



A Level

Drama

Company (Stephen Sondheim, 2018 revival)

Original performance and style

- Opened on 17 October 2018 – revival at the Gielgud Theatre, London (original: 1970, Broadway); proscenium arch staging.
- Expressionistic style; set and costume design by Bunny Christie.
- Realistic modern costumes; Bobbie wears vivid red throughout.
- Concept musical featuring live music, comedy and song.
- Non-linear, two-act structure comprising vignettes from Bobbie's perspective.
- Repeated 35th birthday motif with varying numbers of candles.
- Mobile 'rooms' with changeable neon frames; mobile set enables quick transitions and shifts in Bobbie's thoughts.
- Greyscale furniture; props shift in size (Alice in Wonderland-style).
- Stylised lighting, with blue and pink tones and illuminated mobile rooms.

Context

- Set in contemporary 2018, New York
- Presents different views of marriage and relationships
- Changing attitudes to marriage/divorce/relationships/sex
- Same-sex marriage and relationships
- Urban loneliness
- Contemporary independence vs commitment
- Fear of losing a sense of self
- Anxiety, FOMO

Characters

Bobbie: 35, single, popular, outwardly confident and independent; reliable and a people-pleaser, but lonely, anxious, scared of commitment, conflicted, and a procrastinator.

Joanne & Larry: Joanne is older, loud, sassy, sharp, a heavy drinker, and in her third marriage – tough exterior, but loves Larry; challenges Bobbie. Larry is calm, kind, loyal, and devoted.

Jamie & Paul: Gay couple. Jamie is anxious, intense, and fearful of commitment, but loves Paul. Paul is steady, caring, calm, and loyal.

Susan & Peter: Susan is confident and dominant; Peter is neurotic but caring. Divorced, but amicable – "terrific divorced." They have children.

Sarah & Harry: Bickering but loving. Sarah is dieting and into jiu-jitsu; Harry is a recovering alcoholic. Quirky dynamic.

David & Jenny: Loving couple. Jenny is more dominant and confident; has given up freedom for marriage – "maybe you got to give up to get." David smokes a joint for her; they have a strong connection.

Andy: Airline cabin crew attendant; sweet but dull and not very bright.

Theo: Sensitive, thoughtful, admires Bobbie; leaving NYC to marry.

PJ: Arrogant, self-centred, confident, and loves NYC.

Directing

- Will your *Company* be a faithful staging or a reinterpretation?
- What staging style will you use? Will physical theatre help convey the story and relationships?
- How are you interpreting the text, and what message will your production convey?
- Which themes will you highlight?
- How do you envision the characters and their dynamics?
- How will you direct actors to show relationships and motivations?
- How will positioning and proxemics express meaning?
- How will you block the chorus and transitions?
- What rehearsal techniques will you use, and why?

Acting

Underpinned by research and off-text work to establish: status, social class, motivation, objective/intent, superobjective, function, relationships, backstory and character arc.

Use live theatre performances to inspire and influence your acting choices. Adapt these influences to suit your interpretation. Consider: What happened? How? Why? What did I like? How could I adapt the idea for my own performance?

Experiment and explore practically. Ensure you can clearly explain: What am I doing? How am I doing it? Why am I doing it?

Vocal skills

- Communicate meaning through: tone, volume, tempo, pause, pitch, intonation, musicality, and accent; dynamics in songs; shifts from speech to song.
- Also consider vocal sounds such as breath, sigh, cry, sing, hum, chant, whisper, hesitation, and stutter.
- Apply vocal skills to support more stylised approaches.

Physical skills

- Communicate meaning through: posture, gait, body language, facial expression, and gesture.
- Also consider: tempo, rhythm, pace, energy, dynamics, direction, weight, speed, and flow.
- Apply physical skills to support more stylised approaches (e.g. physical theatre or dance choreography): unison, canon, repetition, motif, slow motion, and exaggeration.

Interaction

- Communicate meaning through: character positioning, spatial relationships, proxemics, vocal choices, physical choices. Driven by motivation and reaction.
- Needs to effectively communicate the relationship between characters.
- Between two or more characters, also with audience and interaction with the space/set.

Design

Are you creating a faithful interpretation or a reinterpretation? Use live theatre to inspire and influence your ideas. Adapt these influences to suit your interpretation. How will actors interact with the design elements? **Ensure all decisions are consistent with your chosen style.**

Set and props – location, setting, period, themes, atmosphere and symbols

Stage type; style; layout of space; size of space; entrances and exits; colours; materials; textures; shapes; symbols; levels; projection surfaces; floor, backdrop/cyclorama; furniture and props (style, size, colour, material, condition, location, use); items above the stage or suspended from above.

Costume, Hair, Make-up – status, age, context, personality, circumstances and location

Garment: colour; size; condition; texture; material; time period.

Hair: style; colour; condition; accessories.

Make-up: face; hands; feet; body; special effects.

Lighting – mood, atmosphere, location, time of day, emphasis and emotion

Naturalistic or non-naturalistic; colour; intensity; angle; positioning; type of lantern; birdie; special; practical; wash; gel, gobo; moving head; strobe; torches; phones.

Sound – location, atmosphere, emotion, tension, pace and amplification

Music; atmospheric; ambient; special effect; diegetic; non-diegetic; volume; fade; layering; soundscape; microphones; reverb; echo; delay; effects and treatment; speaker positioning.