



A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

**THEATER
LATTÉ
DA**

THEATER MUSICALLY

A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC PLAY GUIDE

JAN 23 - MAR 3, 2019 RITZ THEATER



THEATER MUSICALLY

Founded in 1998, Theater Latté Da is in its 21st season of presenting original and re-imagined musical theater. Theater Latté Da (TLD) seeks to create new connections between story, music, artist, and audience by exploring and expanding the art of musical theater. TLD is dedicated to expanding the American Musical Theater with work that speaks to a contemporary audience. Theater Latté Da has fostered innovation and diversity since its conception. We believe in work that is bold and collaborative; we act with integrity and gratitude. These values are integral to the organization's health and drives the discussion at every stage of decision-making. Through productions that transcend the conventional, the organization helps solidify the Twin Cities' reputation as a place where progressive art plays a vital role.

Theater Latté Da is the leading nonprofit professional theater in the Twin Cities that exclusively produces musical theater. Since its inception, TLD has presented 73 Mainstage productions, including 11 world premieres and 11 area premieres. Each has garnered critical acclaim and earned its artists and TLD a host of awards, including: seven IVEY Awards for overall excellence, National Endowment for the Arts, the Gabriel Award for Broadcast Excellence, and the American Theater Wing National Theater Company Award. In addition to our Twin Cities presence, TLD's original production *All is Calm: The Christmas Truce of 1914* celebrated its 12th anniversary with a North American tour and an Off-Broadway debut at the Sheen Center in New York City this past November and December. TLD's provocative staging of *Ragtime* was remounted at the 5th Avenue Theatre in Seattle, Washington in October 2017, and Asolo Repertory Theater in Florida in May 2018. TLD's production of *Sweeney Todd* will be remounted at Asolo Repertory this May.

Since 1998, TLD has performed in venues throughout the Twin Cities, ranging from the intimate 120-seat Loring Playhouse to the historic Pantages Theater in downtown Minneapolis. To deepen our relationship with Twin Cities audiences and to better reach the communities we serve, Latté Da decided to make a permanent home in northeast Minneapolis. In 2016, TLD became the proud owner of the historic Ritz Theater, a 240-seat theater with administrative offices, rehearsal space, dressing rooms, and box office.

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A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

Music and Lyrics by Stephen Sondheim
Book by Hugh Wheeler
Orchestrations by Jonathan Tunick

Suggested by a Film by Ingmar Bergman
Originally Produced and Directed on Broadway by Harold Prince

Directed by Peter Rothstein
Music Direction by Jason Hansen
Choreography by Heidi Spesard-Noble

January 23 - March 3, 2019
Previews on Jan 23, 24, and 25
Opening Night on Jan 26 at 7:30 pm

SONDHEIM ON A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC



Hal Prince and Stephen Sondheim (1981)

***A Little Night Music* premiered on Broadway in 1973, winning the Tony Award for Best Musical. The production was the third collaboration between Stephen Sondheim, who wrote music and lyrics, and director, Hal Prince.**

Their previous collaborations included *Company* (1970) and *Follies* (1971). They would go on to work together on *Pacific Overtures*, *Sweeney Todd* and *Merrily We Roll Along*. For *A Little Night Music*, Sondheim and Prince asked Hugh Wheeler, a British playwright whose work they both admired, to provide the book (Wheeler would work with them again in 1979, penning the book for *Sweeney Todd*). In his book, *Finishing the Hat*, Sondheim shares recollections about the genesis of *A Little Night Music*:

“In 1964, shortly after Hal Prince’s triumphant switch from producer to producer-director with *She Loves Me*, he and I decided that we’d like to do a romantic musical, something flowing and operetta-like. We were attracted by the idea of adapting Jean Anouilh’s *Ring Around the Moon* (*L’Invitation au Chateau*), an elegant high comedy which observed the Greek unities of time and situation (the action occurs entirely during a weekend at a country estate) which had been a hit in London and New York. In our naïve self-assurance, we assumed that Anouilh would jump at the chance, but to our dismay, he said he would be interested only if Leonard Bernstein wrote the

music. I licked my wounds and abandoned the wish and we scrambled to find a similar piece to adapt. We searched our memories for movies and plays and I came up with Ingmar Bergman’s *Smiles of a Summer Night*—a sexual farce with existential overtones in which the apparent tragedy is comically averted, but the submerged one is not. We wrote Bergman for permission to adapt his piece. He granted us the rights, withholding only the title, a restriction that I welcomed since I already had a title I wanted to use: *A Little Night Music*.

