

A Study Guide

Of

# WORKING

From the Book by Studs Terkel

Adapted by Stephen Schwartz and Nina Faso

Songs by Craig Carnelia, Micki Grant, Mary Rodger  
and  
Susan Birkenhead, Stephen Schwartz, James Taylor

Dance Music by Michele Brouman

**Original Production Directed By Stephen Schwartz**

**FORT WAYNE CIVIC THEATRE**

**IN THE WINGS**  
**Arts-In-Education Program**

**PERFORMANCES FOR SCHOOLS AND SOCIAL SERVICES**

**Saturday, May 8, 2009 @ 2:00 p.m.**

*Compiled and Written By Hadley Todoran*  
*Additional Material & Editing By Eunice Wadewitz*

## *Studs Terkel*

Louis (Studs) Terkel, the third son of Russian-Jewish parents, was born in the Bronx on 16th May, 1912. Eleven years later the family moved to Chicago where his father found work as a tailor. He later opened a rooming house for immigrants. After graduating from high school in 1928, Terkel went to the University of Chicago where he received a law degree in 1934. The following year he found work producing radio shows as part of the Federal Writers Project. Terkel, who now adopted the name Studs (after the hero in James Farrell's novel, *Studs Lonigan*), also became involved in the Chicago Repertory Theatre.



In 1939 he married the social worker Ida Goldberg. The marriage was to last for 60 years. On the outbreak of the Second World War Terkel attempted to join the army but was rejected because of a perforated eardrum. He joined the Red Cross but he was not allowed to serve overseas. He later discovered that this was because of his left-wing political views. During the 1940s Terkel became a familiar voice on radio working as a news commentator and disc jockey. He also acted and appeared on several television programs. In 1949 Terkel began his own television show, *Studs' Place*, an improvised sitcom where he played himself as a restaurant owner.

After being investigated by Joseph McCarthy and the House Un-American Activities Committee in 1953, his contract was cancelled. Terkel refused to give evidence against other left-wing activists and was therefore blacklisted and prevented from appearing on television. He later recalled: "I was blacklisted because I took certain positions on things and never retracted... I signed many petitions that were for unfashionable causes and never retracted."

Terkel eventually found employment with the *Chicago Sunday Times* where he wrote a regular jazz column. He also acted in various plays including John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*. In 1958 he started his long-running daily radio program on WFMT, the *Studs Terkel Show*. In the 1960s Terkel became interested in oral history. His first book on the subject, *Division Street: America* (1967), contained interviews with seventy people who had lived in Chicago. This was followed by *Hard Times* (1970), which featured interviews with Americans talking about their experiences of the Depression, and *Working* (1974), an account of people's working lives. Terkel wrote: "Work is about a daily search for meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor, in short for a sort of life, rather than a Monday-to-Friday sort of dying."

Ed Vulliamy pointed out: "As you listen, you know in your bones that each person has never told their story as cogently or as fully before and will never do so again, for that was Terkel's art. He was maestro of that most precious craft in the practice of both journalism and history: listening... But this distinction did much more for the archives of history than bequeath unrepeatable recordings of the great, the good and the gregarious. Terkel's obsessive interest in the propulsion of people's lives was at its most curious and passionate — and his subjects at their most brilliantly articulate — when he was dealing with everyday people, from whatever background: carpenters, judges, hub-cap fitters, priests, admirals, sharecroppers, models, signalmen, tennis players, war veterans and cooks."



Other books in the same style by Terkel include *American Dreams: Lost and Found* (1980), the Pulitzer Prize-winning *The Good War* (1985), *Chicago* (1987), *The Great Divide* (1988), *Race* (1992), *Coming of Age* (1995), *Talking to Myself: A Memoir of My Times* (1995), *My American Century* (1998). *Will the Circle be Unbroken?*, a book about death, was published in 2001. This was followed by *Hope Dies Last* (2005), *And They All Sang* (2006), *They All Sang* (2007) and *Touch and Go: A Memoir* (2008).

Terkel has been described as a historian and a sociologist but he prefers to call himself a "guerrilla journalist with a tape recorder." He created controversy when Tony Blair resigned and he asked: "Why was he such a house-boy for Bush?"

Studs Terkel died in his Chicago home on 31st October, 2008 at the age of ninety-six. He asked that his epitaph should be: "Curiosity did not kill this cat."

## Quotes

- "Most of us have jobs that are too small for our spirits."
- "I always love to quote Albert Einstein because nobody dares contradict him."
- "Chicago is not the most corrupt American city. It's the most theatrically corrupt."
- "I hope for peace and sanity - it's the same thing."
- "When you become part of something, in some way you count. It could be a march; it could be a rally, even a brief one. You're part of something, and you suddenly realize you count. To count is very important."

