

A "Company" of relationships

By Eleanor Coleman
STAFF WRITER

This weekend marks the opening night of "Company."

For the cast and crew, the Nov. 4 premiere will celebrate the dedication and passion they have put into this production. The cast has been attending rehearsals and putting in additional hours backstage for class credit since early September.

This year's play marks a new partnership of the theatre studies and music departments.

The musical is about a character named Bobby, played by senior Marcus Edghill, who spends his thirty-fifth birthday with "the Company," a group of his closest, married friends.

Being a single man in New York City, seeing the lives of his married friends causes Bobby to realize where he is in his life and question what he really wants.

Jack Zerbe, director and professor of theatre studies, calls "Company" an "optimistic piece ... about a character who is distrusting of being in an intimate relationship, which at first seems cynical, but then he learns, grows and changes. By the end, he's saying, 'Give me some real, true intimacy' ... This play is interesting and relevant to this generation, as many college students are asking themselves, 'What do I want for myself?'"

Assistant stage manager and theatre studies major Olivia Shure, a junior, agrees.

"This is a contemporary musical, which kind of gives it an edge," said Shure. "It's relatable."

"All of Sondheim's musicals deal with issues that are relevant to the contemporary theatre-goer," said senior theatre studies major Jacob Kresloff in an email. "Company deals with intimacy and the compromises required to make a lasting relationship work, to which I think everyone can relate."

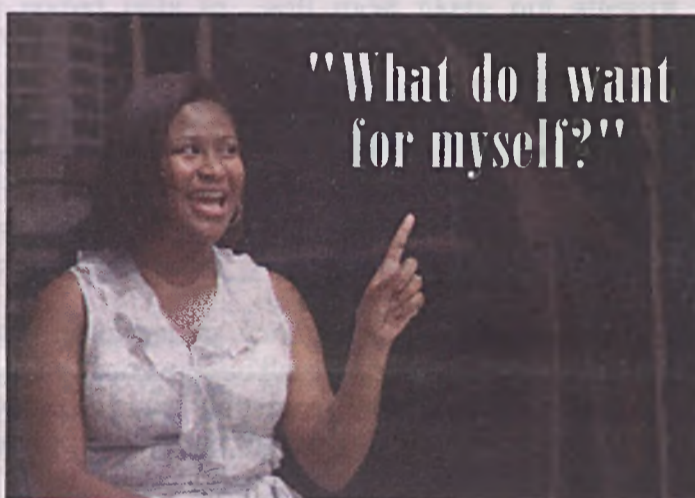
The performance takes a witty and lighthearted look at a range of topics, from alcoholism and marriage to children and divorce.

Despite the seriousness of the themes,

"Company" is humorous and cheerful. Each couple has their own personality and manner of coexisting, as the song "Little Things" describes perfectly.

The scenes that introduce each couple are hilarious. Take, for example, the couple that has taken up karate in place of overeating and alcoholism, or the husband and his "square" wife who smoke pot with Bobby as their children sleep upstairs.

The music, accompanied on the piano by Part-time Lecturer in Music Jim Bumgardner, is superb.



There will also be a full orchestra.

The lyrics written by Sondheim are clever, satirical and comedic. Based on my own reaction, they are sure to leave the audience grinning, shaking their heads and laughing out loud.

After attending rehearsal on Friday night, I found myself humming the tunes after waking up the next day.

Sophomore Candice Nelson was attracted to the play's musicality and decided to get involved. Nelson is not only part of the cast, but also works behind the scenes as a crew member, putting in time painting sets, sewing costumes and more.

Since it is a musical, "the singers are acting, the actors are singing, and we're even throwing in a little dance," said Nelson. "We're doing it all."

Nelson believes this play has been enjoyable, challenging and beneficial for the cast.

"We all bring different talents and personalities to the cast (and) crew," said Nelson. "Everyone has different strengths and difficulties, so we get to develop them by working together. We'll all be triple threats by the time this is over."

The "triple threat" — an athlete who can pass, dribble, and shoot — in this case refers to the cast's ability to sing, act and dance.

"I can say that I'm on my way to being a triple threat," said Nelson.

Despite the intensity and frustration of rehearsal, the cast never seemed to lose their vivacity.

During one of the few five-minute breaks that the crew is granted during rehearsal, the cast sprawled out around the on-set couches, fooling around, cuddling up, doing homework, running lines and exercising their vocals.

Within minutes, they were back on stage getting ready to start up again.

"We will not stop, train wrecks or no," joked Zerbe in his pep talk.

There were paint cans, electric saws and about twenty ladders surrounding the stage in the rehearsal room.

"We have to work hard to focus," Zerbe said. "There are so many distractions. We have to anticipate everything — and be alive to it."

The performances will definitely be an event of enjoyment for the actors, cast and crew and the audience.

"Working on a musical has been an amazing experience," said Edghill in an email interview. "I have really enjoyed working with both the theatre department and the music department ... on this show. It's going to be a great one."

The relevant and edgy theme, the witty lyrics and catchy music and the dynamics of acting, singing and dancing make "Company" an ideal fall production.

See "Company" November 4-5 and 10-12 at 8:00 p.m. in Sternberger Auditorium



(Above) **Candice Nelson** emphasizes a point as Sarah. (Below left) **Kyle Travis** (L) and **Marcus Edghill** (R) gaze upstage as Harry and Bobby. (Below right) **Will Batchelor** (R), Paul, pleads with Susan, played by **Elizabeth Wray** (R).



PHOTOS BY DAVID KINGHEN/GUILDFORDIAN