

The Streamlined Publicity Package on

THE FANTASTICKS

A Musical with Book and Lyrics by TOM JONES
 Music by HARVEY SCHMIDT
 (Suggested by "Les Romantiques" by Edmond Rostand)

 This Material Has Been Assembled and Is Published by
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RESEARCH NOTES

The Authors:

They became friends in 1950 while students at the University of Texas and some undergraduate shows they wrote together earned them encouragement for professional careers from Word Baker, on the teaching staff in the university's drama department. It was Mr. Baker who directed "The Fantasticks" when it was produced ten years later. The pair arrived in New York in 1955 and soon began having their work acted and sung in various places. Together they wrote revues for a celebrated Manhattan supper club, The Upstairs at the Downstairs, and contributed to an interesting off-Broadway revue called "Shoestrings." They also wrote material for such night-club performers as Tom Posten and Ronny Graham. Twelve of their songs were recorded in a record-album called "Demi-Dozen."

HARVEY SCHMIDT, in addition to his work as a composer maintains careers in two other fields -- art and literature. His paintings and drawings have appeared in Life, Esquire, Fortune and Harper's Bazaar. He has written two books in collaboration with Robert Benton, "The In and Out Book" and "The Worry Book."

TOM JONES, in addition to his collaboration with Schmidt detailed above, has written special material for Celeste Holm's appearances at the Persian Room in New York and other smart supper clubs. He has written a new version of Schnitzler's "Anatol" to Offenbach's music, and also a one-act play "Sabon Revisited," that is being leased by Samuel French, Inc.

History of the Play:

Jones and Schmidt conceived the idea of "The Fantasticks" soon after they arrived in New York from Texas in 1955, and had a one-act version of it produced in the summer of 1959 on a bill of one-act plays at the summer session of Barnard College. Lore Noto, an experienced off-Broadway actor and producer, saw the Barnard production and was so delighted with it that he commissioned the authors to expand the work into a full evening of off-Broadway theatre.

Nine months later, on May 3, 1960, the expanded version was produced at the tiny Sullivan Street Playhouse (capacity 135) in Greenwich Village, where it had an enchanted reception from critics and the public, who flocked to the little theatre for more than two years. (The show was still drawing packed houses when these notes were revised, Aug. 1966.)

So successful was the show that a record album of its songs was made by MGM Records (No. E-3872), which also became highly popular and had a reciprocally favorable effect on the show's run. (Such "originalcast" albums are usually brought out only for big Broadway shows -- extremely rarely for off-Broadway productions.) Soon other productions were sprouting almost everywhere -- Los Angeles, London, Stockholm, Mexico City, Johannesburg, South Africa. The charm that was being distilled in the little Sullivan Street Playhouse seemed destined to spread around the world, and in the summer of 1962 additional productions were being scheduled for Helsinki, Buenos Aires, Tel Aviv, other cities.

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RESEARCH NOTES (Continued):

The program of the original production read:

CAST *

Jerry Ohrbach as THE NARRATOR	Hugh Thomas as THE GIRL'S FATHER
Rita Gardner as THE GIRL	Thomas Bruce as THE ACTOR
Kenneth Nelson as THE BOY	George Curley as THE MAN WHO DIES
William Larsen as THE BOY'S FATHER	Richard Stauffer as THE MUTE
Jay Hampton as THE HANDYMAN	

ACT I

Overture	The Company
Try To Remember	The Narrator
Much More	The Girl
Metaphor	The Boy and The Girl
Never Say No	The Fathers
It Depends On What You Pay	The Narrator and The Fathers
Soon It's Gonna Rain	The Boy and The Girl
Rape Ballet	The Company
Happy Ending	The Company

ACT II

This Plum Is Too Ripe	The Boy, the girl, the Fathers
I Can See It	The Boy and the Narrator
Plant a Radish	The Fathers
Round And Round	The Narrator, the Girl and Company
They Were You	The Boy and the Girl
Try To Remember (Reprise)	The Narrator

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Additional Research
notes begin p. 12.

EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWSN.Y. TIMES, Brooks Atkinson

Through its first act it is sweet and fresh in a civilized manner, luminous and gay. In the form of a dainty masque, it is a variation on a Pierrot and Columbine theme. A boy and girl, who are neighbors, are in love as long as a wall separates them and they believe that their fathers disapprove. Actually their fathers want them to marry. To create an irresistible romantic mood, the fathers arrange a flamboyant abduction scene in the moonlight. Although the story is slight, the style is entrancing. The characters are figures in a legend, acted with an artlessness that is winning.

