

Sondheim 102: 1982~2023



**Class 7: “No one has ever loved me as deeply as you.”
Passion (1994)**

OLLI at Duke Winter Term 2024 • Alan Teasley, Instructor

Today’s Opening Number



[4:07]

Today's Focus



You will know:

- Scenes 9-16 of James Lapine's libretto and Stephen Sondheim's score for *Passion* (1994)
- Reviews of and awards for the original Broadway production

You will reflect on:

- Your responses to the characters of Clara, Giorgio, & Fosca in the second half of *Passion*
- The musical and dramatic qualities of the work and your assessment of its impact
- Commonalities of three Lapine-Sondheim collaborations

You will (continue to) speculate on the nuances of:

- Love, passion, fidelity, and obsession—as represented in the love triangle at the center of *Passion*

You will note:

- Songs you want to add to your list of favorites

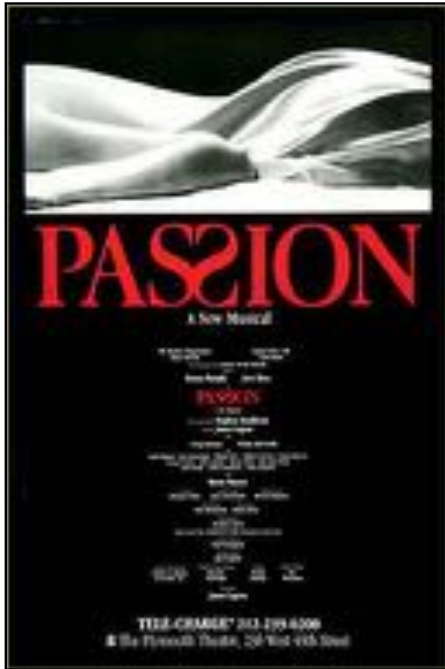


James Lapine: Collaborations with Sondheim



- *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984)
- *Into the Woods* (1987)
- *Passion* (1994)
- *Sondheim on Sondheim* (revue, 2010)
- *Six By Sondheim* (documentary film, 2013)

***Passion* (1994): Creative Team**



- ❑ Produced by: Shubert Organization, Capital Cities/ABC, Roger Berlin, Scott Rudin
- ❑ Book: James Lapine, based on Ettore Scola's 1981 film *Passione d'Amore*
- ❑ Music & Lyrics: Stephen Sondheim
- ❑ Directed by: James Lapine
- ❑ Scenic Design: Adrienne Lobel
- ❑ Lighting Design: Beverly Emmons
- ❑ Costume Design: Jane Greenwood
- ❑ Orchestrations: Jonathan Tunick
- ❑ Cast: Donna Murphy, Jere Shea, Marin Mazzie, Gregg Edelman, Tom Aldredge

LENGTH OF RUN: 280 performances

***Passion: A Review* (1994)**

- ❑ “There is a lot more in *Passion* than can easily be absorbed during a single performance. . . . Staged simply and elegantly by Mr. Lapine, *Passion* is often played in the theatrical equivalent to the cinema’s split screen: two characters in separate locations share the stage, communicating through letters. . . . The effect of these duets and trios is to give a visual and aural dimension to the layered emotions within each of the three characters.
- ❑ “It’s the boldest, most modern musical work to arrive on Broadway in years. The Sondheim score is both intricate and lyrical, but spare and clean of dramatic line, almost stark.
- ❑ “*Passion* sweeps along from its gorgeous opening duet . . . to the final tableau in which the living and the dead celebrate one of the strangest, most romantic love stories ever seen in a commercial New York theater.”