## Summary of the Book

A national treasure, radio legend Studs Terkel first made his name in his home town of Chicago, conducting tens of thousands of radio interviews over several decades. (He even interviewed Bob Dylan in the early '60s.) In *WORKING*, Terkel lets the tape roll as people talk about their jobs--an oral history approach which, though he did not invent it, he is generally credited with popularizing. As they talk about their everyday tasks and their work environment, relate their insights into coworkers or customers, and tell anecdotes about problems they face, each speaker's voice comes through as distinctly individual, adding up to an amazing portrait of America and Americans.

## Excerpt from Working

*It is a two-flat dwelling, somewhere in Cicero, on the outskirts of Chicago. [Mike LeFevre] is thirty-seven. He works in a steel mill. On occasion, his wife Carol works as a waitress in a neighborhood restaurant; otherwise, she is at home, caring for their two small children, a girl and a boy...*

...I'm a dying breed. A laborer. Strictly muscle work ... pick it up, put it down, pick it up, put it down. We handle between forty and fifty thousand pounds of steel a day. (Laughs) I know this is hard to believe - from four hundred pounds to three- and four-pound pieces. It's dying.

You can't take pride any more. You remember when a guy could point to a house he built, how many logs he stacked. He built it and he was proud of it. I don't really think I could be proud if a contractor built a home for me. I would be tempted to get in there and kick the carpenter in the ass (laughs), and take the saw away from him. 'Cause I would have to be part of it, you know.

It's hard to take pride in a bridge you're never gonna cross, in a door you're never gonna open. You're mass-producing things and you never see the end result of it. (Muses) I worked for a trucker one time. And I got this tiny satisfaction when I loaded a truck. At least I could see the truck depart loaded. In a steel mill, forget it. You don't see where nothing goes.

I got chewed out by my foreman once. He said, "Mike, you're a good worker but you have a bad attitude." My attitude is that I don't get excited about my job. I do my work but I don't say whoopee-doo. The day I get excited about my job is the day I go to a head shrinker. How are you gonna get excited about pullin' steel? How are you gonna get excited when you're tired and want to sit down?

It's not just the work. Somebody built the pyramids. Somebody's going to build something. Pyramids, Empire State Building--these things just don't happen. There's hard work behind it. I would like to see a building, say, the Empire State, I would like to see on one side of it a foot-wide strip from top to bottom with the name of every bricklayer, the name of every electrician, with all the names. So when a guy walked by, he could take his son and say, "See, that's me over there on the forty-fifth floor. I put the steel beam in." Picasso can point to a painting. What can I point to? A writer can point to a book. Everybody should have something to point to.

# *The Show*

## **Stephen Schwartz**

Stephen Schwartz was born in New York City on March 6, 1948. He studied piano and composition at the Juilliard School of Music while in high school and graduated from Carnegie Mellon University in 1968 with a B.F.A. in Drama. Upon coming back to live in New York City, he went to work as a producer for RCA Records, but shortly thereafter began to work in the Broadway theatre. His first major credit was the title song for the play BUTTERFLIES ARE FREE; the song was eventually used in the movie version, as well.

In 1971, he wrote the music and new lyrics for GODSPELL, for which he won several awards, including two Grammys. This was followed by the English texts in collaboration with Leonard Bernstein for Bernstein's MASS, which opened the Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C. The following year, he wrote the music and lyrics for PIPPIN, and two years later, THE MAGIC SHOW. At one point, GODSPELL, PIPPIN and THE MAGIC SHOW were all running on Broadway simultaneously.

He next wrote the music and lyrics for THE BAKER'S WIFE, followed by a musical version of Studs Terkel's WORKING, to which he contributed four songs and which he also adapted and directed, winning the Drama Desk Award as best director. He also co-directed the television production, which was presented as part of the PBS "American Playhouse" series. Next came songs for a one-act musical for children, CAPTAIN LOUIE, and a children's book, THE PERFECT PEACH. He then wrote music for three of the songs in the Off-Broadway revue, PERSONALS, lyrics to Charles Strouse's music for RAGS, and music and lyrics for CHILDREN OF EDEN.

He then began working in film, collaborating with composer Alan Menken on the scores for the Disney animated features POCAHONTAS, for which he received two Academy Awards and another Grammy, and THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME. He also provided songs for DreamWorks' first animated feature, THE PRINCE OF EGYPT, for which he won another Academy Award for the song "When You Believe." He most recently collaborated with Alan Menken on the songs for Disney's ENCHANTED.

Mr. Schwartz provided music and lyrics for the original television musical, GEPPETTO, seen on The Wonderful World of Disney and recently adapted for the stage as MY SON PINOCCHIO. He has released two CDs on which he sings new songs, entitled RELUCTANT PILGRIM and UNCHARTED TERRITORY.