After the intermission, the author substitutes sunshine for moonlight. Disillusion destroys the rapture of the first scene. Pierrot and Columbine have combed the stardust out of their hair. Perhaps "The Fantasticks" is by nature the sort of thing that loses magic the longer it endures. But for the space of one act it is delightful. The music has grace and humor.

N.Y. HERALD TRIBUNE, Walter Kerr

It begins with a narrator setting the imagined scene, and this narrator progresses in due time to the role of a professional abductor who is prepared to quote various prices for various (quite mythical) kinds of rape. There is fun in the song "It Depends On What You Pay," since it describes a splendid assortment of assaults by moonlight. At this point in the old Rostand whimsy two giddy youngsters are convinced that they are deeply embroiled in a melodramatic encounter in a garden, and the Narrator has a pleasantly fraudulent scene of dying from a rapier wound. He addresses the disillusioning remark to a too bedazzled heroine, "saddlesores are

(MORE

EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS (Continued)

the occupational hazard of the hero," and it's entertaining mockery. The evening itself is entirely concerned with the notion that children -- of whatever age, probably -- cannot fall in love unless their love is forbidden. There is a mangy old actor who crawls out of a trunk about halfway through the first act, a patchwork of lavender tights, a ruff and a few wisps of white hair, and manages to convulse his listeners with some most casual asides ("Try to see it under lights," he urges as one of his improvised daydreams seems about to buckle at the knees)..

The jazz figures that the composer has insinuated beneath tunes that have the essential flavor of tearoses climbing a trellis, help mightily to give the proceedings a contemporary wink.

THE NEW YORKER, Donald Malcolm

It deals with a young man and the girl next door, whose parents have built a wall to keep them apart. The youngsters nevertheless contrive to meet and fall in love. Their parents, meanwhile, are congratulating themselves, for they have erected the wall and staged a feud in order to achieve, by negation, a marriage between their willfully disobedient children.

They even hire a desperado to pretend to abduct the young lady, and to pretend to fall before the onslaught of the young man. Unfortunately, however, the children detect this ruse and they part, each determined to see life "as it really is." For the girl this involves the discovery that dashing bandits on horseback sometimes suffer from saddle rash. For the boy, it means being beaten and burned in various exotic ports around the world. A cynic might point out that the author's view of real life is quite as romantic and theatrical as the illusions once shared by the youngsters. The tunes are exceedingly pretty and the lyrics are frequently clever.

N.Y. JOURNAL AMERICAN, John McClain

It is a delight -- bewitching, bright and tasteful.

N.Y. POST, Richard Watts, Jr.

A rueful and disarming little romantic fantasy with music. It has freshness, youthful charm and a touch of imagination, a lot of engaging appeal. It tells a story of two young lovers, whose fathers stir their romantic imaginations by pretending to oppose their match. The understanding parents even hire a debonair vagabond to put up a pretense of kidnapping the girl and letting the boy think he is a hero when he rescues her from a band of villains. It is moonlight and the night seems filled with romance.

But this is only half the tale. The sun comes up and the day brings an end to dreams. The lovers must be taught to face reality. The dashing vagabond, who was their guide to romance and illusion, becomes their instructor in disillusionment. It is only when he has shown the boy the harshness of the world that looks so filled with promise of bright adventure, and has let the girl see that love can be false, that they come to understand each other.

There are involved also a Shakespearean veteran who keeps mixing up the famous lines and a fellow who specializes in death scenes. The score has several agreeable numbers. The imagination and freshness in this fantasy are welcome.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR

A charming harlequinade, a mock impromptu with music, a piece of comic invention whose infectious humor overcomes its slight air of preciousness.

N.Y. WORLD TELEGRAM & SUN, Frank Aston

The Sullivan St. Playhouse exposed itself last night to an off-Broadway musical pip. It makes sense out of nonsense, sanity out of foolishness. It develops a point of view to the effect that storybook romance is ridiculous but

(MORE)

EXCERPTS FROM REVIEWS (Continued)

endearing, parents are absurd but lovable, and "progeny is hodge podgeny" but desirable. Even whimsy and fantasy, those booby traps, develop bands of irony. The program credits the play to Rostand's "Les Romantiques" but that does not account for the score with its lilt and beat, its touch of waltz and smattering of upper jazz. All the way home this stub-holder kept hearing "They Were You" and "Try to Remember." There are plenty of good tunes in the show. I repeat, "Fantasticks" is a musical pip.

