

MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL

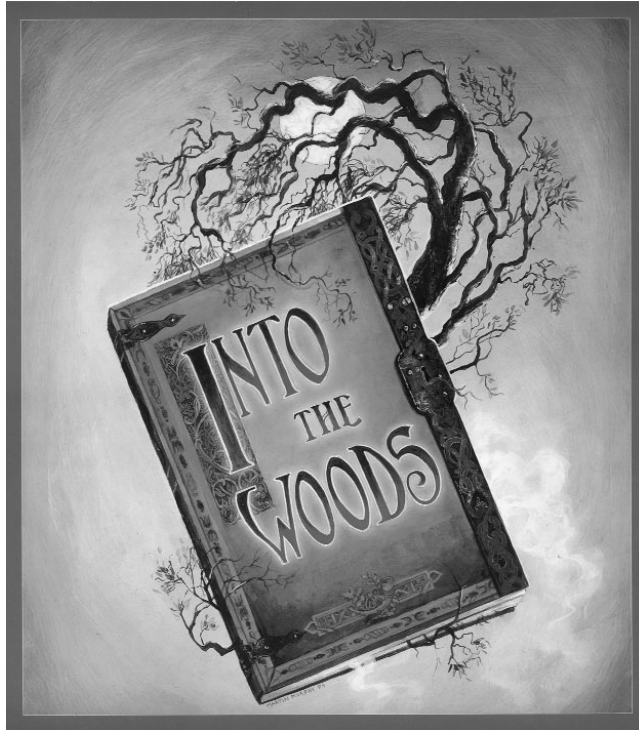
MUSIC THEATRE INTERNATIONAL is one of the world's major dramatic licensing agencies, specializing in Broadway, Off-Broadway and West End musicals. Since its founding in 1952, MTI has been responsible for supplying scripts and musical materials to theatres worldwide and for protecting the rights and legacy of the authors whom it represents. It has been a driving force in cultivating new work and in extending the production life of some of the classics: *Guys and Dolls*, *West Side Story*, *Fiddler On The Roof*, *Les Misérables*, *Annie*, *Of Thee I Sing*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Damn Yankees*, *The Music Man*, *Evita*, and the complete musical theatre works of composer/lyricist Stephen Sondheim, among others. Apart from the major Broadway and Off-Broadway shows, MTI is proud to represent youth shows, revues and musicals which began life in regional theatres and have since become worthy additions to the musical theatre canon. MTI shows have been performed by 30,000 amateur and professional theatrical organizations throughout the U.S. and Canada, and in over 60 countries around the world. Whether it's at a high school in Kansas, by an all-female troupe in Japan or the first production of *West Side Story* ever staged in Estonia, productions of MTI musicals involve over 10 million people each year.

Although we value all our clients, the twelve thousand high schools who perform our shows are of particular importance, for it is at these schools that music and drama educators work to keep theatre alive in their community. MTI shares with these educators the goal of raising the next generation of theatre artists and audiences. To help these educators, it has taken a leading role in theatre education by creating MTI THEATRICAL RESOURCES, a "theatrical tool box" designed to help not only ensure the success of each musical production, but also to establish the study of musical theatre as a permanent part of the school curriculum. These resources include: STUDY GUIDES designed to bring the study of specific shows into the classroom; MTI REHEARSCORES® which provide unlimited rehearsal accompaniment via an easy-to-use, fully interactive computer program on disk; professional TV SPOTS allowing companies to affordably advertise on television in local markets; LOGO PACKS to aide in poster and program design; TRANSPOSITIONS-ON-DEMAND to allow flexibility in casting and musical key changes; and VIDEO CONVERSATIONPIECES™ featuring video seminars with artists such as Martin Charnin, Stephen Sondheim and Scott Ellis discussing the creation of their shows from inception to production.



MTI is also a leader in providing materials to meet the increasing demand for symphonic arrangements of popular theatre music. The MTI CONCERT LIBRARY offers arrangements of selected songs, as well as full scores from Broadway shows.

Musicals are America's premiere contribution to the theatre and MTI is firmly committed to supporting and nurturing a musical theatre that will continue to develop and flourish into the next century.



Music and Lyrics by
Stephen Sondheim

Book by
James Lapine

Study Guide by Sarah Schlesinger

Into The Woods lyrics © 1987, 1988, 1989 by RILTING Music, Inc.

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About INTO THE WOODS

Into The Woods, the 1988 Tony Award winner for both Score and Book of a musical, is a brilliantly conceived exploration of what happens after “happily ever after.” The show, which has an enchanting, moving and profound score by Stephen Sondheim, and a powerful, witty book by James Lapine, opened on Broadway on November 5, 1987, at the Martin Beck Theatre under the direction of Mr. Lapine.

Into The Woods is a magical, imaginative adventure with a moral and political point of view. Employing sophisticated artistry and innovative craft, the show’s creators lead the audience on a journey to the darker side of fairy tales as they explore the pain of growing up, communal responsibility, and the values we pass on to our children. As the intricate, absorbing plot unfolds, a childless baker and his wife, cursed by a wicked witch, go off into the woods in hopes of ridding themselves of her evil influence. There they encounter Cinderella, her Prince, Little Red Ridinghood, the Wolf, Jack the Giant Killer, Rapunzel, and other fairy tale characters who are attempting to realize wishes of their own.

By the end of Act I, everything seems to be blissfully, happily resolved. But a destructive, vengeful force looms in the woods which leads to tragic consequences in the second act, bringing the characters to a painful, but hopeful resolution.

Filled with unexpected twists and dazzling insights, *Into The Woods* is a cautionary plea for commitment expressed through masterstrokes of theatrical magic. Subjects as diverse as the promise of perfect love, the foolhardiness of questing for material goods, and the loving but difficult relationship between parents and children are considered in a landscape shaded with psychological undertones.

With tenderness and laughter, Sondheim and Lapine bring us through a maze that mirrors the complexity of everyday existence. Like the characters in *Into The Woods*, we end this journey aware of the moral consequences of our actions and the power of tolerance, community and shared sacrifice.

Characters in INTO THE WOODS

THE NARRATOR

CINDERELLA

JACK

JACK'S MOTHER

BAKER

BAKER'S WIFE

CINDERELLA'S STEPMOTHER

FLORINDA (CINDERELLA'S STEPSISTER)

LUCINDA (CINDERELLA'S OTHER STEPSISTER)

CINDERELLA'S FATHER

LITTLE RED RIDINGHOOD

WITCH

CINDERELLA'S MOTHER

MYSTERIOUS MAN

WOLF

GRANNY

RAPUNZEL

RAPUNZEL'S PRINCE

CINDERELLA'S PRINCE (BROTHER OF RAPUNZEL'S PRINCE)

STEWARD

GIANT

SNOW WHITE

SLEEPING BEAUTY

Plot Synopsis

Act One

We discover three dwellings in a large forest. In one, we see Cinderella cleaning; in the second, we see Jack trying to milk his pathetic-looking cow, Milky-White; and in the third, we see the Baker and the Baker's Wife preparing tomorrow's bread.

The Narrator leads the company through "The Prologue" as we learn about a series of wishes that are more important than anything — even life itself — to these characters. Cinderella wants to go to the King's Festival; Jack wishes his cow could give milk; and the Baker (who believes his parents were killed in a baking accident) wishes he and his Wife could have a child. As these characters express their wishes, we meet Cinderella's Stepmother and stepsisters who laugh at the idea of her going to a ball; Jack's aging mother who wishes for a lot of gold and a less foolish son; and Little Red Ridinghood, who comes to buy bread, sticky buns and pies from the Baker and his Wife before starting her journey into the woods to see her sick Grandmother.

We learn Jack's cow (whom Jacks foolishly persists in referring to as "he") is no longer giving milk. Jack's Mother says he must sell the cow so they can survive. He is crushed because he thinks the cow is his best friend, but sets off to the market to sell it. Leaving Cinderella in tears, her family rides off to the ball without her.