Mr. Schwartz's most recent musical, WICKED, opened in the fall of 2003 and is currently running on Broadway and in several other productions around the United States and the world. In 2008, WICKED reached its 1900th performance on Broadway, making Mr. Schwartz the only songwriter in Broadway history ever to have three shows run more than 1900 performances. His first opera, SEANCE ON A WET AFTERNOON, premiered at Opera Santa Barbara in the fall of 2009.

Mr. Schwartz has recently been given a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame and inducted into the Theatre Hall of Fame and the Songwriters Hall of Fame. A book about his career, "Defying Gravity," has recently been released by Applause Books.

Under the auspices of the ASCAP Foundation, he runs musical theatre workshops in New York and Los Angeles and serves on the ASCAP board; he is also currently President of the Dramatists' Guild. Mr. Schwartz is the recipient of three Academy Awards, four Grammy Awards, four Drama Desk Awards, a star on the Hollywood "Walk of Fame," and a tiny handful of tennis trophies.

**For further information, please visit <http://www.stephenschwartz.com>.**

### **Susan Birkenhead**

Susan Birkenhead wrote the lyrics for *Triumph of Love* and wrote additional lyrics for *High Society*. Both shows were on Broadway during the 1997-98 season. She received a Tony nomination and Drama Desk Award for her lyrics for *Jelly's Last Jam*. She was one of the writers nominated for a Tony Award for *Working* and won an Outer Critics Circle Award for *What About Luv?* She is currently working on *The Night They Raided Minsky's* with Charles Strouse and Evan Hunter. Ms. Birkenhead is a member of The Dramatists Guild Council.

### **Craig Carnelia**

Craig Carnelia wrote the score for the Broadway musical *Is There Life After High School?* and contributed 4 songs to Studs Terkel's *Working* for which he received a Tony nomination. Off-Broadway, Craig wrote the music and lyrics for *3 Postcards* at Playwrights Horizons and *Notes* at the Manhattan Theatre Club and contributed songs to *The No-Frills Revue*, *Diamonds* and *A...My Name Is Still Alice*. He also recently published a songbook of his work "The Songs of Craig Carnelia" and released a CD of his critically acclaimed cabaret revue *Pictures In The Hall*. Honors include the 1995 Johnny Mercer Award, the first annual Gilman and Gonzalez-Falla Musical Theatre Award, and the prestigious Kleban Award for distinguished lyric writing. He is currently writing lyrics for a Broadway bound musical based on the classic film, *Sweet Smell Of Success*, with music by Marvin Hamlisch and book by John Guare.

### **Micki Grant**

Micki Grant is the author and composer of *Don't Bbother Me, I Can't Cope*, the award winning Broadway musical in which she also starred. She has performed on and Off-Broadway, and in regional theatres around the country. She recently starred in the national tour of *Having Our Say*, for which she received the Helen Hayes Award for her portrayal of Sadie Delaney, and spent six weeks at the Market Theatre in Johannesburg, South Africa performing the same role. She is the co-composer/lyricist of the Broadway musicals *Working* and *Your Arms Too Short To Box With God*. Some of her other acting credits include major roles in *Brecht On Brecht*, *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Tambourines To Glory*, *The Balcony*, *Funnyhouse Of A Negro*, and *To Be Young, Gifted, And Black*. She also appears in the CBS television version of *Having Our Say*.

### **Mary Rodgers**

Mary Rodgers' credits as a composer began with the Broadway production of *Once Upon A Mattress* in 1959 and continued with *Hot Spot*, *The Mad Show*, *Working*, *The Griffin* and *The Minor Canon*, and scores for the Bil Baird Marionettes and Theatreworks/USA. Her musicals have also been celebrated in a revue, *Hey, Love*. She is a popular author of fiction for young people, most notably the 1972 novel *Freaky Friday*, which was made into a Disney Studios motion picture in 1976 and again in 2003 (with a screenplay by Rodgers), a Theatreworks/USA musical (composed by Rodgers) and an ABC TV remake. Mary Rodgers is Chairman of the Board of the Juilliard School, on the Board of ASCAP, and on the Council of the Dramatists Guild.

### **James Taylor**

James Taylor was born in Boston, Massachusetts on March 12, 1948. A Grammy Award winning singer-songwriter, some of his songs include: "Carolina On My Mind," "Fire and Rain," "Country Road," "You've Got a Friend," "How Sweet It Is," and "Your Smiling Face."