CUE MAGAZINE, Emory Lewis

It is not the plot that matters here. It is the style. The music is the most inventive in town, on- or off-Broadway. The lyrics complement the score beautifully. The mood is martini-dry, uncommitted, upper-Bohemian, with the main enemy the cliché. I suggest you hie to the Sullivan Street Playhouse to catch this Show.

SATURDAY REVIEW, Henry Hewes

One of the happiest off-Broadway events in a season that has been happier off of Broadway than on, is this lighter-than-air musical. The authors have a professional expertness equalling the best Broadway has to offer and with a degree of artistic taste that Broadway seldom attains any more. "The Fantasticks" is a sophisticated story about innocence. It tells a childishly simple romance with an air of knowing at the same time its value and its absurdity.

The songs are distinguished and delightful. The whole show is the freshest and best new Off-Broadway musical in a long, long time.

LOS ANGELES (Hollywood Reporter)

The adjective "delightful" must be repolished and pinned like a shining star on this show.

STOCKHOLM (Expressen)

A gigantic step of advancement of Swedish musical art.

LONDON (Times)

A successful mixture of hilarious burlesque and sublimated theatre.

MEXICO CITY (El Teatro)

This nimble, sophisticated and amusing attraction is like a breath of fresh air

JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA (Star)

A pleasing bit of whimsey with bright vive-la-vaudeville moments.

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S H O R T

The cast of "The Fantasticks," the airily graceful musical opening at the Theatre on _____, will not only act in the show, they will watch the show at every performance. Instead of making exits off-stage at the ends of their scenes, the actors will take places to one side or at the rear and continue to watch the show with their audiences between their various numbers. The convention began with the original production and is being repeated by members of the _____ Theatre's presentation, who say they get more out of the show each time they see it.

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A D V E R T I S I N G S L O G A N S & C A T C H L I N E S

A moonlit-touched musical fantasy.

A dainty masque of winning artlessness.

A rueful musical fantasy of night and day.

A delicious, delightful, distinguished musical.

A melodious, magical, markedly moonlit musical.

A liltingly lovely musical, all the way through.

A captivating combination of worldly wit and innocence.

The musical that tempts you to take a chance and BE sentimental.

The airily graceful musical that ran over two years in New York.

Imagine a musical that's loaded with irony -- that's "The Fantasticks."

An entrancing Harlequinade, filled with tunes that'll burr in your mind.

An evening filled with infectious humor, lilting tunes, romance straight and romance kidded.

A fanciful, sophisticated, innocent musical for everybody who has ever been young -- or is young.

It had to be good! A couple of fellows from Texas made this musical out of a romantic story from France.

As fresh as a garden-party impromptu -- but it took its authors six years to make it seem that improvised!

The lovely musical with that gay and instructive song telling parents how to bring up bewilderin' children -- "Never Say No!"

The moonstruck musical that began in a little Greenwich Village theatre and became an international success in fourteen languages.

The joke is that they're so regular, these Fantasticks -- the heroine even sings "Please, God, don't let me be just normal" -- but she is!

All it's about is just a boy and girl in love, but what makes it fun is the rare style of the telling, the sweetness and dry wit of the songs.

You'll hum, you'll whistle, you'll hardly ever get out of your head such songs as "Try to Remember," "They Were You" and "Soon It's Gonna Rain."

The musical that lets you eat your cake and have it, too -- you enjoy the sentimentality of its romantic tale, and its mockery of sentiment as well.

No wonder it's an international success! It started with a French plot, it's told in an Italian style of clowning, and it was written by a couple of young fellows from Texas.

The New York musical hit that succeeded without spending thousands for scenery or other production gimmicks -- it charmed its way with just the enchanting words and music that you'll adore.

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R E A D E R N o . 1

A musical comedy that was first produced in a little 135-seat off-Broadway theatre in 1960, that filled those seats every night for more than ~~six~~ years, while it went on to become an international success in Europe, South America, the Near East and Australia, is coming to the _____ Theatre for the _____ of _____ through _____.

This is "The Fantasticks," a harlequinade written by two young men from Texas, Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt, on the basis of a half-forgotten old French romance.

The Gallic original was "Les Romantiques," Edmond Rostand's first play, written in 1894 when he was 26 years old, which was more or less a buried footnote to the career of the man who later wrote "Cyrano de Bergerac," until Jones and Schmidt dug it up as a plot for "The Fantasticks."