The Baker and his Wife learn the Witch next door, a humpbacked crone with long gnarled fingers, has placed a curse on them to prevent their having a child. She explains the Baker's father had stolen various vegetables from her garden many years ago to satisfy his wife's insatiable desire for greens. He also stole the Witch's magic beans. To punish him for the theft, she demanded and had been given the Baker's sister, a sibling the Baker never knew existed. She claims she still has the Baker's sister hidden away and that he can break the spell that makes him childless only by bringing her a cow as white as milk, a cape as red as blood, hair as yellow as corn and a slipper as pure as gold.

The Baker puts on his father's old jacket as he prepares to journey into the woods. He finds six beans in the pockets and wonders if they are the Witch's magic beans. He forbids his Wife to join him on this dangerous quest as he tries to memorize the list of things the Witch says he must deliver. As "The Prologue" ends, Cinderella decides to visit her mother's grave.

At this point, the show takes on a rapid pace.

Cinderella tells her mother her wish and is given a fancy dress and slippers to wear to the ball. While walking through the Woods to market, Jack encounters a Mysterious Man who tells Jack his cow is only worth a sack of beans. Little Red Ridinghood meets a Wolf who targets her and her grandmother as his next meal

("Hello, Little Girl"). The Baker appears and is concerned harm will come to Little Red Ridinghood. The Witch warns him not to worry about the child's welfare; his task is simply to steal her cape. We hear the sound of a woman singing in the distance; it is the voice of the Baker's lost sister, Rapunzel.

As the Baker struggles to remember the four objects on his list, his Wife appears, with another offer to help him. They argue about her presence as they encounter Jack and his cow, a beast like the one the Witch has demanded. The Baker's Wife persuades Jack to sell the cow for five of their beans (which leaves them with one remaining bean). After Jack sings a sad farewell to the cow ("I Guess This Is Goodbye"), the Baker is upset they used deceit to acquire the animal. The Baker's Wife insists they did Jack a favor. ("Maybe They're Magic"). She says you have to go after what you want and not hesitate. The Baker sends his wife home with the cow and continues on his way, as Rapunzel sings again.

The Witch visits Rapunzel at the tower where she is kept prisoner. A handsome prince sees the Witch climb Rapunzel's hair and decides to try it himself the following day.

The Baker makes an unsuccessful try at stealing Little Red Ridinghood's cape — thievery does not come naturally to him. Little Red Ridinghood enters her Grandmother's house to find the Wolf, in bed, pretending to be the old woman (whom he has eaten). After the Wolf eats Little Red Ridinghood, he takes a nap. The Baker sees a corner of the red cloak hanging out of the Wolf's mouth and hoping to get the whole thing cuts his stomach open, releasing Little Red Ridinghood and her Grandmother. After the ordeal, Little Red Ridinghood realizes that "I Know Things Now." Grateful to the Baker for saving her life, Little Red Ridinghood gives him her cloak.

Jack's Mother is furious with him for selling their cow for five seemingly worthless beans and she throws them away. The Baker's Wife, leading Milky-White through the forest, encounters Cinderella, who is running from the Prince (the brother, coincidentally, of the prince who is smitten with Rapunzel) and his Steward. When Cinderella reveals she isn't sure she wants the Prince, the Baker's Wife thinks she is being very foolish ("A Very Nice Prince.") The Baker's Wife tries to take one of Cinderella's gold shoes, but is forced to chase after the runaway cow instead.

The next morning the characters realize one midnight has gone and they have not realized their wishes. Jack discovers a beanstalk has grown up overnight.

As the Baker sleeps beneath a tree, Jack appears with an oversized money sack. He sings about "Giants In The Sky" and relates his adventure. He describes the sensation of being high in the sky and meeting a lady giant who drew him close. The appearance of her husband, an even bigger giant who intended to harm him, sent him scrambling back to earth with one of the giant's sacks of gold. Jack's Mother, delighted by his acquisition, has let him keep five gold pieces which he wants to use to buy

back Milky-White. He finds the Baker and demands his cow. The Baker cannot sell the cow because the Witch wants it. Jack, thinking the Baker is holding out for more money, goes off in search of additional funds, leaving the gold with the Baker. The Baker's Wife appears, confessing she has lost the cow.

Rapunzel's Prince and Cinderella's Prince exchange tales of woe ("Agony"), each insisting his romantic problem is more serious than his brother's.

The Baker's Wife, who is searching for the hair as yellow as corn, encounters Jack's Mother, who is looking for Jack. The Mysterious Man returns the cow to the Baker. The Witch warns the Mysterious Man to stay out of her business. The Baker's Wife, recognizing Rapunzel's hair as the perfect shade to satisfy the Witch's hair demand, grabs one of the girl's substantial tresses, rips it out, and runs into Cinderella, who is on her way home from another night at the Festival. The Baker's Wife tries, without success, to take Cinderella's shoe. The Baker and his Wife run into each other and he finally agrees it will take both of them to accomplish their goal ("It Takes Two").

Jack appears with the hen that lays golden eggs. The Baker's Wife realizes the Baker has considered selling the cow for money. The cow drops dead and all seems lost for the Baker and his Wife. Two midnights are gone.

The Baker goes in search of another cow. The Baker's Wife goes off to try again to grab a golden slipper. The Witch warns Rapunzel to obey her ("Stay With Me") and to remain shielded from the world. Rapunzel says she is no longer a child and wants to see the world. Enfuriated, the Witch cuts off most of Rapunzel's hair and exiles her. The Narrator reveals, while pursuing Rapunzel, Rapunzel's Prince has fallen into a patch of thorns and blinded himself.

Little Red Ridinghood has turned bloodthirsty, replacing her red cloak with one made from the skins of the Wolf. Jack, questing after more money for his mother, has returned to the giant's domain to steal more gold.

Leaving her third visit to the royal ball with only one slipper, Cinderella reflects on her indecision about leaving her miserable home for the unknown aspects of life with the Prince ("On The Steps of the Palace"). She decides not to decide. She has left a shoe for the Prince to find and it will be his decision.

The Baker's Wife gives Cinderella her own shoes in exchange for the remaining gold slipper. She then has a struggle with the Prince's Steward who also wants the second gold slipper. The Mysterious Man becomes involved in the struggle. The Prince decides they only need one shoe. There is a horrible thud. Jack's Mother screams that a dead giant has fallen from the sky. No one seems to care. The third midnight is near.

The Baker and his Wife report to the Witch with their four objects, but she rejects the new cow which they have covered with flour to look like the dead Milky-White. The Witch demands they bring the dead Milky-White to her and she'll bring it back to life.

Jack appears with a golden harp. The Witch restores Milky-White to life and commands the Baker to feed the cow the other objects. A clock chime begins to strike. The Witch insists the cow be milked to fill a silver goblet. Jack tries, but no milk flows. When the Baker's Wife says she pulled the hair as yellow as corn from a maiden in the tower, the Witch explains she, the Witch, cannot have touched any of the objects needed to break the spell. The Mysterious Man says to feed the cow an ear of corn. The Witch reveals the Mysterious Man is the Baker's father. The cow eats the corn, the milk flows into the goblet and the Witch drinks it. She is transformed into a beautiful woman and the Baker's father dies as the third midnight strikes.

The Narrator explains the Witch had been cursed with ugliness after her beans were stolen, but is now beautiful once again. Milky-White is reunited with Jack. The Prince searches for Cinderella with the golden slipper. Lucinda and Florinda try to fit into the slipper by cutting off parts of their feet, but their tricks are discovered and the Prince finally finds Cinderella.

The Narrator states Rapunzel, who has had twins, has been reunited with her blind husband and Rapunzel's tears restored his vision. The Witch attempts a reconciliation with her adopted daughter, but Rapunzel refuses. When the Witch tries to enchant Rapunzel and her prince, she realizes that in exchange for her own youth and beauty, she has lost her magical power over others.