**From The Music Theatre International Study Guide for WORKING**

## Characters

### **Act I:**

- Mike Dillard, ironworker
- Al Calinda, parking lot attendant
- Amanda McKenny, project manager
- Rex Winship, corporate executive
- Rose Hoffman, schoolteacher
- Babe Secoli, supermarket checker
- Roberto Nuñez, boxboy & migrant worker
- Conrad Swibel, UPS delivery man
- Kate Rushton, housewife
- Roberta Victor, hooker
- Candy Cottingham, political fundraiser

### **Act II:**

- Grace Clements, millworker
- Anthony Coelho, stone mason
- Frank Decker, interstate trucker
- Heather Lamb, telephone operator
- Sharon Atkins, receptionist
- Enid DuBois, telephone solicitor
- Delores Dante, waitress
- Joe Zutty, retired
- Tom Patrick, fireman
- Maggie Holmes, cleaning woman
- Ralph Werner, salesman
- Charlie Blosson, ex-copy boy
- Mike Dillard, ironworker

## Musical Numbers

### **Act I:**

1. Opening (Orchestra)
2. All the Livelong Day (Mike, Men, Women)
  3. Hey, Somebody Reprise #1 (All)
  4. Traffic Jam (Workers)
  5. Lovin' Al (Al)
6. Neat to Be a Newsboy (John, 3 Men)
  7. Nobody Tells Me How (Rose)
8. I'm Just Movin' (Babe, Other Checkers)
9. Un Mejor Dia Vendora (Roberto, Spanish Workers)
  10. Just a Housewife (Kate, Housewives)
  11. Millwork (Singer)
12. If I Could've Been (Man, Woman, All)

### **Act II:**

1. Hey, Somebody Reprise #2 (All)
  2. Mason (Singer)
3. Brother Trucker (Frank, Dave, Singers)
  4. It's an Art (Delores, Customers)
  5. Joe (Joe)
6. Cleaning Woman (Maggie, Cleaning Women)
  7. Fathers and Sons (Mike)
8. Something to Point To (Mike, All)

## Which Composer Wrote Which Songs

**Stephen Schwartz:** the opening "All the Livelong Day," "It's an Art," "Fathers and Sons," "Neat To Be A Newsboy," "I'm Just Movin'"

**Micki Grant:** "If I Could've Been," "Lovin' Al," and "Cleaning Women"

**Craig Carnelia:** "Just a Housewife," "The Mason," "Joe," and "Something to Point To"

**James Taylor:** "Brother Trucker," "Millwork," "Traffic Jam," and the music for "Un Mejor Dia Vendra" - Matt Landers and Graciella Danielle wrote lyrics for this song

**Susan Birkinhead and Mary Rodgers:** the teacher's song, "Nobody Tells Me How"

## Synopsis

The musical begins Monday morning as the ensemble comes out, introduces themselves, and sings "All the Livelong Day." First, Mike Dillard, a steelworker, talks about his job and thinks about the man who drives the car made with his steel. The Workers, driving their cars, are held up in a "Traffic Jam," then they turn their cars over to Al Calinda, the parking lot attendant. Al tells his life story and sings about his obsession with cars in the song, "Lovin' Al."

Meanwhile, in an office filled with cubicles, Amanda McKenny and her fellow workers talk about their work days in a time of computers and corporate mergers. Amanda and her co-workers attempt to do as little work as possible. In contrast, her boss, Rex Winship, loves to work and he takes an overseas call. Rex hopes to retire and become a teacher, so he can pass on his business knowledge to the next generation. Next, an aging third grade teacher, Rose Hoffman greets her students as they come in to class. She laments the changing teaching methods and different generations in the song, "Nobody Tells Me How." Rose then remembers her favorite student, Pam "Babe" Secoli, who is now a checker at the Treasure Island Supermarket.

In "I'm Just Movin'," Babe and other checkers check-out and bag groceries for shoppers. Roberto, a bag boy, bags lettuce for Kate Rushton, a housewife, as he remembers his migrant worker family. He sings "Un Mejor Dia Vendra" with Spanish Workers. Kate goes home with her groceries where Conrad, the UPS deliveryman, startles her. Conrad talks about the low points of his day (being bitten by dogs) and the high points (meeting pretty housewives). Alone in her kitchen, Kate sings about her mundane tasks in "Just a Housewife."

As the lights fade on Kate, Roberta Victor, a hooker, comes on and announces she never wanted to be a housewife. She talks about turning her first trick and how women are taught to hustle. Candy Cottingham, a political fundraiser, says her work is hard because she has to separate people from their money. Candy sees herself as an entertainer while Roberta does not see her occupation as being different from someone who works on an assembly line.

The lights fade on Roberta and Candy and come up on Grace working in a suitcase factory. In the song "Millwork," Grace and her fellow Millworkers lament their boring, monotonous jobs and begin to daydream about their lost youths. At the last hour of the workday, all the workers reflect on their regrets and the lives they might have had in the song "If I Could've Been."