My favorite musical form has always been that of Theme and Variations and [*A Little Night Music*, with its multiple couples all grappling with love], I thought would be the perfect occasion on which to work out such a structure in both musical and theatrical terms (Rachmaninoff’s *Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini* is for me the apotheosis of the form, which may be the reason his presence pops up so often in the score.)

An evening of waltzes alone would soon become monotonous, but variations on the basic three-beat meter could supply plenty of variety: polonaises, mazurkas, sarabands, giges and more,

“In any event, for someone who the loves the perennial puzzle of trying to make a score into something more than just a string of numbers, the idea of a Theme and Variations in which the Theme was a metric one seemed workable.”

- Stephen Sondheim

are all versions of triple meter—enough so that even with a relentless succession of threes throughout the evening I should be able to avoid repetitiousness. I think I did and, in the course of writing them, I got to like the show enormously, not the least because of Hugh’s supple and surprisingly ageless libretto. Whenever I have to go see *A Little Night Music* (major revivals, school productions, some friend’s granddaughter playing Fredrika) I fret in advance that it will seem like homework, and find, once the lights have dimmed, that I have an exhilarating time watching it.”

BERGMAN'S SMILES OF A SUMMER NIGHT

THE FILM THAT INSPIRED A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC

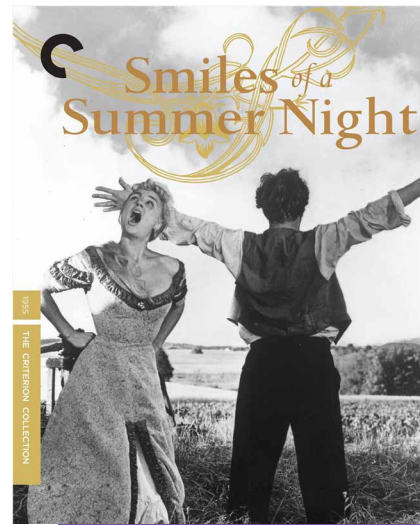
In 1955, Ingmar Bergman wrote the screenplay for *Smiles of a Summer Night* in the midst of a nearly debilitating bout of depression. His love life was in turmoil, he was practically broke, and though his talent was recognized and admired by those who knew him, his work had failed to generate the kind of popular interest that would justify further financial backing of his projects. In that respect, *Smiles of a Summer Night* was far from just a frothy comedy romance made for light-hearted laughs in an elegant turn-of-the-century (19th-to-20th, that is) setting; rather, it was close to an all-or-nothing wager on Bergman's part. Happily for him and his future artistic collaborators, Bergman's gambit paid off. His film caught on with the Swedish audience, winning him an artistic and commercial reprieve. The next two films he would go on to make were two of his most well-known: *The Seventh Seal* and *Wild Strawberries*.

The humor found in *Smiles of a Summer Night* grows out of Bergman's ingenious juxtaposition of eight emblematic characters, four men and four women, who enter the story at various conditions of romantic frustration, either through a missing or mismatched partner, or due to personal tensions that prohibit them from finding the freedom and sense of satisfaction that adults constantly seek to escape from the tensions of life.



Smiles of a Summer Night

With these eight prototypes of modern humanity in view, we're thus set up to enjoy the spectacle as *Smiles of a Summer Night* goes through its motions like the amusingly-crafted clockwork figures that Bergman puts before us late in the film. We're first drawn in to appreciate the awkwardness of the relational arrangements that have resulted from the ungainly mix of social conventions and complicated personal choices. Though the emphasis is of course on male-female romance, the man-to-man, woman-to-woman and intergenerational clashes are just as invigorating.