At Cinderella's wedding, her stepsisters are blinded. The Baker's Wife appears, very pregnant.

The Narrator observes that everything which seemed wrong is now right. The kingdoms are filled with joy and those who deserve happiness to are certain to live long and satisfying lives. Only tenderness and laughter are foreseen forever after. As everyone congratulates themselves on their unswerving determination to get their wishes, a giant beanstalk emerges from the ground and stretches to heaven. No one notices it.

Act Two

As in the opening of Act I, we discover three structures. The first is the castle where Cinderella lives with the Prince; the second is Jack's house which is filled with all the conveniences gold will buy; the third is the home of the Baker and his Wife, which is cluttered with nursery items.

While the characters seem content ("Prologue: So Happy"), minor disturbances are quietly disrupting the joyous scene. The Baker's Wife wants a bigger cottage and she is squabbling with her husband over the baby's care. Suddenly a huge crash is heard and their home caves in.

The Baker goes off to tell the Royal Family. The Witch, who has lost her garden in

the incident, insists they will not be of any help. When the Baker stops at Jack's house he is refused help by Jack's Mother who is still angry because no one cared when she had a giant in her backyard. The Baker is granted an audience with Cinderella who seems unable to offer any concrete assistance. Despite his mother's warnings, Jack goes out to investigate.

Little Red Ridinghood stops at the Baker's. She is on her way to move in with her Grandmother because her own home was destroyed and her mother has disappeared. The Baker and his Wife offer to escort her through the woods. The birds come to lead Cinderella through the woods, warning of trouble at her mother's grave. The characters re-enter the woods "To flee the winds — To find a future — To shield — To slay — To flee — To find — To fix — To hide — To move — To battle — To see what the trouble is."

The royal brothers, Rapunzel's Prince and Cinderella's Prince, meet and again compare their problems. Rapunzel's Prince complains his wife finds it impossible to be happy because of her pain-filled upbringing. He has fallen for Snow White. Cinderella's Prince lusts after Sleeping Beauty (Reprise: "Agony").

The Baker, his Wife and child and Little Red Ridinghood are lost in the now chaotic woods. They see the Royal Family staggering down a path and learn the castle has been set upon by a giant. When the Baker reminds the Steward he tried to warn them, the Steward replies "I don't make policy, I just carry it out."

Suddenly the Giant appears and the group realizes it is the wife of the giant Jack killed. She has come to exact revenge and demands Jack be handed over to her. Since she is near-sighted, the group thinks they can substitute someone else. Everyone in the group has an idea who should be sacrificed. First they sacrifice the Narrator. When the Giant realizes he isn't the boy she's after, she destroys him and again demands Jack. Jack's Mother engages the Giant in a furious verbal battle; the Steward bashes Jack's Mother over the head to stop her from endangering everyone else and Jack's mother is fatally wounded. The Steward reveals that Jack is hiding in Rapunzel's tower. Then, hysterical, Rapunzel runs toward the Giant and is crushed. The witch mourns that this is the world she was trying to save Rapunzel from confronting ("Lament").

The group disagrees about turning Jack over to the Giant. The Royal Family, without concern for anyone else, run to another kingdom. The Baker and his Wife leave their child with Little Red Ridinghood and go off to save Jack from the Witch, who is on her way to turn him over to the Giant.

The Baker's Wife encounters Cinderella's Prince in the woods and they have a romantic encounter in a glade. The Prince is ready to forget his commitment to Cinderella, but The Baker's Wife is ambivalent ("Any Moment"). The Baker meets Cinderella next to her mother's ruined grave and invites her to join his group. The Baker's Wife realizes she has to let the moment go, but says she will never forget her time with the Prince ("Moments In The Woods"). She knows it is time for her to leave

the woods, but she becomes lost, the giant appears and she is crushed.

Jack is discovered by the others. He reports the Baker's Wife is dead. Everyone blames him, but he blames the Baker for giving him the beans which set the scenario in motion ("Your Fault"). As the song evolves, everyone blames every one else. The Witch stops their accusations, declaring it's the "Last Midnight." She says everyone is looking for someone to blame, when they should look inward instead. She says "You can tend the garden. Separate and alone." She disappears as they begin to see the connections between their earlier individual actions and the current problem.

The Baker starts to leave the Woods, believing his child is better off with Cinderella than with him. Suddenly, his father, the Mysterious Man, reappears. The Baker says, "I thought you were dead." The Mysterious Man answers "Not completely. Are we ever?" The Baker cries out that the whole situation was caused by the father's invasion of the Witch's garden years before. The Mysterious Man accuses the Baker of running from his own guilt ("No More"). As his father leaves, the Baker realizes he is just like him. He decides to stay and fight alongside the others.

As the Baker, Jack, Little Red Ridinghood and Cinderella plan their attack, a flock of birds whispers to Cinderella that her prince has been unfaithful. She says she doesn't care and enlists their help to kill the Giant. As each prepares to execute the plan, the Prince reappears. Cinderella dismisses him saying, "My father's house was a nightmare. Your house was a dream. Now I want something in between."

Cinderella and the Baker try to reassure Little Red Ridinghood and Jack, who are now orphans trying to make sense of right and wrong ("No One Is Alone").

The Giant is killed and the dead in the community appear as ghosts, joining in a pronouncement of the moral lessons learned from the experience in the woods. The Baker and Cinderella become the responsible adults in a re-constituted family made up of the Baker's child, Little Red Ridinghood and Jack. The ghost of the Baker's Wife encourages him to believe in his power to raise their child without her. The Witch reappears to warn the Baker to be careful of the tales he tells his child ("Children Will Listen").

The final reprise of "Into The Woods" reminds us there will be times when each of us must journey into the woods but that we must mind the future and the past.

YOU JUST CAN'T ACT
YOU HAVE TO LISTEN
YOU CAN'T JUST ACT
YOU HAVE TO THINK.

The show ends as Cinderella says "I wish ... "

Themes and Topics to Explore

QUESTIONS AND ASSIGNMENTS

Our study guide includes a wide-ranging list of themes and topics suggested by issues raised in *Into The Woods*.

Avenues for exploring each theme and topic are suggested in the forms of:

QUESTIONS:

Designed to prompt in-class discussions before and after viewing or reading the show.

ASSIGNMENTS:

Designed to be researched and written out of class.

Themes and Topics to Explore: INTO THE WOODS

The Structure, World and Point of View of Into The Woods

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is a cautionary tale? In what ways is *Into The Woods* a cautionary tale?
- What do we learn from the opening of *Into The Woods*? What does it tell us about the theme, setting, characters and energy of the show?
- Most fairy tales/folk tales are short. By combining a number of them into one entity, what have the authors of *Into The Woods* accomplished? How does a collection of tales about individual wishes gain power when grouped together?
- What do “the woods” represent to the characters in the show in Act I? What do the “the woods” represent to them in Act II?
- Most of the first act of *Into The Woods* takes place over three days. Summarize what happens each day. What other events take place in “threes” in the show?
- How do events in Act II mirror and comment on events in Act I? What would the show seem to say if it ended at intermission?
- George Bernard Shaw observed there are two tragedies in life. He said, “One is not to get your heart’s desire. The other is to get it.” Discuss this quotation in terms of the structure of *Into The Woods*.
- *Into The Woods* is a show which mixes moments of humor and tragedy. What is your feeling about this juxtaposition?
- The nature of the second act is influenced by the authors’ choice of point of view. What is point of view? In traditional fairy tales, we see the story only from the hero’s point of view. In *Into The Woods* we are also asked to consider the story from the point of view of the characters who are affected by the “hero’s” actions. For example, the authors suggest we might view Jack’s act of slaying the Giant as murder. Do you agree or disagree? Are your perceptions influenced by the fact the “Giant” represents a class of characters who are usually portrayed as evil?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- What do “the woods” represent to you? Write an essay on what they mean to you in your own life.
- Draw a map of “the woods” in the show. Show the location of important land-

marks like the grave of Cinderella's mother, the castle and Rapunzel's tower.

