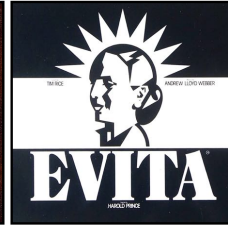
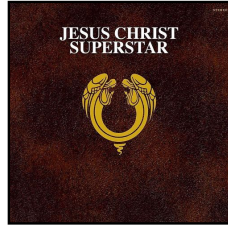


British Musicals on Broadway



Class 3: Sandy Wilson's *The Boy Friend* (1954) & David Heneker's *Half a Sixpence* (1963)

OLLI at Duke Fall Term 2024 • Alan Teasley, Instructor

Today's Opening Number



[2:57]

Today's Focus



You will know:

- The book, music and lyrics of two British musicals in the 1950s and 1960s that successfully transferred to Broadway: Sandy Wilson's *The Boy Friend* (1954 in both London and New York) and David Heneker's *Half a Sixpence* (1963 London, 1965 New York).

You will understand:

- The degree to which these shows changed to be successful in New York.

You will speculate on:

- What Americans of this period thought of “the English.”
- The reasons *The Boy Friend* in particular has enjoyed such broad and enduring support.

British Musicals on Broadway, 1950s-60s (London Opening / New York Opening)

1954 Sandy Wilson, *The Boy Friend* (1954, 485 performances)

1958 David Heneker (lyrics), *Irma La Douce* (1960, 524 perfs)

1960 Lionel Bart, *Oliver!* (1963, 774 perfs)

1961 Anthony Newley & Leslie Bricusse, *Stop the World,
I Want to Get Off* (1962, 555 perfs)

1963 Heneker, *Half a Sixpence* (1965, 511 perfs)

1964 Newley & Bricusse, *The Roar of the Greasepaint—
The Smell of the Crowd* (1965, 231 perfs)

British Musicals on Broadway, 1950s-60s (London Opening / New York Opening)

CLASS 3 (September 26)

1954 Sandy Wilson, *The Boy Friend* (1954)

1963 Heneker, *Half a Sixpence* (1965)

CLASS 4 (October 10)

1960 Lionel Bart, *Oliver!* (1963)

**1961 Anthony Newley & Leslie Bricusse, *Stop the World,
I Want to Get Off* (1962)**

**1964 Newley & Bricusse, *The Roar of the Greasepaint—
The Smell of the Crowd* (1965)**

Sandy Wilson (1924-2014)

EARLY LIFE & EDUCATION:

- Born in Cheshire, England
- Educated at Harrow School
- In 1942 got a scholarship and assigned to study Japanese to assist the war effort
- Put on a satirical revue about his time there
- Later served in the Army in Egypt and Iraq
- Earliest theatrical writing was for revues
- In 1953 he wrote book, music & lyrics for *The Boy Friend* which was presented at the Players' Theatre



1954

Sandy Wilson (1924-2014)



1958

MUSICAL THEATRE CAREER:

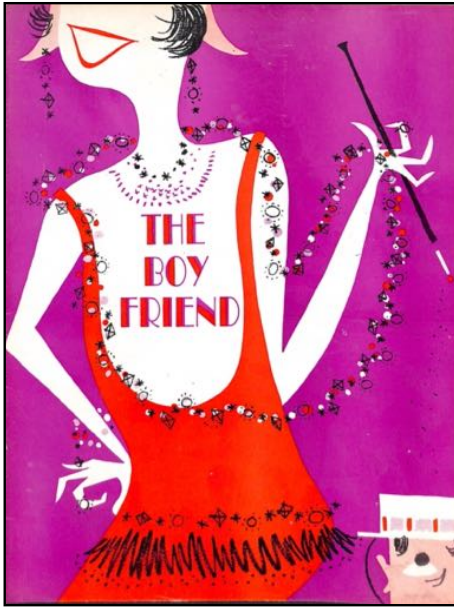
- Earliest theatrical writing was for revues
- In 1953 he wrote book, music & lyrics for *The Boy Friend* which was presented at the Players' Theatre
- in 1954 *The Boy Friend* transferred to the West End, where it ran for over 2,000 performances (5 years)
- Subsequent musicals included *Valmouth* (1958), *Divorce Me, Darling!* (1964, a sequel to *The Boy Friend*), and *Aladdin* (1979)

The Boy Friend (1953)



📷 The Boy Friend at the Players' theatre, London, in 1953. It opened in the West End the following year. Photograph: Kurt Hutton/Getty Images

The Boy Friend (1954)



KEY MEMBERS OF THE BROADWAY CREATIVE TEAM:

- **Producers:** Cy Feuer & Ernest H. Martin
- **Music & Lyrics:** Sandy Wilson
- **Book:** Sandy Wilson
- **Directed by:** Cy Feuer (replaced Vida Hope)
- **Choreographed by:** John Heawood
- **Scenic & Costume Design:** Reginald Woolley
- **CAST:** Julie Andrews, John Hower, Ruth Altman, Millicent Martin, Eric Berry, Paulette Girard, Ann Wakefield, Dilys Lay, Bob Scheerer

LENGTH OF RUN: 485 Performances

The Boy Friend (1954): Story



***The Boy Friend* (1954): Story**



pastiche

noun

- “An artistic work in a style that imitates that of another work, artist, or period.”**

Source: New Oxford American Dictionary

- Examples:**

- “Til Tomorrow” is a pastiche of sentimental songs of the 1890s-1910s like “After the Ball.”**
- Many of the songs of *Chicago* are pastiches of 1920s popular songs: “All I Care About Is Love,” “Mister Cellophane,” et al.**
- Sondheim’s *Follies* mixes pastiches (“Broadway Baby,” “One More Kiss,” “Who’s That Woman?”) with more contemporary “Sondheim” songs (“In Buddy’s Eyes,” “The Road You Didn’t Take”)**

Source: Alan’s Mental List of Great Examples

The Boy Friend (1954): Songs

ACT I:

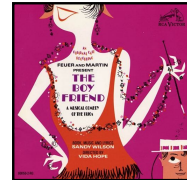
- Overture
- “Perfect Young Ladies”
- “The Boy Friend”
- “Won’t You Charleston With Me?”
- “Fancy Forgetting”
- “I Could Be Happy With You”

ACT II:

- “The Riviera”
- “It’s Never Too Late to Fall in Love”
- “Carnival Tango”
- “Poor Little Pierrette”
- “Finale”

ACT II:

- “Sur La Plage”
- “A Room in Bloomsbury”
- “The ‘You-Don’t-Want-to-Play-with Me’ Blues”
- “Safety in Numbers”



The Boy Friend: “Perfect Young Ladies”



Original 1954 Broadway Cast Recording featuring Julie Andrews [1:13]

***The Boy Friend*: “I Could Be Happy With You”**



Julie Andrews & John Hower • 1954 Broadway Cast Recording [3:21]

***The Boy Friend*: Reviews (1954)**

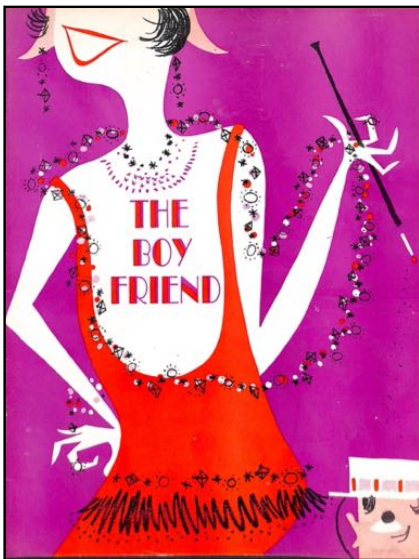
- “When I saw *The Boy Friend* in London last summer, I was in considerable doubt about its chances for a New York success. Fortunately, I gave myself an out. I said that the gift for showmanship possessed by Feuer and Martin, who were importing it, might provide the added touch that was required for local audiences. This is just what happened. By giving the American production an added skill and vitality . . . they have made the show brighter and better than it seemed abroad.
- “It is possibly true *The Boy Friend* is played more straight in London than in New York. But the local production has just the right combination of parody, nostalgia, and candid paraphrase of a period, and it’s a constant pleasure.”

—Richard Watts, Jr., *NY Post*

The Boy Friend: Reviews (1954)

- “It is probably Julie Andrews who gives *The Boy Friend* its special quality. She burlesques the insipidity of the part. She keeps the romance very sad. [Her] wistful, shy mannerisms are very comic. But, by golly, there is more than irony in her performance. There is something genuine in it, too.” (Brooks Atkinson, *NY Times*)
- “Miss Andrews is perfect She breathes lunatic sincerity into the romance.” (Walter Kerr, *Herald Tribune*)
- “You are aware that your leg is being pulled, at the same time you feel a tug at your heart strings.” (John McClain, *Journal-American*)