This plot is merely about a boy and girl in love, but it was the mockingly sophisticated style of telling their romantic story that seemed to captivate the show's audiences around the world. The boy and girl are separated by a wall which their seemingly hostile parents have put up. The necessity to climb trees on each side of the wall to have their secret meetings, the need to plot behind the backs of their feuding fathers, only adds piquancy to their romance.

Actually their fathers are the best of friends who fondly hope that their children will marry. They have forbidden meetings of their progeny out of the certainty that youngsters will be contrary. They expound this wisdom in one of the show's hit numbers, "Never Say No!" which states that children will always insist on doing what they're forbidden to do.

In order to find a way in which their pretended objections can be overcome, they hire some actors to stage an attempted abduction of the girl in the moonlight, so that her beau can gallantly rescue her. This will make the girl see her suitor in an even more romantic light than ever, and will force the "reluctant" parents to consent to the match.

After this moonstruck episode goes off as planned, the musical then transfers its principals to a world of bright, disillusioning sunlight. Youngsters and fathers grow irritated with one another. The boy and girl can only find happiness after they discover that the world is not composed entirely of moonlight and honeysuckle, and the theme is developed that "without a hurt the heart is hollow."

_____ and _____ will be seen as the pair of sweethearts, _____ and _____ as their fathers, _____ doubling as the Narrator and the hired abductor and _____ in the long but non-speaking role of the man who arranges the scenery and props and is himself a prop at times (his arms form the wall separating the lovers during one of the songs).

_____ is directing this midsummer night's impromptu, and _____ is arranging the backgrounds for its shenanigans.

#

S H O R T

_____ (The Mute) has both the shortest and the longest roles in "The Fantasticks," the satirically romantic musical comedy opening at the _____ Theatre on _____. It is short because his lines are at an absolute minimum -- none, since he is portraying a mute. But he is also on the stage longer than any of the other actors and has more than 400 cues to memorize. For he is the musical's property-man who, in full sight of the audience, will re-arrange a vast collection of boxes, planks, ribbons, scarves and other paraphernalia to indicate changes of scene, and he will scatter vast amounts of confetti and colored cards at appropriate moments.

He is himself a prop from time to time. For example, he will have to hold his arms straight out for a full eight minutes without moving, to indicate a wall, while _____ (The Boy) and _____ (The Girl) sing the duet, "Metaphor," across this "wall."

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R E A D E R N o . 2

"The Fantasticks," the mock-romantic musical that scored a run of more than ~~six~~ years in New York and huge successes in Europe, Australia, South America and the Near East, will be presented at the _____ Theatre for the beginning _____.

With a book and lyrics by Tom Jones, based on a half-forgotten harlequinade by Edmond Rostand, and with a tuneful score by Harvey Schmidt, "The Fantasticks" is another re-telling of the ancient Pierrot and Columbine story of the boy and girl who fall in love, then spoil their love, and then come back to a new appreciation of each other for final happiness.

_____ and _____ will portray this pair of sweethearts whose wooing is especially romantic because it is forbidden. Their fathers, to be played by _____ and _____, are neighbors and friends who hope for a match of their children, and have promoted it by pretending to an angry feud. They tell of their wisdom in manipulating offspring in a clever patter song, "Never Say No," which advises the audience that children will always do what they're told not to. The song cites an instance --:

"Your daughter brings a young man in,
And says, 'Do you like him, Pa?'
Just say that he's a fool and then
You've got a son-in-law."

For added flavor to the idyll the fathers even provide an adventure -- a staged abduction of the girl in the moonlight, in which the young man can heroically play her rescuer. After the young man has handily vanquished the ruffians, and the fathers have "reluctantly" consented to their union, the story seems to have arrived at a happy ending at mid-point in the evening. But then the Narrator-doubling-as-abductor -- to be played by _____ -- discloses that "A play never ends till we've been burned a bit."

It is the harsh reality of sunlight that burns them after their early moonstruck escapades. The boy discovers that not all of life's promises of bright adventure come true, the girl learns that love can be false. In a song of discontentment, "This Plum Is Too Ripe," that has a compelling rhythm similar to that of "Mack the Knife," the lovers admit that "what last night was scenic seems cynic by today," that when you "take away the golden moonbeams, take away the tinsel sky, take away the secret meetings," love loses some of its enchantment. In the end, after some trying ordeals, they learn to build their lives on a more solid basis than moonlit raptures.