- What do you think happens to the characters who survive at the end of the show? (The Baker and his child, Cinderella, Little Red Ridinghood, Jack and the Princes.) Why do you think the authors chose to let the Princes survive? Is that fair?
- Write about an instance in your own life when humor and tragedy were juxtaposed.
- Write a description of Jack's experiences up the beanstalk from the point of view of the female giant.
- Write an essay defining the word "journey."
- Read a novel or short story that depicts a quest or journey. Write about the journey taken by the central character. How does it compare to the journey undertaken by the characters in *Into The Woods*?

Wishes and Desires

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What was the wish of each character in *Into The Woods*? Trace the "history" of each wish. How was it accomplished? What resulted? Did these wishes actually obscure some other needs felt by these characters?
- Can you describe a situation in which you would consider it acceptable to take advantage of some one else in order to accomplish your own wishes?
- What is the meaning of the final line in *Into The Woods* when Cinderella says, "I wish...?"
- How were the stakes involved in pursuing the wishes in *Into The Woods* influenced by the pressure of deadlines?
- Does marrying the Prince solve Cinderella's problems? Does having the baby deliver happiness to the Baker and his Wife? Does the money stolen from the Giant satisfy Jack and his Mother? Does the return of her beauty redefine the Witch's life in a positive way?
- Are "good" wishes ever enough to effect real change in the life of an individual or a community? Can you think of any change in your life or the life of your community that has come without "earning" the change through effort, struggle, or pain?
- What does *Into The Woods* suggest about the worth of seeking perfection?

- Imagine one of the characters in *Into The Woods* had decided to sacrifice his or her wish and had not pursued it. How would the tale have changed?
- Some of the characters in *Into The Woods* are driven by uncontrolled desires. Which characters fit this description? What kinds of desires drive them? What happens as a result of their failure to control these desires?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Make a list of 25 things you wish were yours.
- Write about the thing on your list you most want to have. What must happen in order for that wish to come true? What would you be willing to do to make it come true? Where would you “draw the line?” What would you *not* be willing to do to make your wish come true?
- Write about a situation where you or someone else has acted in a particular way in pursuit of a desire or dream because of the timetable involved. How might your actions have been different in the absence of time pressure?
- Write about an “ironic” wish — a wish that comes true in the opposite way than you, or a fictional character you create, might expect.
- Write about the thrill and terror associated with having a fantasy come true.

Truth and Lies

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is truth?
- What is a lie?
- What is the difference between a small lie and a big lie?
- Some of the characters in *Into The Woods* freely employ deceit to accomplish their goals. Is lying ever justified?
- How does deceit contribute to the downfall of the community?
- Is the presence of deceit inevitable in human relationships?
- Are secrets actually a form of lies? List the secrets characters keep from each other in *Into The Woods*.

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Write about the worst lie you ever told. What did it feel like to tell the lie? What were the consequences of the lie?
- Write about a lie you told which was never discovered.
- Write a story about a small “white” lie that ends up having major ramifications.
- Write about an experience when you discovered someone else had lied to you. How did this influence your relationship with this person?
- Explore the meaning of truth and lies in other cultures.

The Individual Versus The Community**QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS**

- How have the characters upset the natural order of things to get their wishes? What do they have to give up to restore the community?
- The characters describe what they want in the woods by saying they need :

TO SEE
TO SELL
TO GET...
TO GO TO THE FESTIVAL

How does that lyric describe our motivations as individuals within our society today? What do most of us think we need to secure in “the woods?” What kind of importance do we place on having what we want over the needs of the community?

- Before snatching Little Red Ridinghood’s cloak, the Baker convinces himself “things are only what you need them for—what’s important is who needs them more.” How do you feel about this statement? Do you see evidence that people today have this attitude?
- Discuss the manner in which the events of Act I change the whole community in Act II. Do you think the effects could have been foreseen?
- Discuss the meaning of Jack’s Mother’s question: “Doesn’t anyone care that a giant has fallen from the sky?” Make a list of individuals who might have asked the same question of their communities in recent years.
- What is the meaning of the song “No One Is Alone”?

- At the beginning of *Into The Woods* many of the characters seem isolated. Describe this isolation. What changes this situation in each case?
- Is it possible to be alone in the company of others—both strangers and those we know well?
- Are there characters in *Into The Woods* who appear to have a sense of emptiness in their lives in spite of their relationships with others? What is the source of this emptiness?
- Can being alone be a positive experience?
- How does our society foster the idea that being alone is undesirable or “wrong?”
- What kinds of things do people do to avoid being alone?
- What specific threats to the community do you think the authors intend the Giant to symbolize?
- What kinds of “giants” are lurking “in the woods” of your life? Your community? What events could bring mayhem into your personal or community life?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Make a list of the ways in which individual acts of yours have directly and indirectly affected other individuals in your family or community. List the ways in which the actions of other individuals in your family or community have influenced you. Write about one of these instances in detail.
- Write an essay about individual responsibility for a major community problem such as homelessness, hunger, water pollution, or the care of patients with AIDS.
- Interview an individual who works with community issues and tries to alert members of the community of the need to deal with those issues.
- Write about a time when you felt entirely alone.
- Chart the manner in which the characters in *Into The Woods* experience a growing need for others.

The Breakdown of the Community In Act II

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What indications of destruction and decay in the woods become apparent in the second act? What familiar things begin to break down?

- What indications do you see in the world around you of this kind of moral/physical decay?
- When the problems of the community become overwhelming in Act II, the characters look for someone to blame. This behavior is called “scapegoating.” What is the source of this word? Describe specific events in recent history where you have observed “scapegoating” Has it worked? Why or why not? What prompts this behavior? What does it mask?
- When the characters in *Into The Woods* are choosing someone to sacrifice to the Giant, the suggestion is made that the blind stepsisters should be sacrificed because of their physical disability. What does this tell about what is happening to the community? What events in world history does this kind of thinking reflect?
- In what ways do we sacrifice members of our communities in contemporary America?
- The Steward explains he struck Jack’s Mother because she was endangering everyone. Do you agree? Is he justified in killing her? Was everyone saved by her death?
- Can you think of instances when disasters have caused members of communities to respond selfishly? Can you think of examples when the opposite has been the case?
- Why are the characters in *Into The Woods* willing to turn against the Narrator? What does he represent in their lives?
- What happens in the woods in the course of Act II to transform each of the surviving characters?

ASSIGNMENTS: READING AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Write about an experience in your own life where you or others have been the victim of scapegoating.
- For their wrongdoings, the Witch in effect condemns the others to “tend the garden” alone. Can you think of any folk or religious stories that parallel this kind of punishment?
- Write a description of your community if it were going through the kind of physical and moral destruction and decay that takes place in the woods in Act II.
- Imagine someone in your community literally had to be sacrificed. Write about how such a decision could possibly be made in a civilized society.

- Discuss the dangers of a society's decision to silence objective observers who don't agree with the majority.
- Have one member of the group assume the role of a radio talk show "in the woods" during the crisis with the Giant. The issue under discussion is whom to blame for bringing the Giant to the community. Have other members of the group imagine they are residents of the woods who call in to offer their opinions of whom to blame.
- Set up a debate between members of the group to argue which character in the woods should be sacrificed. Should it be Jack? The blind stepsisters? Another character? Have the group evaluate who wins the debate.
- Write an essay about a specific conflict which exists in our society between individual pursuits and the public welfare.