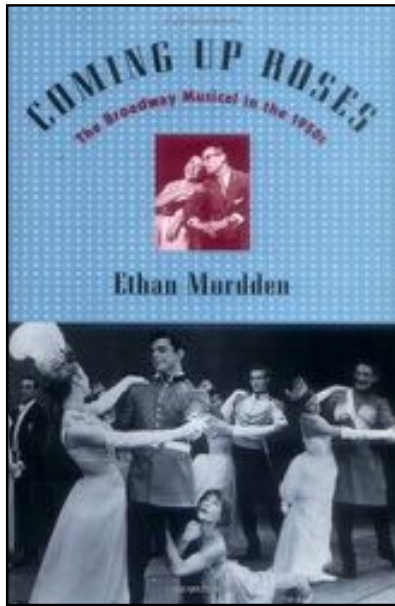
The Boy Friend at the 1955 Tony Awards: No Nominations



1955 Theatre World Award:

- Julie Andrews (given for a performer's Broadway debut)

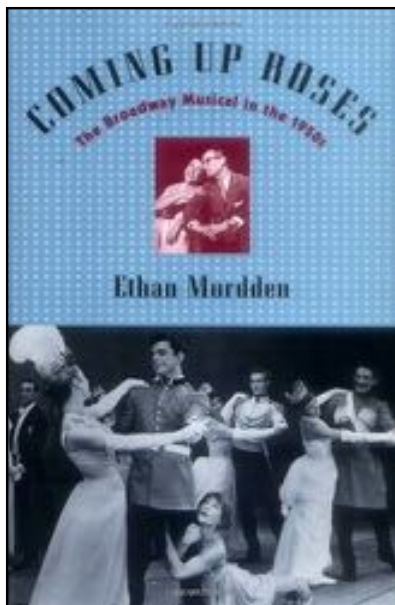
The Boy Friend: Historian Comments



- “[In England] *The Boy Friend* was staged delicately, with a whole cast of naifs. Here is yet another new-old item, a takeoff on the twenties musical that, for all its tintypes of specific twenties songs, is a completely different piece, small and tightly constructed where the twenties shows were spacious and chaotic.
- “Originally a ninety-minute insider’s joke produced ‘for the trade’ at London’s Players’ Club in 1953, the piece expanded and moved to the West End the following year for a five-year run.”

Ethan Mordden, *Coming Up Roses: The Broadway Musical in the 1950s* (1998), pp.106-107

The Boy Friend: Historian Comments



- “Feuer and Martin . . . bought it for Broadway with the stated intention of remounting it exactly as it had appeared at Wyndham’s Theatre. . . . Then Feuer and Martin became unhappy with the tryout performances and demanded alterations. No . . . *made* them. Wilson and [director Vida] Hope found themselves physically barred from the theatre. . . .
- “Hope’s atmosphere of fond bemusement was turned into outright lampoon.”

Ethan Mordden, *Coming Up Roses: The Broadway Musical in the 1950s* (1998), pp.106-107

David Heneker (1906-2001)



EARLY LIFE & EDUCATION:

- Born in Southsea, England; father was a distinguished general in World War I
- After attending Wellington and Sandhurst schools, he began military service.
- Served as cavalry officer in the British Army from 1925-1937 and in the War Office from 1939-1948
- Inspired by Noël Coward's *Bitter Sweet*, he embarked upon a second career in music
- After his military service ended, he performed for a while as a lounge singer, before turning to composing

David Heneker (1906-2001)



MUSICAL THEATRE CAREER:

- Also composed for cabaret and rock and roll singers
- First British writer to have two shows on Broadway which ran for more than 500 performances: *Irma La Douce* (1958) and *Half a Sixpence* (1963)
- Longest running show was *Charlie Girl* (1965)
- Other musicals included *Expresso Bongo* (1958), *Jorrock* (1968), and *The Biograph Girl* (1980)

Half A Sixpence (1965)



KEY MEMBERS OF THE BROADWAY CREATIVE TEAM:

- Producers: Allen-Hodgdon, Inc., Stevens Productions, Inc., and Harold Fielding
- Music & Lyrics: David Heneker
- Book by: Beverley Cross, based on H. G. Wells's novel *Kipps*
- Directed by: Gene Saks
- Choreographed by: Onna White
- Scenic & Costume Design by: Loudon Sainthill
- Lighting Design by: Jules Fisher
- CAST: Tommy Steele, John Cleese, Grover Dale, Polly James, Will Mackenzie, Carrie Nye, James Grout

LENGTH OF RUN: 511 Performances

Half a Sixpence (1965): Songs

ACT I:

- Overture
- "All in the Cause of Economy"
- "Half A Sixpence"
- "Money to Burn"
- "A Proper Gentleman"
- "She's Too Far Above Me"
- "If the Rain's Got to Fall"
- "The Old Military Canal"

ACT II:

- "Long Ago"
- "Flash, Bang, Wallop!"
- "I Know What I Am"
- "The Party's on the House"
- Finale

