demonstrate the emotions of a woman who has to go to great lengths to make the men in her life do what she wants. With my script and characterizations, I hope that the audience understands that many women across the mid-twentieth century could not clearly explain to their male counterparts what they wanted. I want my audience to look at a time that likely not many would have experienced and understand why knowing how women's relationships looked in the 1950s to the 1970s can help us better understand our relationships in 2024.

Chapter 3: Reflection and Future Changes

When I first walked on stage for my performance, I felt as if I was dreaming. I felt like I was just running another dress rehearsal, except this time, my friends and family were there to watch. To finally be performing for them what I had been working on for nearly four months felt completely surreal. I was able to demonstrate how much work I have been putting in with practicing these songs and a small glimpse into the research I have done. I was also able to show my audience what I am passionate about. I love musicals and I wanted to combine that love with a powerful message, such as a strong woman working withing the confines of the patriarchy to make her male counterpart do what she wants. For many members of my audience, it was their first time hearing me sing in several years or just the first time they heard me sing at all. I feel like my performance on April 12th was the best I have ever sung the six pieces I selected and fully encompassed the work I have been doing in my voice lessons.

In preparation for my performance I wanted to make sure I was at my peak performance. I wore a mask everywhere for a week before my show. I was not sick but I could not risk the chance of becoming sick and not performing my best. I have a teaching internship with a local school in Meadville and did not want to risk my health just incase one of the kids was sick. I also tried my best to talk as little as possible in the days leading up to my show. I was already practicing my songs a lot so I did not want to over strain my voice.

Although I have a lot of experience with performing since I have sung in choirs for several years and have been in several plays and musicals, my self-devised performance felt drastically different. My performance consisted only of songs I selected, so I thoroughly enjoyed singing them. Whereas for other musicals or choir concerts I have done previously, there were some songs that I was not so fond of. Being able to have the autonomy to choose songs I enjoyed allowed for me to be fully invested in every aspect of the performance. I was doing what I wanted to do and it showed from the level of energy I brought to the stage. Not only did I have the autonomy to choose the songs I performed, I was wrote and connected my script to the songs in a way that felt comfortable to me. I decided how to share how to consider the complicated way in which women were presented.

On the day of the performance, I made the call time an hour and a half before we started. I am glad that I chose to have an early call time and if I were to do a self-devised performance like this again, I would keep that early time. Since the run time was approximately 35 minutes, we were able to do a full run of the show to warm-up and review when and how we were entering. If I were to perform more than six songs then I would not do a full run-through. I would run through the entrances of each piece, my speeches in between pieces, and sing a few songs to warm up my voice. To do a full run of a show longer than 35 minutes would be too draining vocally and leave the possibility of not presenting my best work. But since this show was only 35 minutes long, doing a full run allowed not only myself, but my actors and accompanist to feel warmed up and confident in their performance.

As for my speeches in between songs I do not think I would change anything. The speeches gave my audience a glimpse into the research I completed. When I wrote what I would say, I made sure that my speeches were short enough so as not to overload the audience with information, but also long enough to ensure that I made clear how the pieces were all connected, although I did not talk about all the pieces.

The two songs that I did not talk about, "Guess Who I Saw Today" and "Don't Rain on My Parade," did not need any context in order for them to have the effect on my audience that I wanted. The audience was in shock about the husband cheating on his wife in "Guess Who I Saw Today." Since the audience was able to feel the power that the wife held over her husband, they could understand that she held the same power over him as well. By letting the audience feel the emotions unfold as the husband realized he was caught, I allowed them to understand more than if I were to explain the context around "Guess Who I Saw Today." As for the other song I did not introduce, "Don't Rain on My Parade," I chose to enter the stage for this song in a different way from all the other pieces I performed. When making my sketches for each song, I knew that entering from the side doors at the bottom of the stage would add an element of power to my characterization of Fanny Brice that the other songs did not have. As I opened the double doors, I watched as almost every head turned from watching my accompanist Wendy Plyler, to me. I felt a huge surge in confidence which added to the power that was already in the lyrics and staging. While introducing a piece to my audience by using my prior research can be powerful and important to conveying my theme, not introducing a song can be as powerful if not more so. I now understand better the benefits to each option.

If I were to repeat this project with the same songs, I would change the order in which I performed them. For this performance, I am glad I chose to sing the pieces in chronological order because the script was more concise and I was able to better explain my research to my audience. The new order I would choose would be "Shopping Around," "Marry the Man Today," "Guess Who I Saw Today," "Just You Wait," "Wait," and "Don't Rain on My Parade." The first and last pieces of a performance tend to be the ones that an audience remembers the most. I would start with *Wish You Were Here*'s "Shopping Around" because this song is a solo piece and has an upbeat mood. I now feel that it is important to start my performance with a solo piece because then it emphasizes that although I have scene partners in other songs, an opening solo emphasizes that it is my performance and the other actors are there to help.

I would end the program with *Funny Girl*'s "Don't Rain on My Parade" because Fanny Brice has a demanding presence that makes an audience lean in to see and hear more. Not only does the singer demand the attention of the audience members through physicality, but also through vocals. "Don't Rain on My Parade" ends with a long sustained note that can be very challenging to support. The vocal demands of holding such a long note demonstrated to my audience the control that I have been working on since January. Ending my performance on such a strong number would leave a more lasting impression than having it in the middle of a program like I did. Although *New Faces of 1952*'s "Guess Who I Saw Today" was my favorite piece, I do not think it left as big of an impact on my audience as "Shopping Around" or "Don't Rain on My Parade" did, which is why I would place it in the middle of the program. There were several laughs when I sang "Guess Who I Saw Today" because of Anthony's facial expressions as his character started to realize that he was caught with another woman. However, I do not think "Guess Who I Saw Today" was as powerful as "Shopping Around" or "Don't Rain on My Parade." Additionally, *New Faces of 1952* is a musical that not many people have heard of. Therefore, "Guess Who I Saw Today" lacks the same sense of recognition for an audience. Whereas "Don't Rain on My Parade" is more widely recognized so an audience would be more eager to hear a song they already know.

The final piece of my performance was *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*'s "Wait." If I were to perform the same songs again, I would not choose to have "Wait" as my program's final song. In comparison to the other pieces I performed, this song is melodramatic and does not hold the same power as "Don't Rain on My Parade." The previous

selections I performed had been building tension and anticipation to see how I would end the performance. Since “Wait” is the piece that I ended the show with, the anticipation that had been built was still there.

For this project, I had an equal number of solo pieces and pieces where I had a scene partner. I did not intend for the different types of pieces to be equal, but in the future I would make sure that I have more solo pieces than group pieces. As much as I enjoyed working on scenes with other people on stage, I wish that I highlighted myself more. Although there was only one song that was a duet, so the rest of the songs were vocally focused on me, they were not solely focused on me in regards to staging. I am glad that my audience was able to laugh at Anthony’s facial expressions in “Guess Who I Saw Today,” but at times I felt like he was drawing a lot of the attention, as if people were waiting for the next time he would react to what I was singing.

At the end of the show, I came out to greet everyone who came to support me. I was incredibly happy with the work I had just done. I was so proud of myself for getting on stage and presenting something that I feel really passionate about and had worked so hard to complete. My family and friends showered me with hugs and compliments. I was just grateful that they were there to support me and watch how much I have grown as a performer. I was also incredibly grateful for everyone who helped me along the way. I wrote thank you notes for all of my actors, my directors, and for Wendy. I truly appreciate their help in letting me see this performance grow from an idea to reality. I am also incredibly grateful for the help from my vocal teacher and my advisors who helped me prepare for this performance and were there to answer any questions that arose.