The Characters in Into The Woods

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- With which character in the show did you most identify? Did you recognize anything which reminded you of yourself in any of the other characters?
- The Witch has been compared to a neighbor no one would want. Have you ever known anyone in your community who reminds you of the Witch? Discuss the Witch as an honest, direct character. How do these traits make her a "loose cannon" during a period of crisis?
- Cinderella is a very indecisive character in Act I. How does she solve her problem? Have you ever solved a problem in a similar manner? Was either her father's home or the Prince's castle the right choice?
- Is the Wolf evil or is his behavior natural? Is his death justifiable? What does the Witch mean when she says "ask a wolf's mother"?
- What kind of people are the Princes?
- What is Jack's basic nature? How does his confused sense of values become dangerous for those around him?
- Discuss Jack's Mother. How does her attitude towards him and their circumstances influence him and the other characters?
- The tale of The Baker and his Wife was invented by the authors. In what ways do they seem like fairy tale characters? In what ways do they seem like a more con-

temporary couple?

- What does the Baker's Wife realize after her encounter with the Prince?
- Is Little Red Ridinghood an innocent character?
- Discuss the function of the Narrator in the show. Why does chaos ensue once he has been plucked from the action? The Narrator and the Mysterious Man are often played by the same actor — how are they similar?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Track each character's transformation from the beginning to end of the show. What discoveries are made by the characters who survive Act II? Which character do you think grows the most?
- Has a period of difficulty ever made you or someone you know change for the better? Write about this experience.
- Write a diary entry as if you were a character like the Baker or his Wife who had just dropped into another familiar fairy tale world — one of tales not included in *Into The Woods*.
- Rewrite a popular fairy tale or nursery rhyme — but give the central character an unexpected "edge" (i.e. Little Red Ridinghood's brattiness) not usually associated with her or him.
- Write about a time you shared a personal problem with somebody who could only respond by relating worse problem.
- Draw a chart tracing the past and current relationships between the characters in *Into The Woods*.

Family in Into The Woods

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Describe each of the family units in *Into The Woods*. What components do they lack? Are there any conventional "nuclear families?" How does this parallel society today?
- Which family unit in the show seems to hold the most promise for success?
- Can individuals avoid the need to be part of a community by substituting family involvement?
- Many of the parents in the woods seem to be emotionally distanced from their

children and mothers seem more in evidence than fathers. Is this an accurate reflection of the family life you see around you?

- How do the parents in *Into The Woods* try to protect their children?
- Cinderella's Stepmother sings "you can never love somebody else's children the way you love your own." Do you agree?
- What does the Mysterious Man represent? What role does he play in the Baker's development as a person? When does the Baker first connect with him?
- When the Baker says he thought his father was dead, his father answers, "Not really. Are we ever?" What does this line mean to you?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Write a profile of one of the mothers in *Into The Woods* in which you describe her positive and negative traits as a mother.
- Write a profile of one of the fathers in *Into The Woods* in which you describe his positive and negative traits as a father.
- Choose one of the couples in *Into The Woods* and describe the relationship.
- Describe one of the parent-child relationships in *Into The Woods*.
- Make a log of characters who are born and characters who die in *Into The Woods*.
- Interview the members of a family which has been "re-formed" as a the result of re-marriage or adoption.
- Write an essay on your own definition of the word "family." Ask an older person for a definition. How are the defintions different? Why?
- Write about your parents' role in your life. When you examine your life at this point, how large a role do your parents play in your "story?" How do you think that will change within five years? Ten years?
- Respond in writing to the statement "sometimes people leave you halfway through the woods."
- Using the phrase "children will listen" as your topic sentence, write about your own perspective on parental responsibility in this decade.
- Write about how well you actually know your parents. Do you ever feel as if some aspects of your father or mother or other close relatives are mysterious and

out of reach?

- Write about the relationship between the Baker and his Wife. How does it change?

Leadership and Community

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- What is moral leadership?
- Do the members of the Royal Family in *Into The Woods* assert moral leadership?
- What does the Steward reply when the Baker reminds him he tried to warn the Royal Family of the dangers in the woods?
- The Witch says you cannot rely on the royal family to solve your problems. Do you think this is true of all royal families? Take an issue involving government intervention (i.e. social security, health care, disaster aid), debate its effectiveness and defend your point of view.
- How does the vacuum of leadership in the woods contribute to the destruction and decay?
- Who ultimately becomes the leader in the woods?
- Imagine a situation in which your community experiences a disaster. There are suddenly no media to rely upon. Everyone has to figure out how to proceed based on the information that is directly observed. What would change? Who would become the leaders?

QUICK ACTIVITY PROMPTS

- Write three short essays, basing each one on one of the following lines from *Into The Woods*.

or

- Write the lines down on slips of paper. Fold the slips of paper. Have members of the group each take one slip of paper and give a three minute impromptu speech based on their "line."

"Even flowers have their dangers."

"Scary is exciting."

“Don’t be scared ... just be prepared.”

“Isn’t it nice to know a lot? And a little bit not.”

“Sometimes the things you most wish for are not to be touched.”

“The harder to get, the better to have.”

“The prettier the flower, the farther from the path.”

“The difference between a cow and a bean is a bean can begin an adventure.”

“We had to lose a lot to win.”

“I ventured out and saw within.”

“There are shouldn’ts and shoulds.”

- “Nice” is not the same as being “good.” Discuss.
- What does the Baker mean when he asks: “How do you ignore all the witches, all the curses, all the wolves, all the lies, the false hopes, the good-byes, the reverses, all the wondering what even worse is still in store?”
- Cinderella says: “ My father’s house was a nightmare. Your house was a dream. Now I want something in between.” Describe what in-between she may be talking about.
- Director James Lapine has said the set for *Into The Woods* can be conceived in many different ways. Design a new set concept for *Into The Woods* and new costumes that set it in a different specific world.

Morals and Meaning in Folk Literature

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Can you remember when you first heard the story of Cinderella, Jack The Giant-Killer, or Little Red Ridinghood? Who told them? Can you remember your feelings about the stories?
- What recent films, television shows and music videos appear to be magic tales set in a contemporary world?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Find and re-read the original Brothers Grimm versions of Cinderella, Jack the Giant-Killer, Little Red Ridinghood, Rapunzel, Snow White and Sleeping Beauty. How did these stories change in the process of becoming part of *Into The Woods*?
- How do the stories in Grimm and *Into The Woods* differ from the Disney versions? Why were they changed for Disney's animated films adaptations? Do they have the same meanings as originally written? Do they still work?
- List ten famous fairy tales, nursery rhymes, or folk tales. Find the basic moral messages in each of them.
- Read *The Uses of Enchantment* by Bruno Bettelheim. Report on Bettelheim's concept of the symbolic meaning of folk literature.
- Use one or more of the "dragons, ogres and giants" who need to be confronted and/or destroyed in contemporary life as the basis for an original magic tale.
- Create five short contemporary magic tales of your own, each based on a different message about a societal norm or moral yardstick.

Oral Tradition/Collecting Tales

Folk tales such as the ones that inspired *Into The Woods* are a legacy from anonymous artists of the past, family members and professional storytellers. They were passed on by word-of-mouth for generations before the printing press caught up with them. Members of military forces, slaves, religious pilgrims and scholars carried these tales from one land to another, altering them in the process. Stories passed from memory inevitably change with each telling. The collecting of old stories continues all over the world today.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS

- Improvise a story for a group of classmates or friends. What kind of results did you get from creating the story as you go along? Ask one of your listeners to you to re-tell your story. What happens to your story? How do you think this parallels the evolution of the folk tales we have inherited from the past?
- How do we know about the past? List the kinds of information we have about a historical event which took place in the First Century BC; during the French Revolution; during World War I. And what kinds of information will individuals living in the year 3000 have about the Vietnam war? Are you sure the technology which currently holds information about this period can survive until the year 3000? In this context, what is the significance of oral history?
- Do you think our society has a strong oral tradition?