A ballad called "Try to Remember," one of the most popular song hits of "The Fantasticks," provides a haunting theme for the story. Another of the ditties that have become popular favorites is "They Were You," set to a lyrical, insistent tune. "Round and Round" is the heroine's reckless and terribly gay visualization of a worldly life to which she is tempted. "Soon It's Gonna Rain" sums up the show's pastoral simplicity. ("No love it better than in September, just before a rain.")

The two fathers have a second act patter song, "Plant a Radish," which celebrates the pleasures of gardening over those of raising children. They delight in the assurance that if you plant a radish, you'll get a radish, while with progeny it's hodge-podgeny.

_____ is directing the cast of eight who include, in addition to those mentioned above, _____ (The Mute) in the non-speaking role of a very active changer of props and scenery (hanging out a cardboard moon or a shining disc of tin as a sun, for example, to change night into day), and _____ (The Actor) and _____ (The Man Who Dies) as actor assistants in the abduction scene.

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Additional Research: Authors Harvey Schmidt and Tom Jones wrote the songs for "110 in the Shade," a musical comedy based on N. Richard Nash's play, "The Rainmaker," which had been presented on Broadway in 1954. The musical version opened in New York in the fall of 1963.

In Oct. 1963, "The Fantasticks" played its 1,450 performance, to become the fifth longest-running musical in American stage history. Preceding it were "My Fair Lady" (2717), "The Threepenny Opera" (2611), "Oklahoma" (2212), "South Pacific" (1694). It was still running strong in Aug. 1964, ready to enter fourth place in the list. It passed "The Threepenny Opera" on Aug. 4, 1966 and was still running strong.

READER No. 3

Bearing the credentials of a run of more than two years in New York, and of successes in the major cities of Europe, South America and Australia, "The Fantasticks," a musical comedy that features both sentiment and mockery of sentiment, is coming to the _____ Theatre for the _____ of _____ through _____.

_____ (Boy) and _____ (Girl) will have the leading roles in this rueful; fantasy about the difference between love by enchanted moonlight and as it is exposed to disillusioning morning-after sunlight. They will be seen as a pair of sweethearts whose romantic imaginations have been turned toward each other by the simple ruse of their fathers pretending to oppose the match they hope for.

_____ and _____ will be seen as the two fathers who hold to the theory, revealed in a patter song called, "Never Say No," that the way to get children to do what is wanted of them is to forbid it.

_____, as the Narrator, not only will hold the freshly pastoral story together with connecting comments between the scenes, but he will also play the part of a roving vagabond who is hired to stage a fake abduction of the heroine so that the hero can win glory in her eyes by rescuing her.

The Narrator's rippling, semi-operatic song, in which he quotes the varying prices for different kinds of abduction, "It Depends On What You Pay," has been counted one of the highlights of "The Fantasticks" in all the cities where it has found success since its opening in New York in the spring of 1960. The variety of assaults he can perpetrate by moonlight include -- short and business-like or spectacular, on horseback, polite, drunken, or even one accompanied by the music of a military band.

Others in the cast will be _____ (The Actor) as a tottering old Shakespearean actor who keeps garbling the famous lines he has been spouting for years, and _____ as another actor with a speciality of being able to die effectively -- these two being assistants for the staged abduction.

_____ (The Mute) will play the highly important, though non-speaking role of the arranger of props and scenery -- hanging out a cardboard moon or sun to indicate changes from night to day, scattering confetti to underline moments of gaiety, flinging scarves, boxes, planks about to set new backgrounds, and even to provide a wall separating the sweethearts with his own arms.

The title of the show, like much of its contents, has its touch of irony. The rapturously romantic pair are not in the least fantastic or bizarre. (At one point the heroine plaintively sings, "Please, God, don't let me be just normal"). The title derives from the parentally-discouraged remark of the girl's father, "My daughter is fantastic," to which the boy's father wearily chimes in, "My son is fantastic, too."

The spoofing tone of the show's Pierrot and Columbine plot is matched by the songs. Several of them are as sweetly sentimental as any ballad to be found in a juke box, but they also sneak in a mocking, jazz undertone or a driving rhythm that joshes such love songs. The deliberately glancing rhymes -- as when "tender" is paired with "September" -- are part of this joke. Part of the show's popularity may be due to the fact that audiences can take the songs straight, but enjoy laughing at their sentimentality and kidding of trills as well.

"The Fantasticks" has had a fantastic history. Tom Jones, author of the book and lyrics, and Harvey Schmidt, composer of its tunes, first developed the idea of the show when they encountered its plot in Edmond Rostand's first play, "Les Romantiques," as undergraduates at the University of Texas, in 1956. When they descended upon New York and made their debuts as writers of professional material for night club entertainers and for several small revues, they continued to work on the idea.