Conclusion

Later in the twentieth century, women became more vocal about demanding equal rights. Women's power grew as the second wave of feminism ended around the 1980s, and the third wave began in the 90s. Musicals written and produced during this time had more strong, independent roles available for women. A few musicals that have such roles include *Chicago* (1975), *Wicked* (2003), and *Six* (2017). The female leads in these musicals are more willing to express their opinions outright than the women in the six songs I selected to perform.

Chicago is a drastic change from the musicals that I have previously researched because the show revolves around several women who were arrested for killing their husbands. However, some similarities exist between the women of *Chicago* and the women from the shows I discussed in my earlier chapters. In *Chicago,* the women were arrested because they acted on their frustrations. There were six women who were arrested for killing their significant others besides the main female lead; they were Liz, Annie, June, Hunyak, Velma, and Mona. Liz shot her husband for popping his gum too loud; Annie poisoned her boyfriend for having six wives; June's husband caught her cheating, so she stabbed him repeatedly; Velma's husband and sister had an affair, so she killed them both, and Mona's partner cheated on her several times so she killed him. Hunyak was the only one who claimed that she was innocent. Whereas the women I selected to portray decided that because of how frustrating their husbands were, they would manipulate their husbands to act in a "better" way. *Chicago* is an excellent marker of where women started to have more roles, and they were not letting the men in their lives take advantage of them. Unlike *New Faces of 1952's* "Guess Who I Saw Today," *Chicago* offers an audience the satisfaction of revenge by having the women lash out. The women not only tell the audience why they were arrested, but they also make the audience feel like their significant others "had it coming." Even though *Chicago* was written before *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*, *Chicago* marks the start of a new theme in musical theatre: strong women who are not afraid to confront their spouses.

Nearly 30 years after *Chicago* took the stage, *Wicked* debuted in 2003. *Wicked* is based on the book *Wicked* written by Gregory Maguire. This musical follows the story of the Wicked Witch of the West, Elphaba, and how she earned that title. *Wicked* is revolutionary in musical

theatre because of the relationship between Elphaba and Galinda, the other female lead. *Wicked* differs drastically from the musicals I looked at that were produced from the 1950s to the 1970s, but not because of how the musical is constructed. According to Stacy Wolf, "Wicked's distinction, then, is in how it uses a very traditional musical theatre formula but infuses its with newly gendered and queered content and relationships that are largely responsible for its enormous theatrical and financial triumph" (S. Wolf 202). *Wicked* differs from the six musicals I chose to perform because, initially, Elphaba sets out to impress the Wizard of Oz. However, she soon finds out that the Wizard is a fraud who is only capable of parlor tricks. Elphaba flees from the Wizard, refusing to support his lies. Elphaba is lashing out against the patriarchy, which was something that musicals did not depict many women doing. *Wicked* is "defying" the expectations of women and creating a new standard for the twenty-first century.

2017's *Six* continues these themes of women and enfranchisement, often a marker of the contemporary musical. Set in 16th-century England, *Six* revolves around the six wives of King Henry VIII. Although this musical is set in a period that takes place many years before the six musicals from which I selected to perform pieces, the way that the women are presented is very modern. Not only is the musical told from the perspectives of King Henry's wives, but their costuming and mannerisms reflect how many women in the twenty-first century behave. For example, one song, "Don't Lose Ur Head," is sung by King Henry VIII's second wife, Anne Boleyn. Not only is the song's title misspelled, but some lyrics use modern slang, such as "LOL" or "totes." Although *Six* portrays the events of what happened with these women nearly 500 years ago, the musical gives King Henry VIII's wives a voice when they were likely silenced due to the patriarchy. Over 60 years, musical theatre grew to create stories where women had more power over their lives and give voices to women who could not advocate for themselves.

From the six musicals I looked at from the 1950s to the 1970s to more recent musicals, such as *Six* or *Wicked*, women's power on stage has grown exponentially. Women went from being accessories for male musical leads to having many leading roles. Over 60 years, women on stage grew to have more predominant roles and more agency. Knowing where women's roles started in musical theatre is crucial to recognizing how far women have come in contemporary musicals. By examining shows written during the Golden Age of musical theatre, we, as performers and audience members, can understand that the women in musicals such as *Guys and Dolls* or *Wish You Were Here* are not quite so different from women in musicals written in the

past couple of decades. Although many women in contemporary musicals can express themselves more freely without worrying about fitting into the confines of the patriarchy, the sentiment of these feelings is often the same as the women of musicals from 60 years ago. Women during the Golden Age of musical theatre needed to be more careful about expressing their concerns and feelings to still fit in the patriarchal boundaries of their society.

Appendix 1: The Script

(Sing “Marry the Man Today”)

I would like to thank all of you for coming out tonight as we take a look back at the Golden Age of musical theatre. That last song you just heard was “Marry the Man Today” from *Guys and Dolls* which was first performed in 1950. This collaborative duet between Adelaide and Sarah represents how, after just meeting, they were able to work together to establish how they could manipulate their men to act the way they deemed appropriate while still letting their soon-to-be husbands believe that they held all the power in the relationship. This next song, “Shopping Around” from *Wish You Were Here*, which was first performed in 1952, is sung by a woman who has a different view on marriage than Adelaide and Sarah. Fay does not want to be trapped in a marriage and wants to ensure she has the right man before settling down, so she decides to flirt as much as possible.

(Sing “Shopping Around”)

(Sing “Guess Who I Saw Today”)

As we have seen so far, many women of the 1950s were concerned with marriage and its challenges. Eliza Doolittle, from *My Fair Lady*, was a woman who was not as concerned with the politics of marriage as other women of her time. Eliza wanted to learn how to speak “proper English” instead of speaking in her usual Cockney accent so she could make a better life for herself. To do so, she moves in with a professor of phonetics, Henry Higgins. Although Higgins believes himself to be a perfect gentleman, Eliza has had enough of his torment and misogyny and fantasizes about all the ways she could kill him. In the next song “Just You Wait,” Eliza demonstrates how colorful her fantasies are.