ASSIGNMENTS: RESEARCH AND WRITING PROMPTS

- Research other great collectors and tellers of tales, such as Hans Christian Andersen, a contemporary of the Brothers Grimm. Who were these collectors and how did the tales they collected differ from those of the Brothers Grimm?
- What is oral history? Research the techniques of collecting oral history. Using a tape recorder, collect oral histories from members of your family, friends and other individuals in your community.
- Which of the stories you've gathered are the equivalent of magic tales, romance tales, animal tales and anecdotes? Would you add a category of your own?
- Create a set of ten tales based on the oral history you gather, imagining a group of individuals your age would be reading them in a hundred years as a way of understanding something about the world you lived in and the things your contemporaries dreamed about. Write and illustrate these tales.
- Write a folk song based on one of your tales.
- Re-tell one of your tales as a rap song.

Into The Woods as Musical Theatre**QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSION PROMPTS**

- What are some of the functions of music in *Into The Woods*? What do we know because of the presence of music we might not know otherwise? What aspects of the story are told by music?
- What does the music tell us about the larger themes of the show and the world in which the show takes place? Does the musical score of *Into The Woods* reflect a particular historical period?
- As it weaves through the show, the musical score in *Into The Woods* functions much as music functions in opera with the introduction and return of musical motifs associated with characters and events. Listen for these motifs and trace them through the show. (For example, how many times do you hear the "bean motive?" — the five notes which are sounded as the Baker gives Jack the beans.)
- Stephen Sondheim has described Jack's farewell song to his cow as the only direct love song in the show. Do you think there are others?
- When does the music from the cow song return later in the show?

- When the Wolf first meets Little Red Ridinghood, we share his inner and outer thoughts. Why do you think authors chose this vaudeville style to represent the Wolf's surface behavior?
- How is the Witch's song like a rap song?

Look at each musical segment of the show.

- Discuss the manner in which each musical segment contributes to the telling of the story.
- Discuss the manner in which each musical segment contributes to establishing the mood of the story.
- Discuss the manner in which each musical segment helps to define the characters.
- Can you find a place in the show for another musical segment? Who would sing it? What would it concern? What kind of music would it have?

Creating Your Own Show

- Read a collection of fairy tales from a culture about which you know very little. (A list of possible collections are included in the bibliography of this study guide.)
- Research other aspects of the culture, particularly from a visual and musical perspective. What kinds of clothing did the characters in the tales wear? In what colors? What were the sights, sounds and aromas which surrounded them? What did their music sound like? What kinds of instruments were used when this music was presented?
- Outline a show following the structural design of *Into The Woods*. In other words, include characters and elements from a number of tales but also tell a larger story. Add characters of your own invention in the same way the authors of *Into The Woods* added the Baker and his Wife.
- Write several scenes from the show, or write the whole show. If the characters in these tales speak in a language other than your own, how will you represent their language in a respectful and authentic way in your script?
- Create costume designs and scene designs for the show.
- Decide what kind of musical score your show will have. Will it have a sound authentic to the locale and historical era in which the tales were set? Will it have a contemporary sound? A mix of the two?

Critical Analysis

ASSIGNMENT: WRITING PROMPT

- Write a review of a performance of *Into The Woods*. You may wish to include any combination of the following elements in your review:
 1. Did the show hold your interest? Why?
 2. Describe how these elements add to the meaning of the show?
 3. Discuss the effectiveness of the performers.
 4. Discuss the ideas presented in the show. Analyze their importance to your reader.
 5. Explain why your reader should make an effort to see the show.

Appendix

The following background material on the creative team who wrote *Into The Woods*; production history of the show; folk literature; history of written folk tales and the Brothers Grimm; and bibliography are designed to enrich your exploration of the Themes and Topics.

About the Creators

STEPHEN SONDHEIM (composer/lyricist), one of the most influential and accomplished composer/lyricists in Broadway history, was born in New York City and raised there and in Pennsylvania. As a teenager he met Oscar Hammerstein II, who became Sondheim's mentor. Sondheim graduated from Williams College, where he received the Hutchinson Prize for Music Composition. After graduation, he studied music theory and composition with Milton Babbitt. He worked for a short time in the 1950s as a writer for the television show *Topper*; his first professional musical theatre job was as the songwriter for the unproduced musical *Saturday Night*. He wrote the lyrics for *West Side Story* (1957), *Gypsy* (1959) and *Do I Hear A Waltz?* (1965), as well as additional lyrics for *Candide* (1973). In addition to writing music and lyrics for *A Funny Thing Happened On the Way to the Forum*, he wrote music and lyrics for *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964), *Company* (1970 — New York Drama Critics Circle Award and 1971 Tony Awards for Best Musical, Best Music, Best Lyrics), *Follies* (1971 — 1972 Tony Award for Best Score and New York Drama Critics Circle Award; revised in London, 1987), *A Little Night Music* (1973 — Tony Award for Best Score), *The Frogs* (1974), *Pacific Overtures* (1976 — New York Drama Critics Circle Award), *Sweeney Todd* (1979 — Tony Award for Best Score), *Merrily We Roll Along* (1981), *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984 — New York Drama Critics Circle Award; 1985 Pulitzer Prize for Drama), *Into the Woods* (1987 — Tony Award for Best Score), *Assassins* (1991) and *Passion* (1994 — Tony Award for Best Score). He composed the songs for the television production "Evening Primrose" (1966), co-authored the film *The Last of Sheila* (1973) and provided incidental music for Broadway's *The Girls of Summer* (1956), *Invitation to a March* (1961) and *Twigs* (1971). *Side By Side By Sondheim* (1976), *Marry Me A Little* (1981), *You're Gonna Love Tomorrow* (1983; originally presented as *A Stephen Sondheim Evening*) and *Putting It Together* (1993) are anthologies of his work as composer and lyricist. He has written scores for the films *Stavisky* (1974) and *Reds* (1981), and composed songs for the film *Dick Tracy* (1990 — Academy Award for Best Song). He is on the Council of the Dramatists Guild, the national association of playwrights, composers and lyricists, having served as its president from 1973 until 1981, and in 1983 was elected to the American Academy of Arts and Letters. In 1990 he was appointed the first Visiting Professor of Contemporary Theatre at Oxford University.

JAMES LAPINE wrote and directed *Passion*, music and lyrics by Stephen Sondheim, in 1994, winning the Tony Award for Book for a musical. He co-conceived with William Finn and directed *Falsettos* for which they won the Tony Award (for Book) in 1992. In 1990, *Falsettoland*, the second part of *Falsettos*, won the Outer Critics Circle Award of Best Musical. In 1988 Mr. Lapine won the Tony for the book of *Into The Woods*, as well as the Drama Desk Award (Book) and the New York Drama Critics Award. The London production of *Into The Woods* won the Evening Standard Award and the London Critics Award of Best Musical in 1991. For *Sunday in the Park with George*, Mr. Lapine won two Drama Desk Awards for Book and Direction, the New York Drama Critics Award for Best Musical and the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for Drama with Stephen Sondheim. The London production of *Sunday in the Park with George* won the Olivier Award for best Musical. In 1980, *Table Settings*, which he wrote and directed, won the George Oppenheimer Playwriting Award. In 1979, he wrote and directed *Twelve Dreams* (Public Theatre). In 1978 he won an Obie award for his first production, *Photograph* by Gertrude Stein, which he adapted and directed.

Mr. Lapine's extensive directing credits include: *A Winter's Tale*, 1988 (Public Theatre); *Merrily We Roll Along*, revised version, 1985 (La Jolla Playhouse); *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, 1982 (Delacorte Theatre); and *March of the Falsettos*, (the first act of *Falsettos*), 1981 (Playwrights Horizons). In film he has directed *Life with Mikey* (1993) and *Impromptu* (1991). In 1988 he directed *Into The Woods* for PBS American Playhouse.