As the sun sets, Anthony Palazzo, a stone mason, wants to lay one more stone before he quits for the day. The song "The Mason" describes how a mason's work (building stone houses) lasts beyond his lifetime. As evening sets in, two truck drivers, Frank Decker and Dave, drive across the country in the song "Brother Trucker." Frank, on a run from Milwaukee, tries to call his dispatcher but only gets an operator (Heather) instead. Heather, Sharon Atkins (a receptionist), and Enid Dubois (a telephone solicitor) talk about their lives over the phone.

As dinnertime sets in at a restaurant, Delores, a waitress, turns her job of serving food into a one-woman show in the song "It's an Art." Then, Joe Zutty, who is retired, comes on and describes his life in the song "Joe." He keeps busy by traveling and going to fires, like the one where the audience meets Tom,

the fireman, running out of a burning building. Tom has always wanted to be a fireman. However, Maggie, who's cleaning offices at two a.m., has always wanted to sing and play piano. In the song "Cleaning Women," Maggie dreams of a better life for her daughter, the next generation.

Maggie leaves and the next generation comes on in the persona of Ralph Werner, a nineteen-year-old salesman who dreams of starting his own business and having his own family. In contrast, Charlie Blossom, a twenty-year-old copy boy, dreams of killing everyone at his job. Then, Mike Dillard comes back out and laments the mistakes he's made and the lessons he hopes to pass on in the song "Fathers and Sons." The ensemble comes out, points to a building, and describes the different jobs they each have had there in "Something to Point To."

The musical ends with a collective acknowledgment of the accomplishments of each of them.

### Quotes

- **Woman:** "How could it be Monday? Wasn't yesterday Monday?"
- **Mike:** "Most people are afraid of heights like that, so automatically every ironworker has an ego. You're doing something somebody else can't do."
- **Al:** "Then we got our regular customers – they tip once a week. We give them what we call 'soigné' service. 'Course those who don't tip, we still have to give 'em service. But it ain't soigné."
- **Amanda:** "Sometimes you have a good boss, which I've had. And sometimes you have a Satan boss."
- **Roberto:** "If I had enough money, I would take busloads of people out to the fields and into the labor camps. Then they would know how that fine salad got on their table."
- **Roberta:** "People aren't built to switch on and off like water faucets."
- **Grace:** "I think women adjust to monotony better than men do, because their minds are used to doing two things at once, where a man can only think of one thing at a time."
- **Sharon:** "I always thought of a receptionist as the dumb broad at the front desk taking phone messages. Now I'm one, so of course, I've changed my opinion."

### Trivia

- The original Broadway production, starring Patti LuPone, opened at the 46<sup>th</sup> Street Theatre on May 14, 1978. It ran through June 4<sup>th</sup>, only playing 24 performances.
- It was nominated for five Tony Awards, including Best Book and Best Original Score.

Do you have questions or comments about *Working*  
or the Civic Theatre's production of it?  
Join the discussion on **Facebook: Fort Wayne Civic Theatre.**

## *Director's Notes by Guest Director Ranae Butler*

In 1972, Pantheon Books published “Working: People Talk About What They Do All Day and How They Feel About What They Do.” The book contains the stories of 135 working men and women (a great many from the Midwest) mined from three years of interviews and conversations with Studs Terkel. Mr. Terkel was a Pulitzer Prize winning oral historian who spent most of his life interviewing and telling the stories of America's working men and women. He was, he wrote in the introduction to “Working,” “constantly astonished by the extraordinary dreams of ordinary people.”

Mr. Terkel, in his introduction, wrote, “This book, being about work, is, by its very nature, about violence – to the spirit as well as to the body.” He spoke to men and women who demonstrated courage, fortitude and sometimes even a little joy in the face of daily humiliations, ceaseless boredom and little glory.

Five years after its publication, “Working” was adapted for the stage and opened on Broadway in 1978. The creators, Stephen Schwartz (“Godspell”, “Wicked”) and Nina Faso, added music to the oral histories (including several songs by James Taylor). The musical was reworked in 1999 to add new characters and new professions.

At its heart, “Working” is a play about the quest for meaning in our lives. It is a mirror reflecting the enormous heart and spirit of the American people on that quest. And while some of these people were interviewed forty years ago, the themes remain constant, the message relevant.

The words of Walt Whitman open the piece, “I Hear America Singing.” The audience is invited into a journey through the ups and downs of these characters’ work life – as they try to maintain some sense of personal worth, they search for beauty, refuse to be demeaned and dream of being remembered. It is a story of what we are, what we might have been and what we still might become.

Friedrich Nietzsche wrote: “He who has a *why* to live for can bear almost any *how*.” There are several poignant examples in “Working” of people who bear their “*hows*” for the people they love. As theatre often does, my eyes were opened to the lives of my parents to whom I owe a great debt. This is also a story of those who brought us this far.