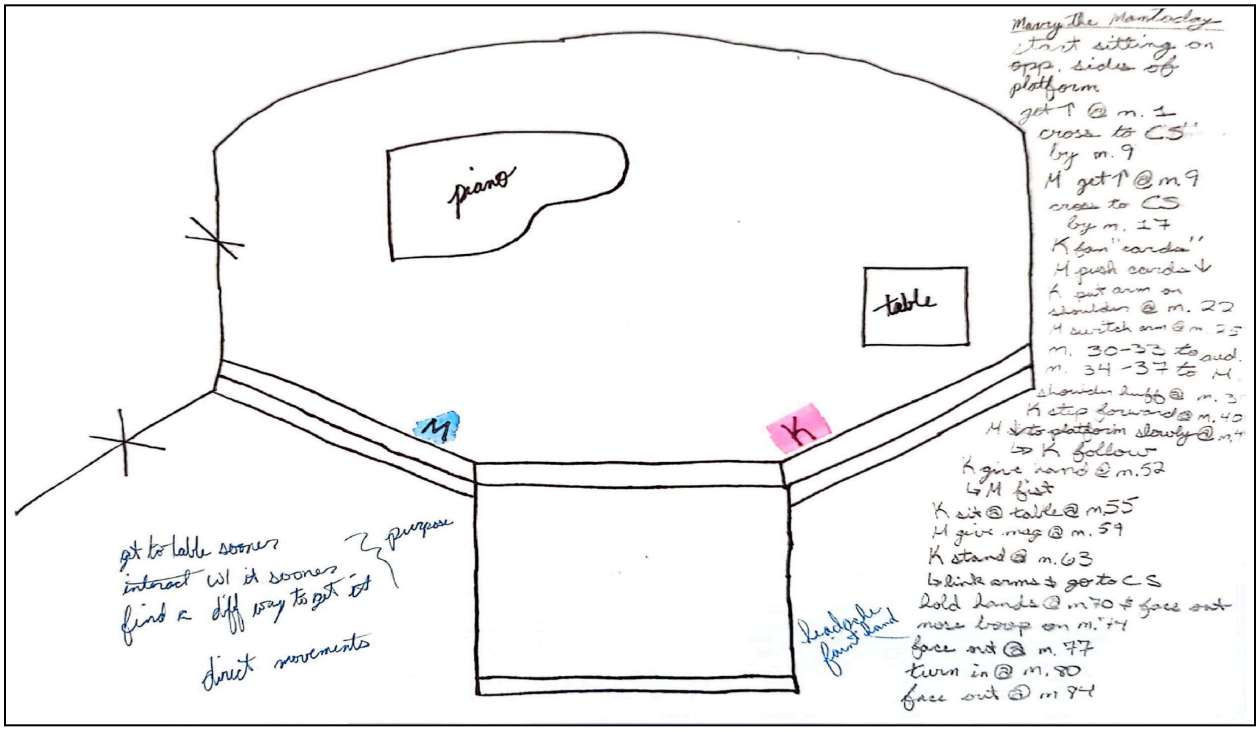
(Sing “Just You Wait”)

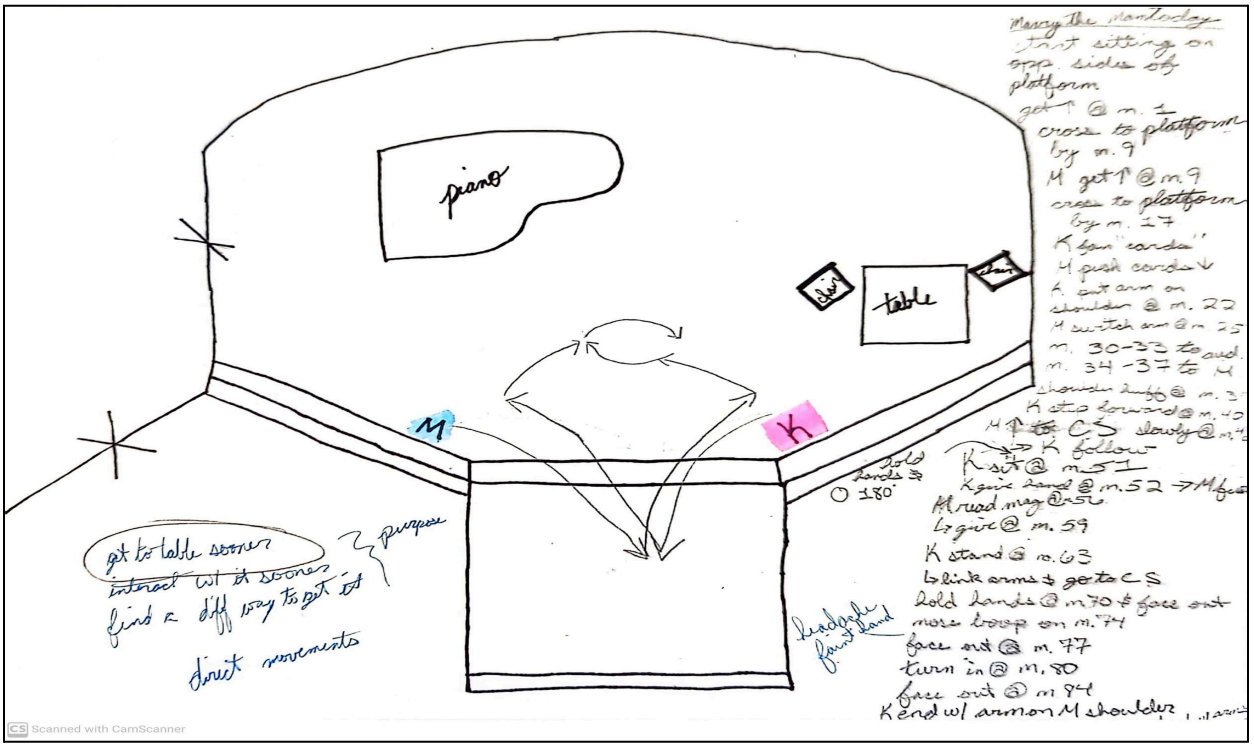
(Sing “Don’t Rain on My Parade”)

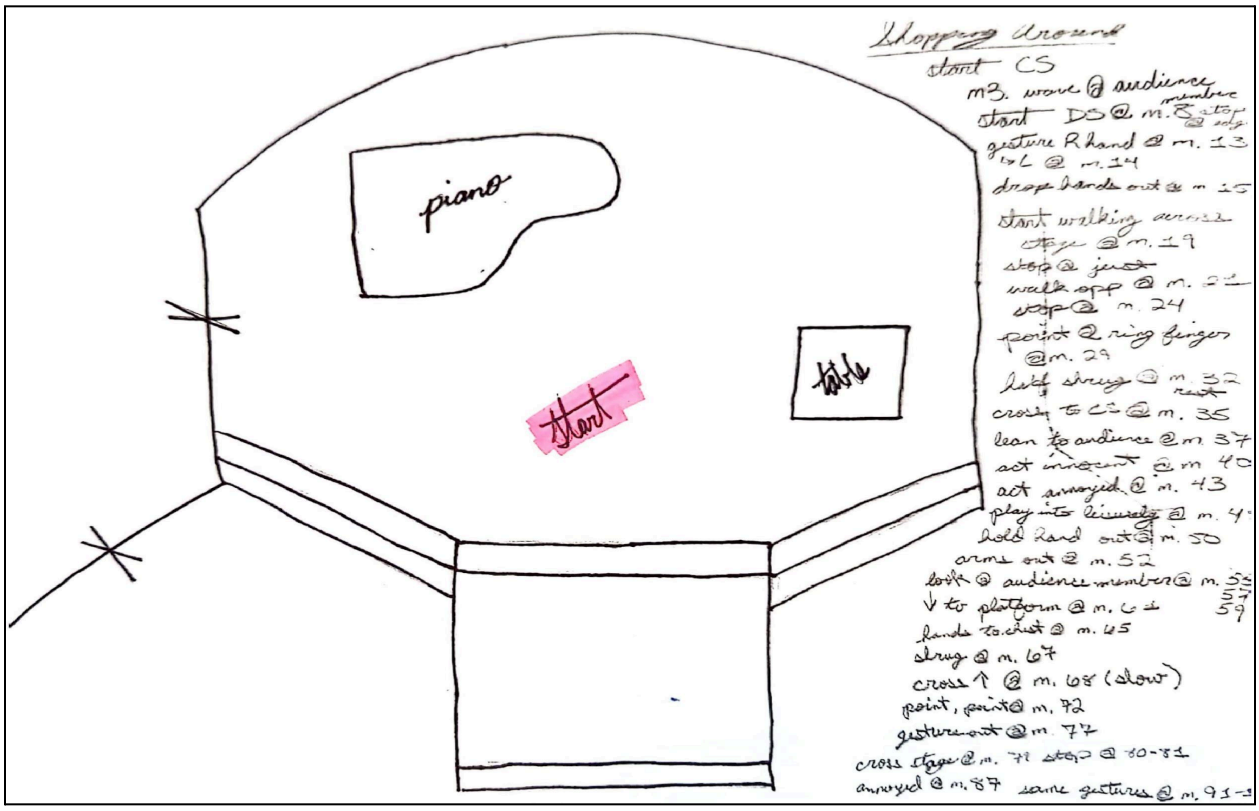
My final piece for tonight is “Wait” from *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*. Famously, Stephen Sondheim wanted to see if he could scare an audience. This musical has a much darker storyline than the previous pieces I have shown you tonight. Sweeney Todd is out for revenge, and who is there to help him, but his doting Mrs. Lovett. Don’t let her looks deceive you though. She may appear gentle, but she is the one who suggested to Todd that they turn his victims into meat pies. Unlike most shows before *Sweeney Todd*, there will be no happy ending for Mrs. Lovett and Sweeney Todd.

