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Starting Here, Starting Now

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PRODUCTION HISTORY

From *Hollywood Goes To Broadway* by Scott Bettencourt

By the time *Starting Here, Starting Now* opened off-Broadway in March of 1977, David Shire had been working steadily as a film and television composer for the better part of a decade, and his then-wife Talia Shire had just earned her second Oscar nomination, for playing Adrian in the first *Rocky*. The mid-70s saw him at the peak of his film scoring career, with two Best Picture nominees to his credit – *The Conversation* and *All the President's Men* – and though he had yet to receive a nomination himself, his scores for *The Conversation* and *The Hindenburg* were in the Academy Music Branch's ten film shortlist for the Best Score Oscar nomination in their respective years.

But for years before he began writing film scores, Shire and fellow Yale alumnus Richard Maltby, Jr. were writing stage musicals, none of which had managed to make it to Broadway. *Starting Here, Starting Now* was a revue collecting a variety of songs from their first two decades of collaborating, essentially a "Best Of" collection which, unsurprisingly, manages to show the team in their best creative light.

Their early show, *The Sap of Life*, featured three songs which ended up in *Starting Here, Starting Now* - "The Word is Love," which opens *Starting Here*; "Watching the Big Parade Go By," one of the many parade songs from the era ("Before the Parade Passes By," "A Parade in Town") and the propulsive "New Life Coming," which ends the show. *Love Match*, a musical about the romance between Prince Albert and Victoria, has four songs in *Starting Here*: "I Think I May Want to Remember Today" is a charming, light-hearted love song; "I Don't Believe It" was substantially reworked for *Starting Here*, and its cynical depiction of relationships is reminiscent of the Sondheim/Rodgers song "We're Gonna Be All Right," especially the version heard in *Side by Side by Sondheim*; "I Hear Bells" is especially lovely; while "Today is the First Day of the Rest of Your Life" is engaging and fun.

In "We Can Talk to Each Other," the man expresses the title's sentiment while ignoring everything the woman says. From the Ronnie Graham revue *Graham Crackers* came "Crossword Puzzle," whose cleverness and subject matter might even please the master, Stephen Sondheim (both Maltby and Sondheim are puzzle creators). *How Do You Do, I Love You* was the source of three songs, the pleasant "Just Across the River," "Pleased With Myself," and "One Step."

Two of the best songs came from a musical version of Rumer Godden's novel *The River*, which had been previously made into a film by Jean Renoir – "Travel" has a lovely flow befitting its title, while "Song of Me" is genuinely childlike and touching. *Starting Here's* title song is one of the show's highlights, written while Shire was an assistant conductor for the original Broadway run of *Funny Girl*, and was ultimately recorded by its star, a certain Barbra Streisand. Streisand also recorded "What About Today?" the one song on the album for which Shire wrote both music and lyrics, and Streisand used it as the title for the album which featured it, and she also recorded "Autumn," the earliest of the Shire/Maltby songs, written while they were attending Yale.

There are also a few songs not written for other shows. "Barbara" was written by Maltby to celebrate the first anniversary of his marriage (Barbara Maltby would later produce Steven Soderbergh's excellent film *King of the Hill*). The jaunty "Flair" was written for *Starting Here*, as was the terrific *I Don't Remember Christmas*, whose uptempo bitterness is worthy of Sondheim.

In 1993, Jay Records released the cast album to the London revival of the show, which added additional Shire/Maltby songs – "Beautiful," "I'm Going to Make You Beautiful," and "A Girl You Should Know."



ABOUT MALTBY & SHIRE

(From the Maltby & Shire Facebook page)

Richard Maltby, Jr. and David Shire are recognized as one of the top songwriting teams working in the musical theatre.

David Shire and Richard Maltby started working together as students at Yale University. Their first Broadway credit was in 1968, when their song "The Girl of the Minute" was used in the revue, *New Faces of 1968*.

Maltby & Shire solidified their place at the forefront of contemporary musical theatre writers with two revues, titled *Starting Here, Starting Now* and *Closer Than Ever*. They collaborated with bookwriter Sybille Pearson in 1983 on the hit Broadway musical, *Baby*. In 1996, with bookwriter John Weidman, they were represented again on the Broadway stage by the musical, *Big*. All of those shows have had hundreds of regional and stock productions worldwide. Currently, the songwriters are working with Weidman on the musical *Take Flight*, which interweaves the stories of the Wright Brothers, Amelia Earhart and Charles Lindbergh. It premiered in July 2007 at the Menier Chocolate Factory in London, and enjoyed a successful run in Tokyo in November of that year. A U.S. premiere is scheduled for a spring 2010 run at the McCarter Theater in Princeton, NJ. [sic]

Both men have also made impressive contributions independently of one another.

Maltby conceived and directed the only two musical revues to ever win the Tony Award for Best Musical: *Ain't Misbehavin'* (1978, also Tony Award for Best Director) and *Fosse* (1999). He was director/co-lyricist for the American version of Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Song and Dance* (1986), starring Bernadette Peters. He was co-lyricist for *Miss Saigon* (1991). He also conceived and directed *Ring Of Fire, The Johnny Cash Musical Show* (2006). He is co-bookwriter/lyricist for *The Pirate Queen* (2007). He was most recently represented on Broadway as the director of the new, original musical *The Story of My Life* by composer/lyricist Neil Bartram and bookwriter Brian Hill. That musical had a brief run at the Booth Theatre in February 2009.

Shire began scoring for television in the 1960s and made the leap to scoring feature films in the early 1970s. He scored *The Conversation*, perhaps his best known score, in 1974. Additional screen credits include *Two People, All the President's Men, The Hindenburg, Farewell My Lovely, 2010, Return to Oz* and *Zodiac*. He composed original music for *Saturday Night Fever* (for which he received two Grammy Award nominations), and also worked on several disco adaptations including *Night on Disco Mountain*. He won the Academy Award for Best Song for his and Norman Gimble's theme song for *Norma Rae*, "It Goes Like It Goes." He was also nominated the same year in the same category for "The Promise (I'll Never Say Goodbye)" from the motion picture *The Promise*, with lyrics by Marilyn and Alan Bergman. In 1981 his song "With You I'm Born Again," recorded by Billy Preston and Syreeta, was a top five international hit and stayed on the pop charts for 26 weeks. Shire's television scores have earned five Emmy nominations.