At the very end of the musical, the stage directions call for the characters to be putting *on* pieces of their costume to identify the workers we have met. The directions read: “*In the original production, this number was performed in white break-away coveralls, which were ripped off at this point to reveal all the character costumes beneath.*” At this point in time they are about to sing the final lines of the show: “Me! Me! Me! Me! Me!”

I would argue that, while we may find meaning in our jobs, they do not have to define us or limit us. One of the characters in the play says, “Most of us, like the assembly line worker, have jobs that are too small for our spirit. Jobs are not big enough for people.” My answer to that is to reverse the stage directions for this production. Rather than have the characters get *into* their work uniforms, I have chosen to have them *remove* the pieces that identify them by their job. They end the show in their “normal” clothes. This is to acknowledge the people behind the uniform. The human spirit larger than the job can hold!

As the characters close in song, the final words of Whitman's famous poem are especially fitting; “*Singing with open mouths their strong melodious songs.*”

## *Production Notes from the script of WORKING*

### P R O D U C T I O N   N O T E S

WORKING is not a "book musical," of course, in that there is no narrative thread carrying the action forward. But neither is it a revue, with the separate scenes occurring haphazardly and interchangeably. Basically, the material is organized by juxtaposition, so that one scene makes a smooth transition into the next and what one character is saying is related in content to the character who precedes and follows. In a way, the transitions are as important as the content of the material itself, since the interrelationship of all the people is an underlying theme of the show. In some cases, such as the transition from the supermarket to the migrants and back, the transition itself is the point of the scene. We have generally attempted to make these transitions clear in the stage directions, but they can be heightened in production by having characters overlap each other, or watch each other's monologues, etc. (It is particularly useful to have Mike Dillard, the only actor who doesn't double roles, observe other monologues.)

This is probably the most difficult aspect of the production to achieve because it is likely that the show will be rehearsed piece-meal, section by section. Thus the transitions are difficult to rehearse until the show reaches the run-thru stage. But it is vital that the director take time then to make sure the transitions exist and are clear to the actors and audience. Otherwise, the show will lose much of its meaning and cumulative power.

A note to the choreographer: The choreography should be based as much as possible on actual work movements. This is particularly important in the staging of "All the Livelong Day." If we ever feel these characters are "dancing", much of the believability vanishes.

A note about acting style: It should be remembered that the words in the script are those of real people taken in an interview. The actors should avoid the temptation to overdramatize or comment on the material, particularly the more serious monologues. People tend to talk about themselves in a matter-of-fact way, with a certain degree of shyness and self-deprecating humor, and often the more terrible the story, the bigger the smile they will have when telling it and the lighter they will make it.

The actors, in approaching the characters, might also think about how shy or how outgoing a character is likely to be talking in public. The person's attitude to the audience and way of speaking to us can be very revealing of character.

## Discussion Questions

- 1) Have you ever had a dull, repetitive, or mindless job? Maybe you've done a dull chore or two. (If you haven't, imagine one.) Is there anything positive to take away from this experience? Under what circumstances? Explain.
- 2) What mark would you like to leave on the world? How can you relate your feelings about this to what you saw in the show?
- 3) What would you take to be the characteristics of the ideal job?
- 4) Compare and contrast all of the characters' opinions of their jobs. Why do you think certain characters feel how they do about their jobs?
- 5) With which character did you sympathize the most? Why?
- 6) Did you recognize anything in any of the characters that reminded you of yourself?
- 7) Are people defined by the jobs they have? Have you ever judged someone by what they do in the workplace rather than who they are?

\* \* \*

## Reviews

### **THEATER REVIEW: *Angst of Working Stiffs From Mason to Waitress* By PETER MARKS    Published: March 22, 1999    NEW YORK TIMES**

"Working" is a musical about people who are never in musicals. The hard hats, cleaning women, parking lot attendants and bricklayers portrayed in this sweet-tempered revue are propelled from the chorus line of life into unlikely leading roles. The trucker on a long haul, the operator on a short break, the waitress on a circuit of the dining room: all get the chance in this show to exercise their inalienable American right to life, liberty and the pursuit of a boffo production number.

It's an unashamed celebration of the common man, as wholesome as a Labor Day picnic. Based on Studs Terkel's identically titled book, a compilation of verbatim interviews with dozens of workers about their daily toils, this 1978 musical attempts nothing fancier than to spread the message through song that virtually everyone takes pride on the job and, by golly, deserves a little respect for it.

Is this premise enough for an evening's entertainment? Well . . . let's just say . . . um . . . almost.

"Working," with an appealingly eclectic folk-rock score by, among others, James Taylor, Stephen Schwartz, Mary Rodgers, Craig Carnelia and Micki Grant, was nevertheless a bust in its original incarnation on Broadway two decades ago. The overblown and overlong production tried much too hard to jazz up what should have been a gentler enterprise.