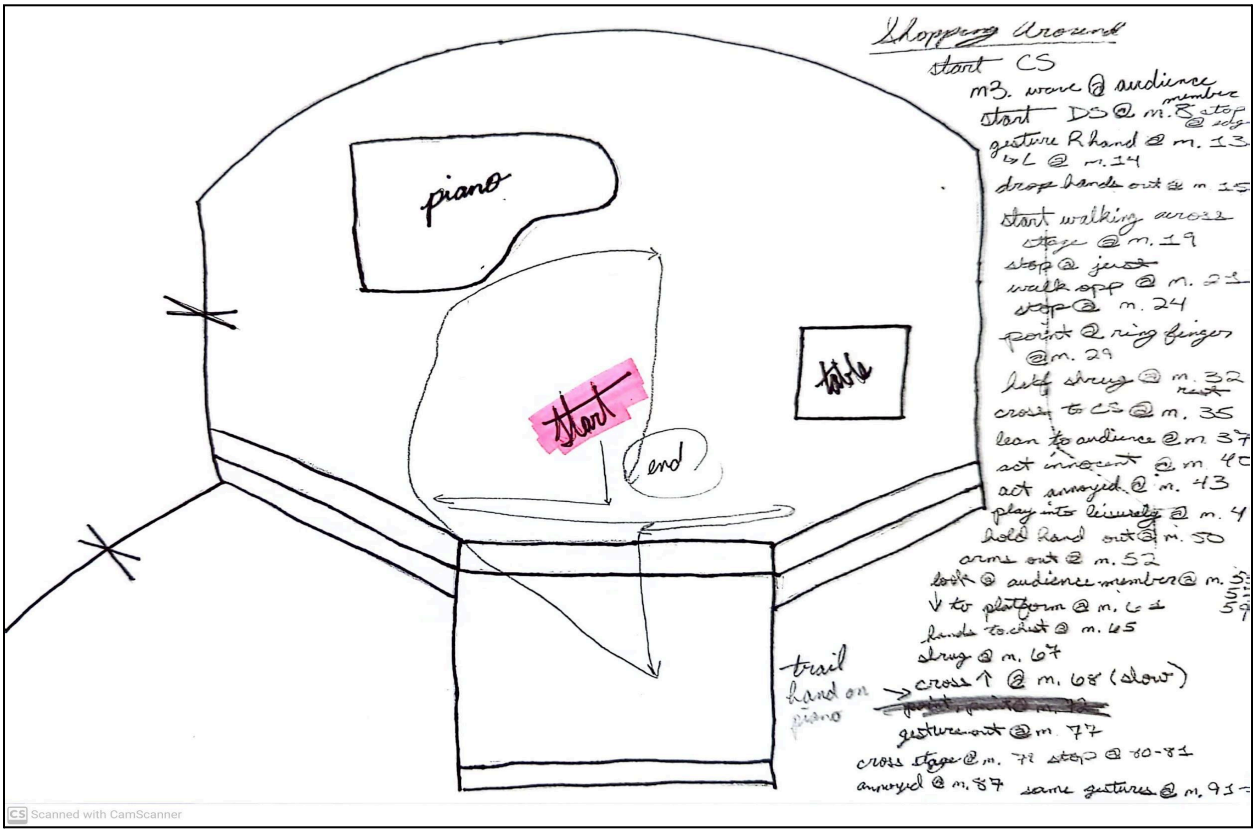
(Sing “Wait”)