In the summer of 1959 they had a completed one-act version which was acted in a summer theatre at Barnard, the women's college division of Columbia University.

This was so warmly greeted as a fresh and charming impromptu that the show was expanded to a full evening's length and presented at an off-Broadway Theatre. There, it had a resounding success that drew full houses for more than two years, and resulted in productions in twelve European cities, four in South America, two in Australia, one in South Africa and one in Israel, within the first year of the New York run.

_____ is staging this bucolic musical hit at the _____ Theatre, _____ is supplying the scenic backgrounds, and _____ will preside over the music department. # # #

FEATURE STORY No. 1

The _____ Theatre's next attraction, "The Fantasticks," which is to open on _____, is a musical comedy that originated in a tiny off-Broadway theatre in New York -- and then within a year was being produced in fourteen languages all over the world.

It should not be thought that the Greenwich Village origin of "The Fantasticks" marks it as being grim, Avant-Garde, serious, significant, or even substantial. Those were the characteristics that were once synonymous with any show that originated in an off-Broadway theatre, where Eugene O'Neill's dour dramas had their first hearings, and where the kind of playwrights audiences sought were such gloomy fellows as Dostoevsky, such serious-minded men as Ibsen and Chekhov.

It was the phenomenal success of "The Threepenny Opera," beginning in 1955, that turned off-Broadway theatres toward musicals that were as lightly entertaining as any Tired Businessman could hope to find on Broadway, if not with as extensive a line of dancing cuties.

The little off-Broadway stages of New York, of course, didn't have room for a lot of dancing girls, so their absence was compensated for with more wit in the plots and songs. Many off-Broadway musicals were distinguished by a specially "in" kind of cleverness that not all the theatregoing public possibly might understand.

In some cases the off-Broadway musicals were revivals of previously big Broadway successes, such as "The Boy Friend," which had a special appeal for sophisticated audiences and thus ran, in its 1958 off-Broadway revival, for 95 weeks in contrast to the 60 week run of the original Broadway production of 1954.

The Bolton-Wodehouse-Kern musical, "Leave It To Jane," had not only the record of a Broadway success behind it when it was given off-Broadway in the spring of 1959, but also a nostalgic and antiquarian concern with a period even further back in history than that of "The Boy Friend," which spoofed the jazz-age mid-twenties. "Leave It To Jane" was a musical of 1917 vintage, based on a George Ade comedy dating back to 1904. The nostalgia bit, even for people who couldn't recollect anything prior to 1945, made the 1959 off-Broadway production of "Leave It To Jane" a 27-month - long hit.

In the fall of 1959 another huge musical comedy hit exploded in an off-Broadway theatre -- "Little Mary Sunshine," which ran for an even three years. This was no fandango from Broadway or from the deep past, but an original show written especially for presentation in a small theatre.

These musical successes opened the floodgates. From 1960 onward the thirty off-Broadway theatres began to be peppered as thickly with musical frolics as they had once been with plays of "Significance." Producers who worked that territory began delving into the musical libraries for all the old hits they could find, and brought to successful production such previously seen song-and-dance hits as "The Golden Apple," from 1954, "Oh, Kay!" from 1927 and "Anything Goes" from 1931, "Best Foot Forward" from 1941, "The Boys From Syracuse" from 1938.

"The Fantasticks" came along in the spring of 1960 to ride this wave in a new, new way. It was an original show, always intended for off-Broadway, but not -- like "Little Mary Sunshine," seeking approval by doing a take-off of the musical comedy styles of another day.

It had some undertones of irony and jocular spoofing of the over-sentimental ballads that filled the juke-boxes, but chiefly "The Fantasticks" was a musical fantasy about a boy and girl in love, that told its story for the sake of charm rather than to raise raucous laughs at outworn cliches of another era.

Great enthusiasm marked the long run of "The Fantasticks." Its 135-seat theatre three blocks south of Washington Square was sold out night after night for two and a half years. This was, perhaps, not so very big an audience, for a large share of its spectators were repeaters, returning again and again to see a musical that entranced them with its sweetness, freshness and complete absence of "problems."

Thus "The Fantasticks" marked an epoch. The trend of musicals off-Broadway had got under way with "The Threepenny Opera," which was a suitable transition piece between the up-to-then customary dour dramas of off-Broadway, and the musical gaiety to come. For "The Threepenny Opera," for all its "Mack the Knife" and other haunting Kurt Weill songs, had a libretto by Berthold Brecht which presented a disillusioned view of mankind, tinged with acrid, sardonic cynicism.