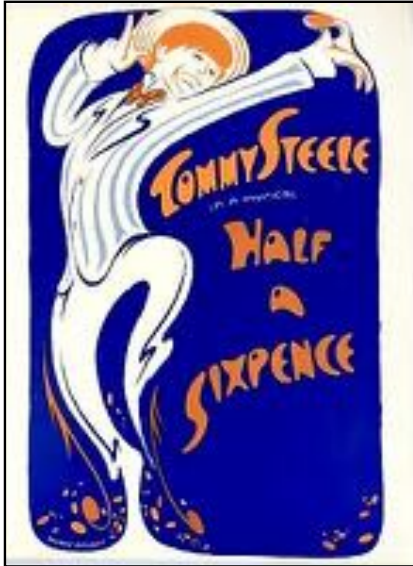


***Half a Sixpence* (1965): A Selection of Performances**

Half A Sixpence: Reviews (1965)

- “It ran something like two years in London, but I am told that it has been vastly gussied-up for this U.S. showing with the kind of zingy choreography that Onna White can deliver, . . . it is a splendid evening of musical theatre. As a musical comedy star, Tommy Steele has all the ingredients—he can dance in the production numbers, score solidly in a single, persuasively act out a straight scene, and he can even play the banjo.” (John McClain, *Journal-American*)
- “*Half A Sixpence* has come a long way—up—since I saw it in London two years ago. Then it was . . . pleasant but bland. Last night it appeared no less pleasant but a lot livelier.” (Norman Nadel, *World-Telegram & Sun*)
- “Tommy Steele can do a bit of everything a bit better than most people: a tiptoe kick, a strut, a sudden spin about the floor when he should be behaving sedately. He rattles a banjo smartly, too.” (Walter Kerr, *Herald Tribune*)

***Half A Sixpence* at the 1965 Tony Awards: 9 Nominations & No Wins**



- Best Musical
- Producer of a Musical: Allen-Hodgdon, Inc., Stevens Productions, Inc. & Harold Fielding
- Author of a Musical: Beverley Cross
- Composer & Lyricist: David Heneker
- Direction of a Musical: Gene Saks
- Choreography: Onna White
- Actor (Musical): Tommy Steele
- Featured Actress (Musical): Carrie Nye
- Featured Actor (Musical): James Grout

Half a Sixpence: Historian Comments



- “For the first time since the early 1900s, a London hit was heavily revised specifically for Broadway. Five of David Heneker’s songs were dropped and one added, Edmund Balin’s choreography was replaced by Onna White’s more high-powered numbers, and even the director, John Dexter, was superseded by Gene Saks.
- “There was a feeling that . . . *Half a Sixpence* was being Americanized. Not in its idiom, but in its performing style.”

Ethan Mordden, *Open a New Window: The Broadway Musical in the 1960s* (2001), pp.168-69

Half a Sixpence: Historian Comments

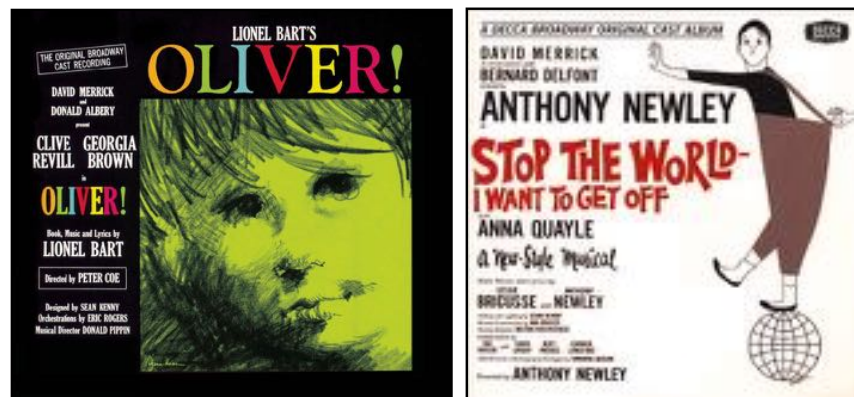


- “Still, the show was a hit, partly because of its disarmingly sweet score but mostly because of Tommy Steele, easily the most likable person ever to have rocked. . . . Steel was that rare Broadway thing, a full-fledged star that few had heard of, let alone experienced.
- “Perhaps, by the 1960s, some English musicals were under the American influence, blurring the formal differences.”

Ethan Mordden, *Open a New Window: The Broadway Musical in the 1960s* (2001), pp.168-69

Preview of Class 4 (Oct 10!)

Lionel Bart, Anthony Newley & Leslie Bricusse



Links to lyrics and playlists will be on the course website by Sunday evening.