Appendix 2: The Sketches

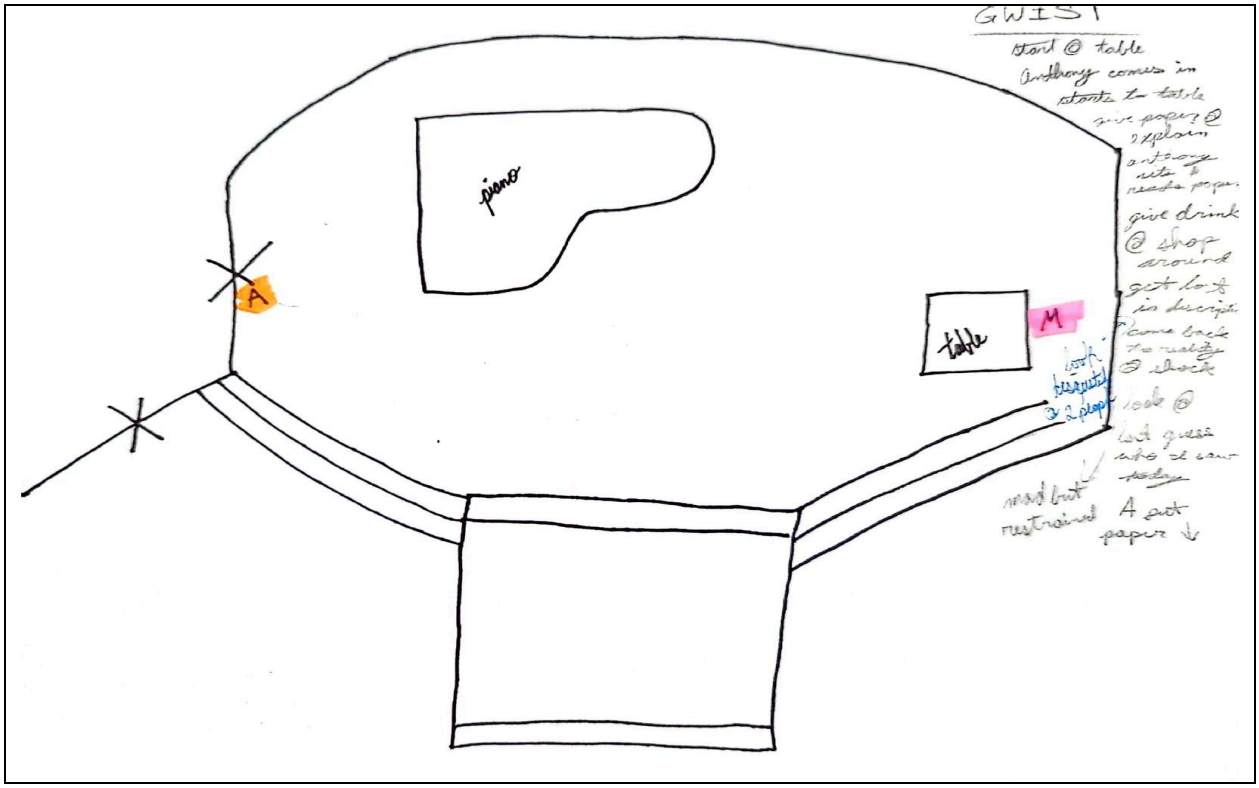


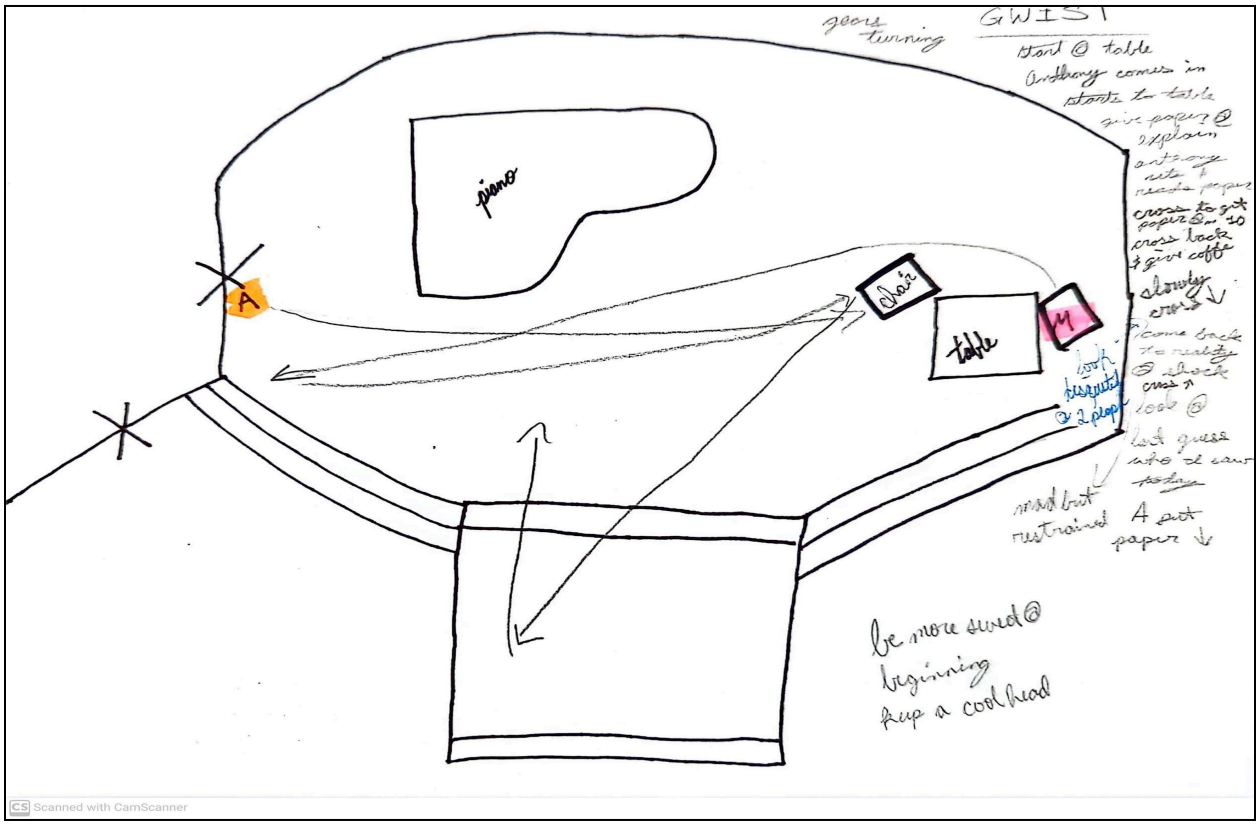


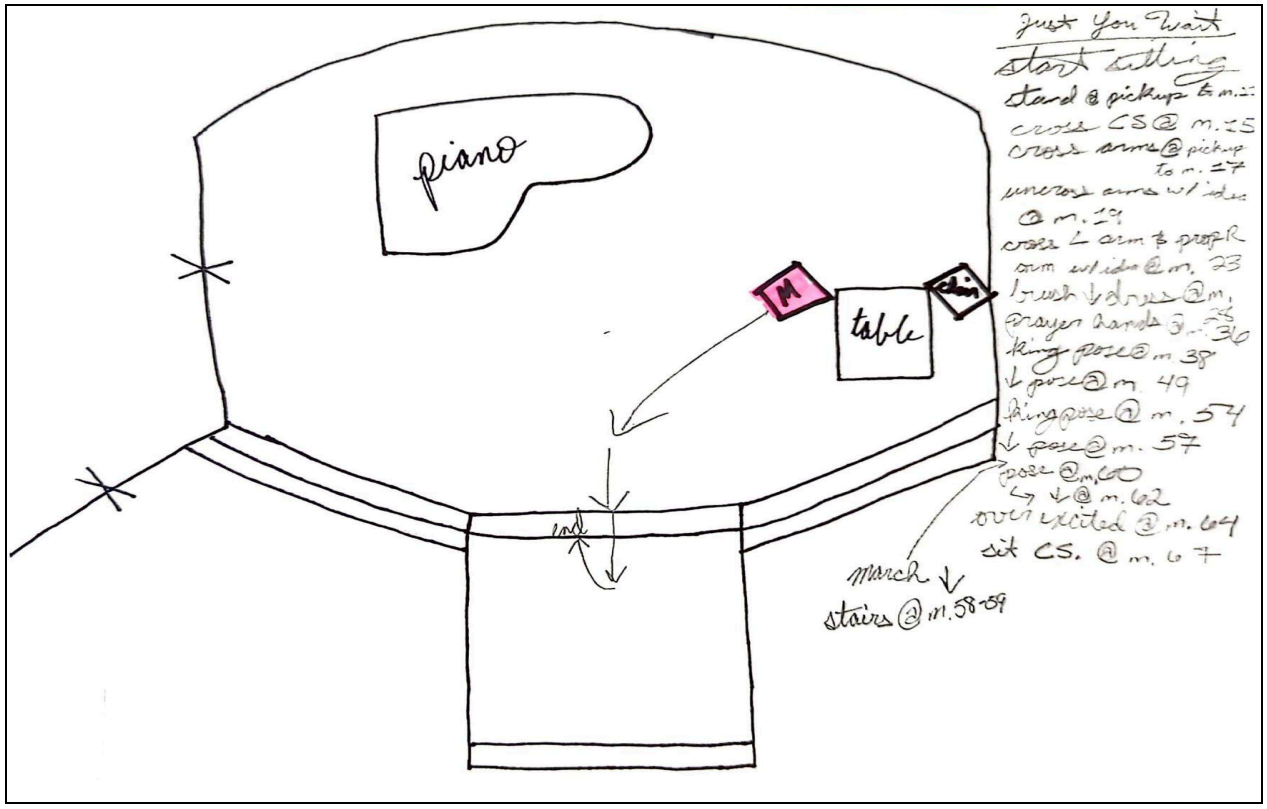


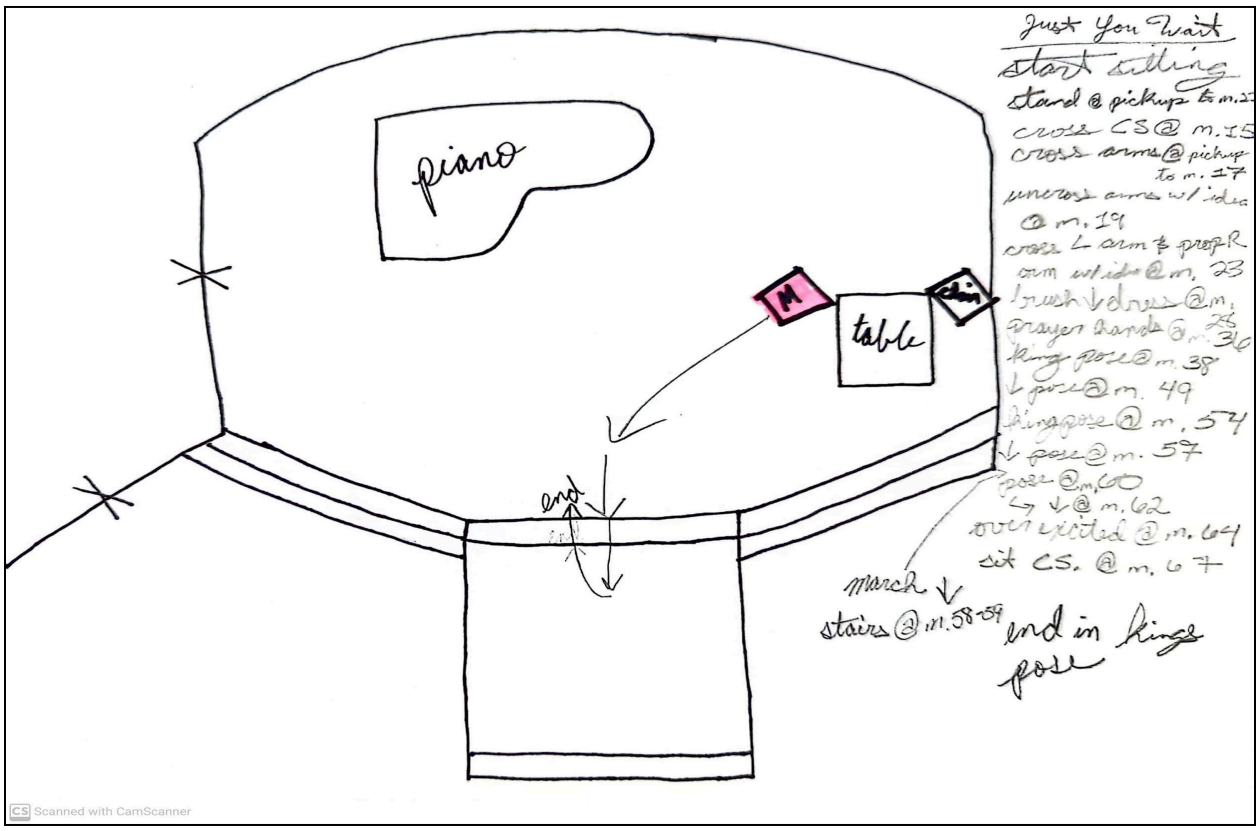


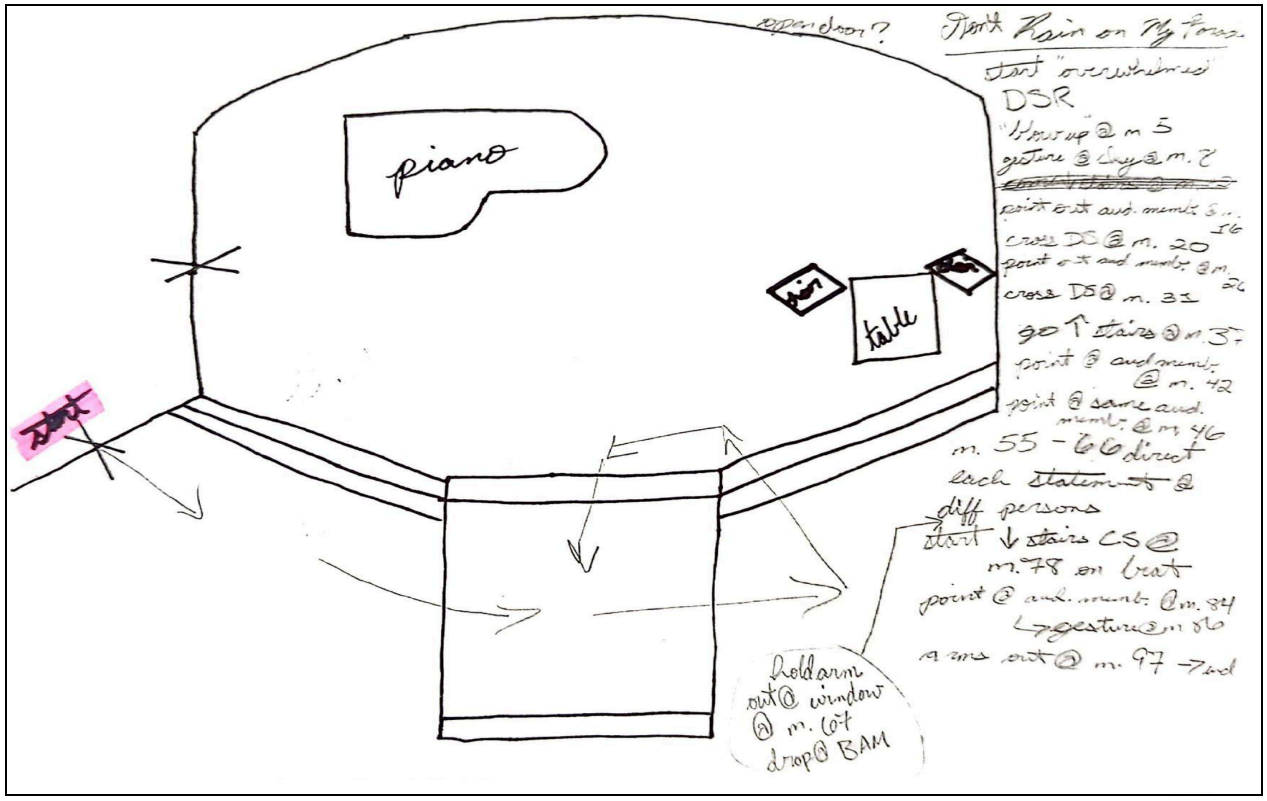
Scanned with CamScanner

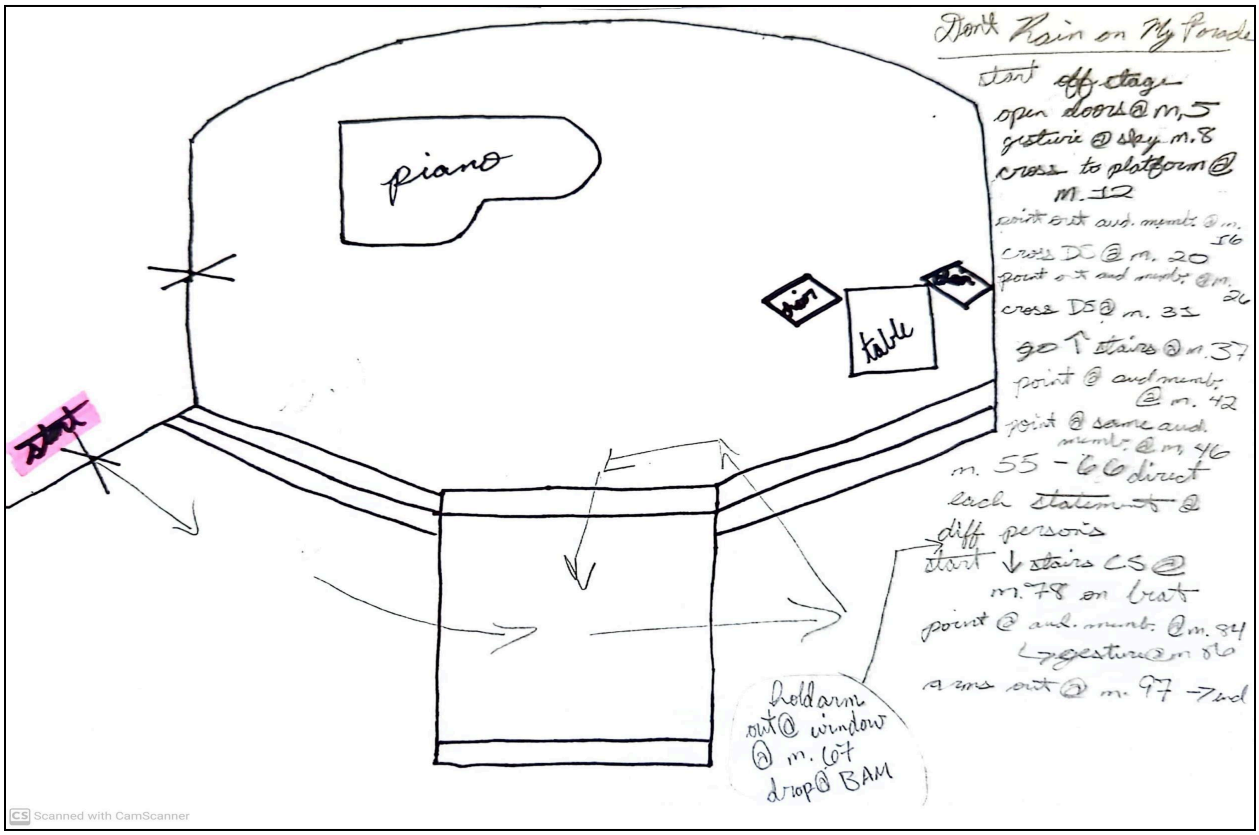

piano
A
table
M

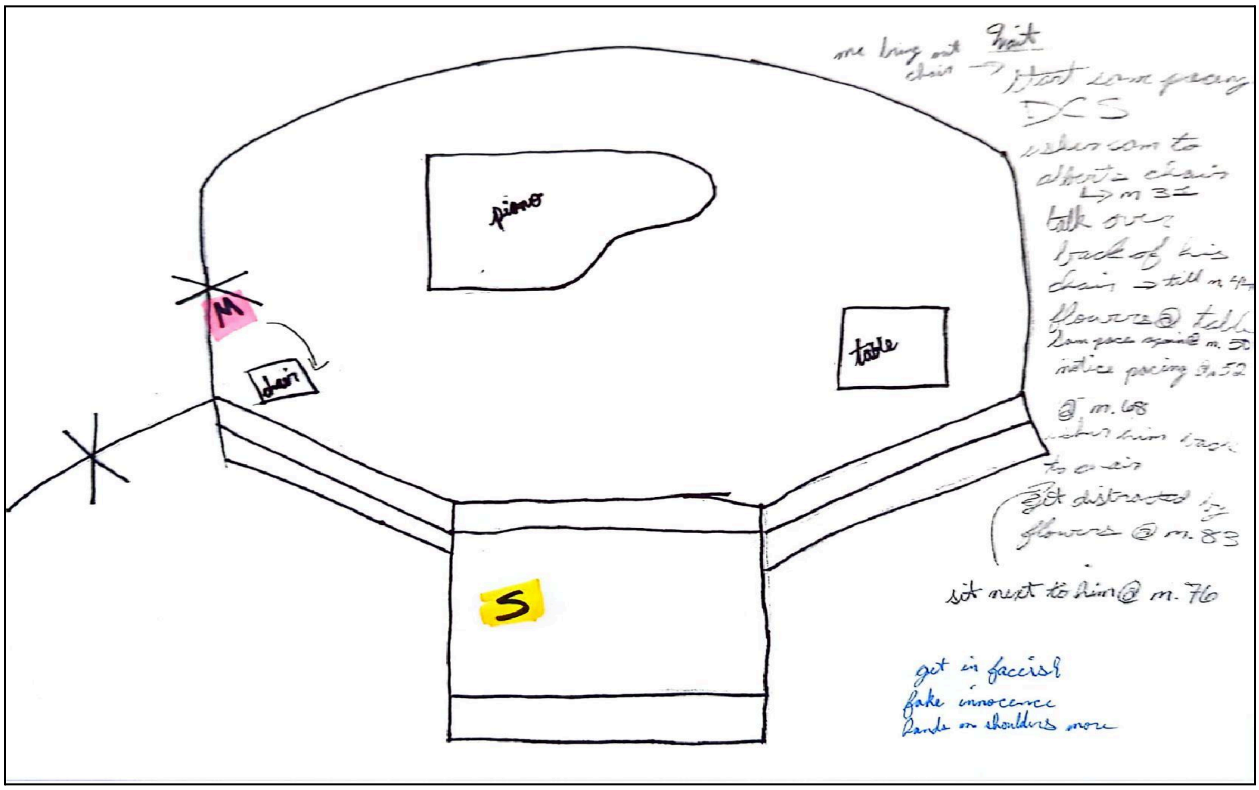

piano
A
chair
table
M

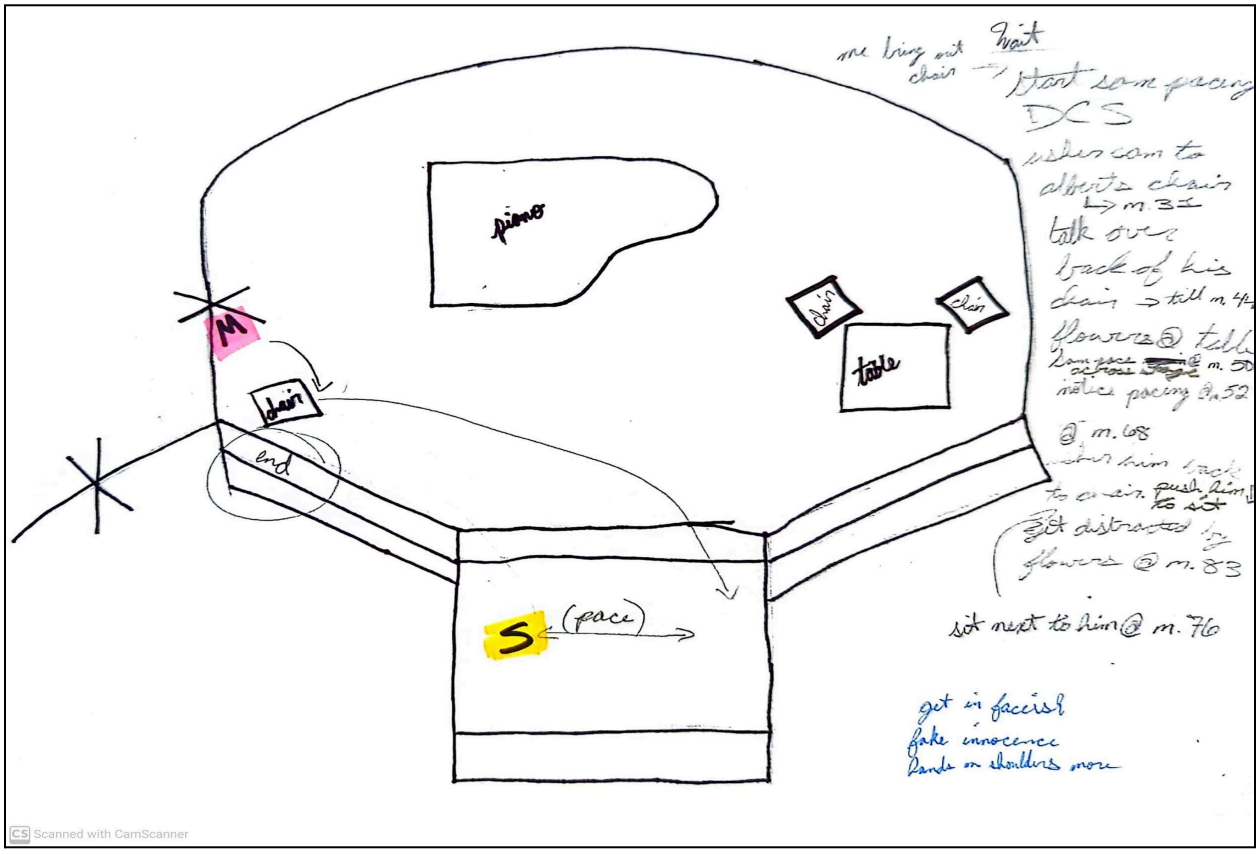

piano
M
table
chair
end
Just You Wait
start sitting
stand @ pickup to m.
cross CS @ m. 15
cross arms @ pickup to m. 17
uncross arms w/ idea @ m. 19
cross L arm & prep R arm w/ idea @ m. 23
brush ↓ dress @ m.
prayer hands @ m. 30
kings pose @ m. 38
↓ pose @ m. 49
kings pose @ m. 54
↓ pose @ m. 57
pose @ m. 60
↳ ↓ @ m. 62
over excited @ m. 64
sit CS. @ m. 67
march ↓
stairs @ m. 58-59


piano
M
table
chair
end
Just You Wait
start sitting
stand @ pickup to m.
cross CS @ m. 15
cross arms @ pickup to m. 17
uncross arms w/ idea @ m. 19
cross L arm & prep R arm w/ idea @ m. 23
brush ↓ dress @ m.
prayer hands @ m. 30
kings pose @ m. 38
↓ pose @ m. 49
kings pose @ m. 54
↓ pose @ m. 57
pose @ m. 60
↳ ↓ @ m. 62
over excited @ m. 64
sit CS. @ m. 67
march ↓
stairs @ m. 58-59
end in kings pose
Scanned with CamScanner


piano
table
chair
start
Dark Rain on My Parade