Chances are pretty good that we will see a bit (or more) of our own romantic and erotic foibles in at least one of the characters, so none of us emerge unscathed...

but Bergman also does a great job of skewering the pretensions and vulnerabilities of those rivals and resistant hearts who have thwarted our aspirations along the way as well, allowing us to laugh and in a small way, enjoy a sweet taste of retribution as we see our adversaries lampooned. The sharp parleys of dialog are reminiscent of the barbed humor that infused *The Importance of Being Earnest*, with the added advantage of being just a bit more explicit and candid about what goes on behind closed doors than Oscar Wilde's Victorian milieu would allow. Bergman's knowing commentary on the battle of the sexes, conveyed in sharp-witted dialog that translates effectively from the Swedish, obviously stems from one who's experienced quite a bit of love's agony and ecstasy, and taken careful notes along the way.

Smiles of a Summer Night remains at hand as an easily recommended entry point for any Bergman novices to begin their appreciation. And for those of us who are prone to occasionally forget its primary lessons, an occasional reviewing of *Smiles of a Summer Night* will help us to lighten up our leaden handling of those most delicate affairs of the heart, reminding us that love is, after all, a perpetual juggling of three balls, the names of which are heart, words and loins. How easy it is for our eyes to get distracted, our minds to fixate on any one of those balls, for our hands to slip and for the whole delicate pattern to come crashing down in a limp and disappointing heap!

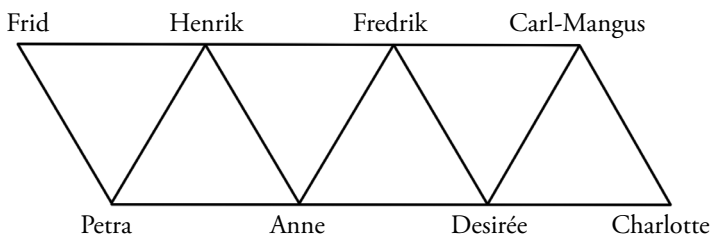
- David Blakeslee; Criterion Collection Reflections

A STORY TOLD IN 3/4 TIME

Stephen Sondheim is known for his love of puzzles and games. Nowhere is his love for the intricacies of these pastimes more apparent than in his construction of *A Little Night Music*. Spend time with the piece and, like staring at an Escher painting, interlocking patterns, repetitions, and refractions begin to reveal themselves—notably those involving the number and concept of three. From Ingmar Bergman’s film, *Smiles of a Summer Night*, Sondheim and Wheeler pluck several key triplicates—the three generations of Armfeldt women (Madame Armfeldt, Desirée, and Fredrika) and a summer night that smiles three times. Jonathan Tunick, who created the lush orchestrations for *A Little Night Music*, describes in the introduction to the published version of the play how the idea of three builds and multiplies:

“Although easier on the audience than most of Sondheim’s musicals, *A Little Night Music* is by no means simplistic. Like all great romantic works, it is classically precise in structure. Hugh Wheeler brings to the musical’s book the exactitude of a mystery writer, creating between the various characters an effectively geometrical pattern of interrelationships, based, like the score, upon the number three:

A chain of triangles: in each of these connected relationships,



the unstable number three is drawn to the stable number two, as the various mismatched couples disengage and find their proper partners.

It was Sondheim’s intention that the score be entirely in triple time—a Waltz musical in the style of turn-of-the-century Viennese operettas, consisting almost exclusively of various permutations of triple time such as the Waltz (“Soon,” “You Must Meet My Wife”), the Mazurka (“Remember,” “The Glamorous Life”), the Sarabande (“Later,” “Liasons”), Polonaise (“In Praise of Women”), the Etude (“Now,” “Everyday a Little Death”) and the Gigue (“A Weekend in the Country”). In addition to the music being in $\frac{3}{4}$ meter, Sondheim tends towards trios with the characters separated (“Now,” “Later,” “Soon”) and duets regarding a third person (“You Must Meet My Wife,” “It Would Have Been Wonderful,” “Every Day a Little Death.”) These songs of alienation and yearning for

cohesion and balance all represent the unstable number three drawn to the stable number two—the triangle yearning to be reconciled to the proper couple.”