James Lapine was born in Mansfield, Ohio. He received a B.A. History from Franklin and Marshall College and an M.F.A. Design from California Institute of the Arts. Prior to moving into the theatre, he worked as a professional photographer and graphic designer, as well as an architectural preservationist, at the Architectural League of New York before moving full-time to New Haven and designing graphics for the Yale Repertory Theatre and teaching design at the Yale School of Drama.

The Road to Broadway and the Broadway Production

In contemporary American musical theatre, most new works follow a series of developmental steps before arriving on Broadway. *Into The Woods* followed this pattern before its successful Broadway opening in the fall of 1987. By presenting the show in a workshop format and in a regional theatre production, the writing team and their artistic collaborators had a series of valuable opportunities to learn about the ways in which the show was "working" for themselves and for its audiences.

Into The Woods began as a workshop at Playwrights Horizons in the summer of 1986. It was produced without costumes or sets. The performers wore baseball caps with signs on them indicating their character names. When they changed roles, they changed caps. The cast was grouped around a piano bench which became a variety of locations and props.

The next step in the development of *Into The Woods* was a fully staged production in December, 1986, at the Old Globe Theatre in San Diego. While it was far more elaborate than the workshop had been, economic constraints still required a physical production that was less ambitious than the Broadway version. For instance, panels of branches gathered by local Boy Scouts were used to represent the woods in that production. The Witch had a punk rock look and a Tina Turner wig.

An additional two-week workshop took place at 890 Studios in New York in August, 1987, prior to rehearsals for the Broadway production. The Broadway production opened on November 5, 1987 and ran for 764 performances.

Into The Woods was Stephen Sondheim's second musical with librettist-director James Lapine, the first being *Sunday in the Park with George*, winner of the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. It also involved the some of Sunday's original stars (Bernadette Peters and Barbara Bryne), set designer (Tony Straiges), lighting designer (Richard Nelson) and music director (Paul Gemignani). Costumes for *Into The Woods* were conceived by Patricia Zipprodt and Ann Hould-Ward, who is credited with the costumes for the Broadway production. The choreography for the Broadway production was contributed by the celebrated modern dance choreographer Lar Lubovitch. Orchestrations were by Jonathan Tunick.

In addition to Bernadette Peters, the original cast included Joanna Gleason, Chip Zien, Tom Aldredge, Robert Westenberg, Kim Crosby, Danielle Ferland, Merle Louise, Ben Wright, Joy Franz, Edmund Lyndeck, Kay McClelland and Lauren Mitchell. During the Broadway run, the Witch was also played by Phylicia Rashad, Betsy Joslyn, Nancy Dussault and Ellen Foley. In the summer of 1988, Dick Cavett took over the part of the Narrator for several months. Performers in the show who have been in previous Sondheim shows, in addition to Bernadette Peters, were Robert Westenberg, Barbara Bryne, Danielle Ferland (*Sunday in the Park with George*), Merle Louise (*Sweeney Todd*, *Company* and *Gypsy*), Joy Franz (*A Little Night Music*, *Company*) and Edmund Lyndeck (*Sweeney Todd*). The road company, which toured for 10 months and featured Cleo Laine, Mary Gordon Murray and Charlotte Rae, opened in Fort Lauderdale in November, 1988. A London production was mounted in the West End in 1991.

Into The Woods was produced by Heidi Landesman, Rocco Landesman, Rick Steiner, M. Anthony Fisher, Frederick Mayerson and Jujamcyn Theatres. The original cast album was released by RCA Victor, as was the London cast album. The show was taped with the original cast for PBS' "Great Performances" series.

A Sample of the Critical Response to INTO THE WOODS on Broadway

"As funny as Sondheim's *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, as musical as his *A Little Night Music*, as morally inflamed as his *Sweeney Todd*, yet more forgiving

and affirmative than anything he has written before, *Into The Woods* is the best show yet from the most creative mind in the musical theater today. A ravishing explosion of color and melody and magic and laughter. *Into The Woods* makes a glorious case for what a musical can be. An elixir of delight. The audiences roar with laughter.”

— William Henry III, *Time Magazine*

“When Cinderella, Little Red Ridinghood and their fairy-tale friends venture *Into The Woods* in the new Stephen Sondheim – James Lapine musical, you can be sure that they won’t miss the subconscious forest for the picturesque trees. The characters of *Into The Woods* may be figures of children’s literature, but their journey is the same existential one taken by so many adults in Sondheim musicals past.... Cinderella and company travel into a dark, enchanted wilderness to discover who they are and how they might grow up and overcome the eternal, terrifying plight of being alone.

To hear “No One is Alone” is to be overwhelmed once more by the continuity of one of the American theater’s most extraordinary song writing careers. *Into The Woods* may be just the tempting, unthreatening show to lead new audiences to Stephen Sondheim.”

— Frank Rich, *The New York Times*

“Stephen Sondheim is not everybody’s idea of someone to tell you bedtime stories. But in *Into The Woods*, a musical based on Grimm’s fairy tales, the lyricist-composer of such acid, bittersweet shows as *Company*, *Follies* and *Sweeney Todd*, has written a spell-binding score, witty enough to make old stories fresh for adults, lovely enough to enchant youngsters.... You know that *Into The Woods* is wizardry as soon as you see Tony Straiges’ bewitching sets, which move as magically as dreams.... Sondheim’s music weaves in and out of the dialogue shamelessly.... Ann Hould-Ward’s costumes have gorgeous shapes and colors. Richard Nelson’s wondrous lighting and Jonathan Tunick’s elegant orchestrations also add to the spell.

Into The Woods is total enchantment.... If you can resist its luscious star, Bernadette Peters, you are beyond the help of potions and spells. Joanna Gleason is funny and moving as the Baker’s Wife. Chip Zien is appealing as her hapless husband. It is hard to imagine a more dashing, vocally seductive prince than Robert Westenberg. Danielle Ferland is hilarious as a nasty Little Red Ridinghood, Tom Aldredge powerful in the tricky role of the Narrator, Ben Wright wonderfully innocent as Jack. Kim Crosby is a captivating Cinderella, Barbara Bryne is expectedly funny as Jack’s long-suffering mother.”

— Howard Kissel, *New York Daily News*

“An enchanted musical evening.”

— John Beaufort, *Christian Science Monitor*

“*Into The Woods* is a musical that will be difficult to top this season.”

— Michael Kuchwara, *Associated Press*

"I was entranced. I would go *Into The Woods* anytime."

— Pia Lindstrom, *WNBC-TV*

"A sumptuous production. *Into The Woods* is filled with magical effects — chess-set castles that rise from the ground, carousel horses towing gilded carriages and puffs of cumulus smoke marking apparitions and disappearances."

— David Richards, *Washington Post*

"*Into The Woods* is the most beautiful production in town. Everyone is so splendid in this magically imaginative, inventive musical directed by Lapine. An adventure everyone in the family should take."

— William A. Raidy, *Newark Star-Ledger*

"Mr. Sondheim performs magic indeed with this rich score, particularly with his words. Mr. Lapine has directed this work with seamless imagination. Sondheim has done what many of us have hoped — slain the giant of the British musical spectacle."

— Jay Beauseigneur, *Hearst Newspapers*

"A dazzling production. Tony Straiges' set is spectacular. This and the stunning costumes by Ann Hould-Ward, look like classical children's book illustrations."

— David Lida, *Women's Wear Daily*

"It's well worth a visit to *Into The Woods*. Stephen Sondheim's score is gorgeous."

— Stewart Klein, *WNYW-TV*

"A major theatrical event. A wondrous cast. *Into The Woods* is the most imaginative musical of the season."

— Jeffrey Lyons, *WCBS-TV Radio*

"A fascinating mix of mayhem, magic and mania. An intoxicating, exciting journey."

— Lisa Karlin, *WABC Radio*

"Finally, there's hope for the Broadway musical."