Now, at last, in a revival at the Long Wharf Theater here, "Working" is getting the loving, small-scale handling it was always meant to receive. This new version, streamlined by its adapters, Mr. Schwartz and Nina Faso, to 90 minutes, was first produced movingly at the Signature Theater in Arlington, Va., last season. It's an unpretentious re-imagining that in its most satisfying moments digs out the poignant internal struggles in the bedrock American lives it seeks to glorify.

Christopher Ashley, who directed, and Dawn DiPasquale, credited with the

"musical staging," which presumably means the minimal choreography, do extremely well by their Broadway-caliber cast; Pamela Isaacs ("The Life") and Emily Skinner ("Side Show") are among the members of the talented ensemble that also includes John Herrera, Alix Korey, Matthew Saldivar, Gavin DeGraw, Ann Harada, Ken Prymus and Rex Robbins.

Still, there is something of a knee-jerk impulse to sentimentality in much of the material they perform, a tendency to pabulum, that dims the power of "Working." It's not exactly agitprop, but the show at times displays its biases so baldly it comes across as a rather corny commercial for the A.F.L.-C.I.O.

The numbers can be quite affecting. Mr. Taylor's elegiac "Millwork," for instance, set in a luggage factory and sung with a smoldering sense of loss by the excellent Ms. Skinner, is a masterly precis on a kind of suffering that OSHA's regulations cannot quash.

As Ms. Isaacs and other cast members work a plastic-molding machine, realistically rendered by the set designer Neil Patel, Ms. Skinner tells her story of the snuffing out of a spirit on the assembly line -- "Millwork, it ain't nothin' but an awful boring job" -- and that does, truly, sound like America singing.

Many other times, however, "Working" settles for the uncomfortably facile. When a homemaker sings of her loneliness ("Just a Housewife"), when a stoneworker declares his joy in the durability of a wall ("The Mason"), when a migrant worker dreams of a better life ("Un Mejor Dia Vendra"), the audience knows from the first syllables where the number is headed.

Although the show's creators updated some of the vignettes -- corporate raiding and word processing, for example, were not yet popular pursuits when the musical was first put to paper -- many of the numbers still sound slightly antique, as if they should be background music on "That '70's Show" on television.

Yet overlooking some unremovable stains, a good time can be had at "Working" savoring the better numbers and the cast's expertise at selling them. (Ms. Korey and Mr. DeGraw, for example, have sharp turns as, respectively, a teacher from a less tolerant era and a package delivery man with an eye for sunbathing addressees.) As in any workplace, you have to be willing to compromise.

## **Working**

**By JAY HANDELMAN      Published May 20, 2008      VARIETY**

Though it was a Broadway failure in 1978, "Working" has been a popular fixture in regional, stock and community theater ever since. Its long life is likely to be extended through a vibrantly updated version of the show, premiering at Asolo Rep in Sarasota, Fla., that gives voice to peoples' attitudes about their jobs.

Adapted from Studs Terkel's oral history by Stephen Schwartz and Nina Faso, "Working" mixes funny, poignant and sassy monologues with a varied assortment of songs by seven composers and lyricists, capturing a broad array of jobs and careers that can be financially rewarding or exercises in frustration.

Schwartz and director Gordon Greenberg went back to the original composers for updates and some new interviews were conducted to acknowledge changing times, such as the introduction of computers, cell phones and outsourcing, and more contemporary jobs like hedge fund managers.

They dropped three songs that were now a little passé (like one about a newsboy), and added two more timely new tunes by Lin-Manuel Miranda, the Tony

nominated star and composer of the Broadway musical "In the Heights." And in a nod to an era of shrinking staffs, they cut the cast from 17 performers who each played individual characters, to six actors in multiple roles, adding the acting profession to the careers depicted onstage.

With some rearranging of the remaining monologues and musical numbers, Greenberg has staged a mostly seamless musical in which scenes more naturally flow from one to another, as opposed to the choppy transitions evident in past stagings of the original show.

On Beowulf Boritt's set, dominated by a three-story structure with four dressing rooms and a third-floor area for Mark Hartman's band, the actors frequently go through their transformations in full view of the audience, with the help of stage hands and dressers.

Darrin Baker, for example, shifts from playing a jaded publicist to a retiree who regrets leaving his job for a life of relative boredom by removing his toupee and moustache, adding a sweater and slumping his shoulders. Danielle Lee Greaves reveals she is far more than "Just a Housewife," then strips off her apron and day dress and changes wigs to become a young prostitute who discovers a dangerous but easy way to make money.