Feature Story No. 1 (Continued)

"The Fantasticks" had no trace of vinegar. Its story had innocence and frothy lightness and its songs had jazz rhythms and ballad-lilts. It was pure entertainment, intended to be intoxicating and gay and not a bit thought-provoking. With "The Fantasticks" the off-Broadway had come a long way out of the dark tunnel of introspective drama into the light fields of unselfconscious laughter and radiant musical joy.

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F E A T U R E S T O R Y N o . 2

Let two ambitious young men from Texas fool around with a play from France and you've got an international mixture that just might become an international hit.

That is what happened in the case of "The Fantasticks," the blithe and fanciful musical hit that is opening at the _____ Theatre on _____.

The Texans are Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt. Back in the early 1950's they were fellow-students at the University of Texas, both trapped in a hopeless love affair with the theatre. They wrote material for college shows, acted in college shows, and were certain that "life upon the wicked stage" must indeed be a bed of roses, despite the "Showboat" song that propounds the contrary. They laid plans to go to New York and together set theatrical rivers afire as soon as they were graduated.

Before the day of diplomas rolled around they had already fixed upon their first project for conquering the theatrical metropolis, the musical that turned out to be "The Fantasticks." It took them five years from their graduation to get it produced, but it was worth waiting for. It became a huge hit, beginning in the spring of 1960, and it not only ran for over six years in New York but it was soon being produced on five other continents (from Buenos Aires to Paris, Stockholm to Melbourne, Johannesburg to Tel Aviv) in fourteen languages.

In 1955, their senior year at Texas, Jones and Schmidt became infected with a wild enthusiasm for the work of the romantic French playwright, Edmond Rostand, who had died in 1918, at the age of fifty. They read and re-read his three most famous plays, "Cyrano de Bergerac," "L'Aiglon" and "Chantecler," looked around for others, and found two in an equally lyrical, romantic strain, "The Far Off Princess" and "The Last Night of Don Juan." Were there any more?

There was still another play, the first that Rostand ever wrote, that gained him his earliest fame, when he was 26 years old, in 1894. It had been buried and forgotten except for a mention in the playwright's biographies in encyclopedias. Jones and Schmidt wanted to study that one, too, they could find no copies in any library within their reach. Undeterred, they sent to a rare-book dealer in Paris, who unearthed a copy in French.

This first play they found even more enchanting than any of the later, more celebrated Rostand plays. It was a sort of pastoral idyll, a masque, about a boy and girl in a never-never bucolic land, who must arrange secret trysts because their fathers are enemies. They have to pursue their wooing from tree-branches that meet over the wall erected between their respective fathers' gardens.

The fathers are really the best of friends who, having fond hopes that their children will marry, have deliberately promoted the match by pretending to forbid it. They increase the romantic element all the more by hiring an actor to stage an abduction of the girl so that the boy can play hero by rescuing her.

But as the desired match is thus finally arranged, Rostand injected the touch of rue and poignancy that he was so famously to employ later in the least scenes of "Cyrano de Bergerac," when the dying Cyrano learns that he might have won his life's happiness had he only dared try for it.

In this first play, Rostand achieved the same romantic richness by letting the boy and girl find commonplace disillusionments under sunlight that is harsher than the moonlight that had shone over their courting.

(m o r e . . .)

Feature Story No. 2 (Continued)

Reading this light and tender little Harlequinade, Jones and Schmidt together had a single impulse -- to turn the tale into a modern musical. They understood that the reason it had become lost and forgotten was that in its original form it was too simple and sweet a love story to withstand modern cynicism. But as a musical with light overtones of mockery? They would try. With Jones writing the libretto and lyrics and Schmidt composing the music, they cut, trimmed, adapted and changed around the old Rostand tale until they had fashioned "The Fantasticks."

They even changed the name of Rostand's original play,, In the acknowledgement of the source material that later appeared in programs, the credit line read: "Suggested by 'Les Romantiques' by Edmond Rostand." Actually Rostand's play was entitled "Les Romanesques," a word that carries the meaning that such people are not only romantics but also the kind who are found in "romans", the French word for novels.

Fearing that for most people, who hadn't gone through French courses in school, this nuance might be lost, Jones and Schmidt took the liberty of changing Rostand's title, along with their many other changes. Not one of the New York drama critics who praised "The Fantasticks" and noted from its program that it derived from "Rostand's 'Les Romantiques,'" caught this trifling deception.