— David Patrick Stearns, *USA Today*

"The show is adventurous, profoundly moving and deliciously funny. I loved Joanna Gleason and Bernadette Peters sparkle."

— Joanna Langfield, *ABC Radio Network*

About Folk Literature and Magic Tales

The tales which provided the inspiration for *Into The Woods* are part of a category of fiction called *folk literature*. Important figures such as Sigmund Freud, Carl Jung, Bruno Bettelheim and Joseph Campbell have perceived folk literature as an entry point into the unconscious and a source of unexpected and significant insights into the essence of the human experience. The true power of these ancient tales, which entertain us while relating truths basic to our emotional, psychological and spiritual well-being, continues to be a source of fascination to us.

There are two types of poetic or prose folk stories: *legends* and *fictional tales*.

Legends attempt to explain reality by accounting for phenomena such as the origin of the world and human race, explaining the nature of God or the gods and predicting how the world will end. The contents of legends often become the basis of belief systems. They are the foundation of mythology and typically contain vivid accounts of hero figures, natural disasters, military encounters and golden ages of the past. For example, a legend of a flood that covered the world and killed nearly all life, similar to the Biblical legend of Noah's Ark, is found in many ancient societies.

Fictional tales, as defined by the Brothers Grimm, can be divided into the categories of *magic stories*, *romance tales*, *animal tales* and *anecdotes* (a category which includes numskull stories, clever individual and stupid individual stories, lucky accident stories and tales of lying.)

Magic tales, the type which inspired *Into The Woods*, often incorporate supernatural enemies, enchanted family members, supernatural tasks that must be accomplished, supernatural helpers, magic objects, supernatural powers and supernatural knowledge. The central character in a magic tale is a hero or heroine who attempts to escape from everyday reality into the realm of magical experiences where their expectations are met. They then return to the "real" world to live happily ever after.

Cinderella, one of the magic tales on which *Into The Woods* is based, is a folk tale told throughout the world in which a mistreated, impoverished heroine receives supernatural aid in finding love and escaping her home.

The oldest known version of the this tale was told in China in the 9th century. The popular English version is a translation of Charles Perrault's *Cendrillon* which he wrote in French in 1697. More than 500 versions of the Cinderella tale have been documented in Europe alone. *Snow White* is a magic tale with a similar structure.

Giants and Witches in Magic Tales

Two of the familiar figures in many magic tales are giants and witches, both of whom appear in *Into The Woods*. Witches in magic tales are individuals who do evil deeds by

employing supernatural powers and are often thought to be in cahoots with evil spirits and possibly the devil himself. The idea of good witches stems from the fact that in ancient times, wise women or priestesses often had unusual powers of healing or future forecasting. After the advent of Christianity, witches were personified as evil beings who used these powers against the rest of humanity. The best known witch in the magic tales appears in the Grimms' retelling of the story of *Hansel and Gretel*.

Giants have been a standard character in mythology and folk tales since ancient times. In myths they were often primeval beings who existed before the gods and were overcome by them. In folklore, they were mortals, who behaved like cruel, stupid monsters and often practiced cannibalism. Hero figures in magic tales often outwit the giants by successfully playing on their stupidity. The story of Jack and the Giant that is part of *Into The Woods* is one of the best known of the old English folk tales. In the original tale, *Jack and The Bean Stalk*, Jack sells his mother's cow for a handful of colored beans. In anger, his mother throws them into the yard and they grow overnight into a huge beanstalk that reaches into the sky. Jack climbs the stalk, spots the giant counting his wealth, steals it and inadvertently causes the giant's death when the huge creature tries to chase Jack down the beanstalk and falls. In the old English telling, Jack and his mother live happily ever after.

The Origins of Magic Tales

Many old magic tales were originally created by adults for the entertainment of adults; in fact, only a small number were originally created to be shared with children. Much of the subject matter in these tales concerns the mature experiences, customs, beliefs and emotional challenges confronted by individuals in adult life in most of the cultures of the world. However, since many of the tales also have exciting plots, an abundance of action and "just" endings, they have long been a popular form of literature for young people as well.

How and why such tales originated has long been a source a debate. One popular theory, that of polygenesis, grew out of the belief that all humans are basically similar in their reactions to life and would inevitably create similar stories to describe their experiences. The existence of so many different versions of a basic tale like *Cinderella* would seem to support this notion. However, anthropologists quarrel with this theory because their studies have revealed that human beings differ too widely in their customs and emotional reactions to experiences to have such similar responses to specific concepts such as stepmothers.

Magic tales have also been thought to represent remnants of nature myths (Red Riding Hood and the Wolf are said by some to represent day and night); remnants of religious beliefs and rituals; symbols of emotional fantasy; or the dreams and nightmares of unconscious frustrations of the storytellers.

The most accepted explanation has been offered by social anthropologists who believe these tales to be the cement of society and the means by which moral codes

are communicated from one generation to the next. Their dramatic portrayal of positive and negative behavior and the proper rewards and punishments that follow are designed to help bind society together with shared concepts of societal norms and moral yardsticks.

Written Versions of Magic Tales

Written versions of tales began to appear in Europe in the 12th century when merchants and crusaders brought the talking beast tales from India in Persian and Arabic translations to be written down in Latin. The great Celtic manuscripts recorded stories of witchcraft and magic that are thought to date back to 400 B.C.

In the sixteenth century, Cantón's celebrated translations of *Aesop's Fables*, the King Arthur legends and Homeric epics appeared. In seventeenth-century France, Charles Perrault authored a collection of eight famous folk tales which triggered an interest in folklore collecting that continues today.

During the nineteenth century, the Brothers Grimm made careful records of old German tales which they were told by aged storytellers. The intent of the Brothers was not to create a series of stories for children, but rather to conduct a serious study of the German language.

The Brothers Grimm

Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm spent 13 years collecting folk tales from the people of Hesse in middle Germany. Jacob was the more quiet and scholarly of the brothers, while Wilhelm was more friendly and jovial. Their first volume of 86 tales gathered "from the lips of the people" over a five-year period was called *Kinder and Hausmarchen* (*Young People's and Household Tales*) and was published in Berlin in 1812. This work has sold close to a billion copies in no fewer than 20,000 editions in 50 languages. *Into The Woods* opened on the 175th anniversary of the publication of *Kinder and Hausmarchen*.

Friends and relatives of the Brothers Grimm also participated in the collecting process and many stories were provided by a gifted storyteller, Frau Viehmannin, a peasant who lived near Kassel. Later known as Gammer Grethel, she told her stories carefully and vividly. The Brothers published two more volumes of stories, one in 1815 and one in 1822. The first English edition of their work was illustrated by George Cruikshank.

In collecting the tales, the Brothers were particularly concerned with preserving the contents as related by the people they interviewed. Their first concern was "faithfulness to the truth." They often wrote their versions of the tales in the dialect of a particular region so the stories would not lose their flavor. Often, they found several versions of the same story and combined them into one, providing notes explaining the

source of the various elements of the tale. For instance, notes found in the early English editions of their work indicate that some of their sources described Rumpelstiltskin as hopping on one foot while others depicted him riding around the fire in a ladle. In some sources, a witch lived in the sugar house found by Hansel and Gretel, while in others the occupant was a giant.

The tales collected by the Brothers had been kept alive by German peasants who worked as cowherds, woodcutters and wood-carvers and had little chance to change their station in life. Their dietary staple was coarse black bread and as basic an idea as a well-stocked pantry seemed magical. The tales are laced with images of gold — golden eggs, feathers and leaves — although the peasants who told the tales rarely saw this precious substance in any form.

While we observe the presence of many moral lessons in the good and bad characters and strong contrasts between good and evil in the tales, the Grimms stated that “although there is a moral in the stories, that was not their object and if it is there it easily grows out of them like fruit from a perfect blossom without any help from man.”

Wilhelm Grimm died on December 16, 1859. Having spent his entire life with his brother, Jacob died on September 20, 1863.

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