start "overwhelmed"
DSR
"Hold up" @ m 5
gesture @ sky @ m. 7
point @ ☆ and memb. @ m. 16
cross DS @ m. 20
point @ ☆ and memb. @ m. 26
cross DS @ m. 32
go ↑ stairs @ m. 37
point @ and memb. @ m. 42
point @ same and memb. @ m. 46
m. 55 - 66 direct each statement @ diff persons
start ↓ stairs CS @ m. 78 on beat
point @ and memb. @ m. 84
↳ gesture @ m. 86
arms out @ m. 97 → end
hold arm out @ window @ m. 107
drop @ BAM


piano
table
chair
start
Dark Rain on My Parade
start diff stage
open doors @ m. 5
gesture @ sky m. 8
cross to platform @ m. 12
point @ ☆ and memb. @ m. 16
cross DS @ m. 20
point @ ☆ and memb. @ m. 26
cross DS @ m. 32
go ↑ stairs @ m. 37
point @ and memb. @ m. 42
point @ same and memb. @ m. 46
m. 55 - 66 direct each statement @ diff persons
start ↓ stairs CS @ m. 78 on beat
point @ and memb. @ m. 84
↳ gesture @ m. 86
arms out @ m. 97 → end
hold arm out @ window @ m. 107
drop @ BAM
Scanned with CamScanner


piano
M
chair
table
S
wait
start scene pacing
DCS
when com to
chair
talk over
back of his
flowers @ m. 83
@ m. 68
sit next to him @ m. 76
get in faccis
fake innocence
hands on shoulders more


piano
M
chair
table
chair
chair
end
S
(pace)
wait
start scene pacing
DCS
when com to
chair
talk over
back of his
flowers @ m. 83
@ m. 68
sit next to him @ m. 76
get in faccis