Far from being just the intellectual folly of Sondheim and Wheeler’s collective genius, the presence and recurrence of the number three grounds us amidst the kaleidoscopic sexual machinations of the characters, carrying us through the play until all of the puzzle pieces fall, finally, and satisfyingly, into place.

- *Elissa Adams, Dramaturg and Associate Artistic Director*



Bradley Greenwald, Rodolfo Nieto, and Mark Benninghofen



Costume Renderings by Rich Hamson

COSTUME DESIGN *by Rich Hamson*



“The designs from the show reflect European dress from 1905 thru 1907, with some harkening back to the turn of the century for Madame Armfeldt. I felt it was important that they had the same texture and depth as the set, and reflected the dress of the different social classes we were seeing. There are also subtle physical suggestions between characters and couples. It was also decided by Peter to keep them in a very tight palette in the first and then to use color in the second act to highlight the heightened emotional situations. The colors I chose for the gowns hopefully suggest the colors seen in the sky during twilight: blue, purple, amethyst and dusty pink with the men being in traditional black formal wear tones.”

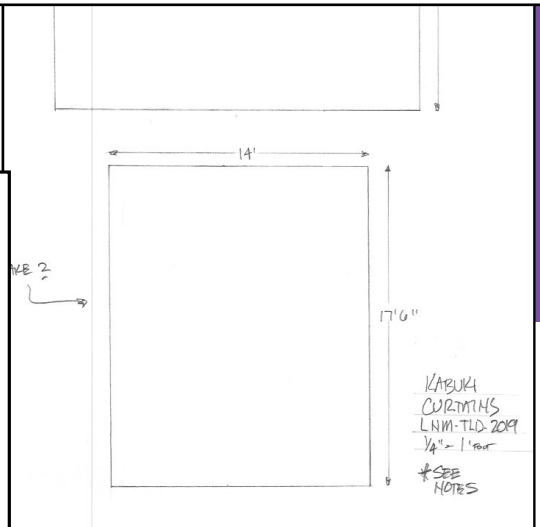
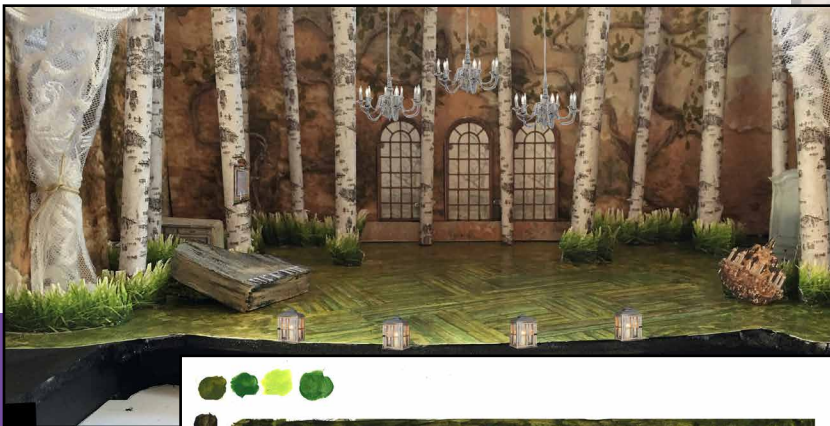
- Rich Hamson



SCENIC DESIGN *by Joel Sass*

“The world of *A LITTLE NIGHT MUSIC* is one of fading elegance, where we’re designing a poetic reality that allows interior spaces to blend into an external, natural world. Having had such fun making a claustrophobic urban landscape for *FIVE POINTS* last season, it’s a treat to switch gears and play with fabrics, trees, grasses and lots of open space. The Ritz Theater continues to be a marvelous container in which to conjure imaginary spaces in endless variety...”

- Joel Sass



REHEARSAL PHOTOS *by Emilee Elofson*