The blend of the Texans' kidding with the romanticism of Rostand resulted in a great hit. Jones and Schmidt made their descent upon New York in 1955 and began having immediate successes, writing material for little musical revues and night club entertainers, and they didn't get around to finishing "The Fantasticks" until 1959, when it had a try-out at Barnard College, the women's division of Columbia University.

There it was so enthusiastically received that a few months later they had the pleasure of seeing the show produced with a professional cast in New York, and then many audiences had this pleasure for well over six years. The run of nearly 3,000 performances also led to performances in many other countries. And now -- here it comes to _____, with _____, _____, _____ and _____ leading its cast.

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S H O R T S

Great oaks from little acorns indeed do grow. Take, for example, "The Fantasticks," the romantic musical comedy opening at the _____ Theatre on _____. It scored one of the most resounding hits in New York theatrical history and also achieved popularity later in such foreign capitals as London, Stockholm, Mexico City, Milan and Johannesburg. Yet its epochal New York run was entirely in a little off-Broadway theatre seating only 135 persons..But those 135 seats were packed at every performance for more than six years, and the little show with nine actors acquired its world-wide reputation there.

_____, who is directing rehearsals of "The Fantasticks" for its opening at the _____ Theatre on _____, admits that this moonlight-touched musical is completely mistitled. "The sweethearts in the show to be played by _____ (Boy) and _____ (Girl)," he says, " are not the slightest bit fantastic, beat, odd-ball or peculiar. They are the epitome of normality. They come to be called 'fantasticks' by their fathers, who find their offspring incomprehensible, as so many parents do. 'My son is fantastic,' says one of the puzzled papas. 'My daughter is fantastic, too,' echoes the other. Hence the title".

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S H O R T

Are the Burton's "IN?" -- Is holidaying in Spain, Tiffany glass, the Beatles "OUT?" These designations that have been picked up by magazine editors, sociologists and social climbers to distinguish current social values are the invention of Harvey Schmidt, composer of the musical comedy hit "The Fantasticks," coming to the _____ Theatre on _____. Schmidt, in collaboration with Robert Benton, a fellow graduate from the University of Texas, wrote "The In and Out Book" which was published in 1959. They did it as a lark, never dreaming that their terms would become the syntax of the Sixties. Schmidt remains unperturbed, believing as they wrote it, that: "Out people who are sincere Out people are automatically In" He can be assured that his musical "The Fantasticks" will be in for a long time to come.

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Additional Research Information on Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt:

Since the opening of their highly successful musical "The Fantasticks," Jones and Schmidt have written three musicals for the Broadway stage. The first was "110 in the Shade," with a book by N. Richard Nash and based upon Nash's play "The Rainmaker." It opened in Oct. 1963 and ran to Aug. 1964, for a total of 331 performances.

The second venture was the two-character musical "I Do! I Do!" starring Mary Martin and Robert Preston, and adapted from Jan de Hartog's play "The Fourposter." It opened in Dec. 1966 and ran through the middle of June 1968 for a total of 584 performances.

The third work was an original musical called "Celebration," which had a brief run from Jan. 1969 through Apr. 1969 -- a total of 100 performances.

In May, 1970, the authors contributed a set of songs to a non-musical off-Broadway play that won an enthusiastic reception from the N.Y. drama critics: "Colette," a dramatization of various autobiographical writings of the late French novelist who wrote under the name of Colette. Composer Schmidt played his own music on an up-right piano during all performances.

Additional Research Information on the Musical:

Early in Jan., 1970, "The Fantasticks" reached sixth continuous year of its run in San Francisco at Ghirardelli Square.

In May, 1970, the tenth anniversary of the musical's opening was celebrated. While the length of the skirts had changed, from the modified New-Look-below-the-knee to the micro-Mini, the play's enchanting audience appeal had not, and crowds still flocked to the off-Broadway Sullivan Street Theatre to see the musical play.

Martin Gottfried, in Women's Wear Daily, noted that perhaps Jones and Schmidt's best work was "The Fantasticks." Moreover, they had yet to surpass the hauntingly lovely "Try to Remember." (These comments came in his review of "Celebration.")

"The Fantasticks" still had a long way to go to surpass the two longest-run dramatic presentations of the English speaking stage: "The Drunkard," which ran for over 10,000 performances in Los Angeles and Agatha Christie's perennial favorite, still running in Oct. 1970 after its opening in 1952, "The Mousetrap."