fake innocence
hands on shoulders more
Scanned with CamScanner

Works Cited

Adams, Julie. "The Importance of Warming Up Your Voice Before Singing." *LessonRating.com*, http://www.lessonrating.com/students/expert-articles/singing/the-importance-of-warming-up-your-voice-before-singing/

"Anatomy of the Voice." *SingWise*, https://www.singwise.com/articles/anatomy-of-the-voice

Boyd, Elisse and Grand, Murray. "Guess Who I Saw Today." *New Faces of 1952*, 1952. Santly-Joy Inc.

Collins, Gail. *When Everything Changed: The Amazing Journey of American Women From 1960 to the Present*. Little, Brown and Company, 2009.

Friedan, Betty. *The Feminine Mystique*. W. W. Norton & Company, 1963.

Goldman, Herbert G. *Fanny Brice: The Original Funny Girl*, Oxford University Press, Incorporated, 1993. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/allegheny-ebooks/detail.action?docID=679483.

Hischak, Thomas. *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical Theatre: Theatre, Film, and Television.* Oxford University Press, 2008.

Lerner, Alan Jay and Frederick Loewe. *My Fair Lady*. *American Musicals 1950-1969: The Complete Books & Lyrics of Eight Broadway Classics*, edited by Laurence Maslon, Literary Classics of the United States, 2014, pp. 161-254.