What worked in the past remains effective now. Marie-France Arcilla leads the cast through the drudgery of "Millwork," going through the repetitive motions required to operate a machine that makes fabric for suitcases. Liz McCartney puts sparkle into her role as a waitress who uses a dramatic flair in "It's an Art," and strikes a recognizable chord as an aging teacher trying to adapt to new ways of learning in "Nobody Tells Me How."

Nehal Joshi is featured in both of Miranda's dramatically different songs. The first is the exuberant "Delivery," about a young fast-food restaurant worker who occasionally gets the chance to get away from the counter and experience life in the neighborhood while delivering food. It's one of several buoyant numbers given a lift from Joshua Rhodes' choreography. Joshi also teams with Arcilla in the sweet "A Very Good Day," about two immigrants in jobs no-one else wants to do.

Greenberg and Rhodes maintain a good sense of pacing and flow, allowing emotions and humor to build to the rousing group number "If I Could've Been" and then ease back to the tender "The Mason," sung by Colin Donnell while Joshi plays a man who loves working with stone.

Greenberg also uses his cast in a sort of echo effect of movement or singing in several numbers, including "Brother Trucker" and "Housewife" to emphasize that the characters aren't speaking or singing only for themselves.

The cast is strong in both song and story segments. Donnell is particularly moving as a fireman who realizes he may have helped lead to the birth of new generations because of the lives he saved, while Greaves hits the right notes as a "Cleanin' Woman" who wants more for her daughter.

Greenberg does not yet fully utilize the set. The actors rarely retreat to their onstage dressing rooms to change or rest between scenes. And it's difficult to see some of the projections designed by Boritt and Aaron Rhyne depicting various people on the job or locations.

But the obvious care and affection that has gone into this new version captures the essence of working America. It renews a sense of the common spirit that somehow allows us to get up each day and make it through another work week.

## **Working the Musical - From Page to Stage**

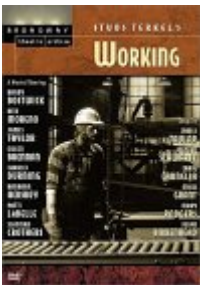


ESSENTIAL READING FOR DIRECTORS AND ACTORS WORKING ON *WORKING*  
Autographed copies signed by composer Stephen Schwartz and author Carol de Giere are available.

In [Defying Gravity: The Creative Career of Stephen Schwartz, from Godspell to Wicked](#), author Carol de Giere includes a behind-the-scenes account of the way Stephen Schwartz and his collaborators developed *Working* as a stage musical. In interviews for the book, Schwartz revealed why he chose additional songwriter to create the score and what his rationale was for developing a non-fiction musical.

The story of *Working* in *Defying Gravity* also includes comments from co-adaptor Nina Faso, producer Irwin Meyer, cast members Lynne Thigpen, Robin Lamont, Matt Landers, David Patrick Kelly, and songwriters Micki Grant, Craig Carnelia, Stephen Schwartz, and Susan Birkenhead. Readers gain insights about individual songs in relationship to the musical as a whole.

## **Working the Musical: DVD of the Television version**



*Working* play: Broadway Archives created a DVD from the tape from American Playhouse, WNET and KCET, 1982 [Studs Terkel's Working \(Broadway Theatre Archive\)](#)

Also available as a downloadable rental or purchase: [Downloadable version of Working the Musical](#)

Stephen Schwartz directed this PBS production of his show *Working*. Watch for James Taylor singing his trucking song and sharing his great smile. Studs Terkel introduces the show. You'll see Schwartz's wife Carole in the role of supermarket checker. There are many noteworthy performers and performances. [Read a review of the production](#)

## **Resources, Features, Reviews for the musical Working**

- A related item to *Working*: [Studs Terkel's Working: A Teaching Guide](#)
- [Studs Terkel - Bio, books, audio book](#)
- For a Podcast discussion by Stephen Schwartz about "Fathers and Sons" see [The Schwartz Scene "Fathers and Sons"](#)
- Working Reworked March 2009: [Read about the Old Globe Theatre production of Working, spring 2009](#)
- comparison chart between characters in the musical and Terkel book: [Working - Cross Reference between Working the Musical and Working by Studs Terkel](#)
- [Working CD](#): Working on WORKING: The Journey towards a Long-awaited CD, By Bruce Kimmel | Review by Robert Levy of the 2001 release of the cast album
- Review of the Video *Working* - [Review](#)
- Production photos and review of a Revised version of WORKING - [American Theater Company Chicago 2000](#)
- [Working the musical Video Clip of professionals singing pieces from a concert version](#) Zipper Theatre Actors fund performance 2007
- [Theatremania.org](#) maintains an online photo collection from a recent production of *Working* in New Haven.
- <http://www.ibdb.com/> - for *Working* - Details on the Broadway cast, creatives, songs, crew, etc.

For more information see: <http://www.musicalschwartz.com/working.htm>

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