Loesser, Frank. *Guys and Dolls*. *American Musicals 1950-1969: The Complete Books & Lyrics of Eight Broadway Classics*, edited by Laurence Maslon, Literary Classics of the United States, 2014, pp. 1-80.

Merrill, Bob and Styne, Jule. "Don't Rain on My Parade." *Funny Girl*, 1964. Chappell & Co.

Nolan, Frederick. *The Sound of Their Music: The Story of Rodgers & Hammerstein*. Applause Theatre & Cinema Books, 2002.

Rome, Harold. "Shopping Around." *Wish You Were Here*, 1952. Chappell & Co.

Sondheim, Steven. *Collected Lyrics (1954-1981) with Attendant Comments, Principles, Heresies, Grudges, Whines, and Anecdotes*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

Stempel, Larry. *Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theatre*. W. W. Norton & Company, 2010.

Suskin, Steven. "ON THE RECORD: *New Faces of 1952* and *New Faces of 1956*" *Playbill*, 2009, https://playbill.com/article/on-the-record-new-faces-of-1952-and-new-faces-of-1956-com-160980#:~:text=Sillman's%20claim%20to%20fame%20was,give%20them%20something%20to%20do.

Swayne, Steve. *How Sondheim Found His Sound*. University of Michigan, 2005.

Wolf, Laurie. *Performance Analysis: An Introductory Coursebook*. Routledge, 2001.

Wolf, Stacy. *Changed For Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical*. Oxford University Press, 2011.