—Vincent Canby, *New York Times*)

Passion: Reviews (1994) & Assessments

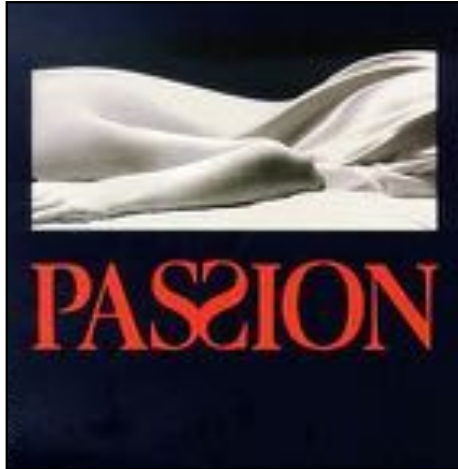
- ❑ **“The most emotionally engaging new musical Broadway has had in years.” (Jeremy Girard, *Variety*)**
- ❑ **“The darkest, most depressing show of Sondheim’s career.” (William A. Henry III, *Time*)**
- ❑ **It’s unlike any Sondheim show you’ve ever seen. . . . the first musical to have the feeling and texture of a foreign film.” (Peter Filicia, *Sondheim Review*)**
- ❑ **“Sondheim continued to be the conscience of an art, refusing to toss out sops of entertainment in the form of show tunes and Broadway exhilaration. Instead, he challenged his audience’s intelligence as he stretched his own, expanding still further the possibilities of musical theater.” (Martin Gottfried, in his book *Sondheim*, 2000)**

Passion At the 1994 Tony Awards: 10 Nominations & 4 Wins



- ❑ **Best Musical**
- ❑ **Book of a Musical: James Lapine**
- ❑ **Score: Stephen Sondheim**
- ❑ **Actress (Musical): Donna Murphy**
- ❑ **Actor (Musical): Jere Shea**
- ❑ **Featured Actress (Musical): Marin Mazzie**
- ❑ **Featured Actor (Musical): Tom Aldredge**
- ❑ **Direction of a Musical: James Lapine**
- ❑ **Costume Design: Jane Greenwood**
- ❑ **Lighting Design: Beverly Emmons**

Acclaim for the 1994 Original Broadway Cast Recording of *Passion*



- ❑ Winner of 1994 Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album
- ❑ Recording was produced by Phil Ramone for Broadway Angel Records
- ❑ Orchestrator Jonathan Tunick added 26 string players to “warm the sound”

Passion (2013): Creative Team



Ryan Silverman, Melissa Errico, Judy Kuhn

- ❑ Produced by: Classic Stage Company
- ❑ Book: James Lapine, based on Ettore Scola's 1981 film *Passione d'Amore*
- ❑ Music & Lyrics: Stephen Sondheim
- ❑ Directed by: John Doyle
- ❑ Set Design: John Doyle
- ❑ Lighting Design: Jane Cox
- ❑ Costume Design: Ann Hould-Ward
- ❑ Sound Design: Dan Moses Schreier
- ❑ Orchestrations: Jonathan Tunick
- ❑ Cast: Judy Kuhn, Ryan Silverman, Melissa Errico,* Stephen Bogardus, Tom Nelis

LENGTH OF RUN: six months

* Rebecca Luker performs as Clara on the 2013 recording

***Passion* (2013): Nominations**



2013 LUCILLE LORTEL AWARD

Outstanding Revival

2013 DRAMA DESK AWARD

Outstanding Revival (Musical)

Actor (Musical): Ryan Silverman

Featured Actor (Musical): Stephen Bogardus

Featured Actress (Musical): Melissa Errico

Director (Musical): John Doyle

Sound Design (Musical): Dan Moses Schreier

Lighting Design: John Doyle

2013 DRAMA LEAGUE AWARD

Outstanding Revival (Musical)

Distinguished Performance: Judy Kuhn, Ryan Silverman

Today we'll explore the rest of *Passion*, focusing on scenes 9-16.

Continue to track your feelings and judgments about the three main characters.

Are they sympathetic? well? admirable? honest? sane?

Note when your opinions shift.



Passion: The Score



SONDHEIM ON OPERA:

- “The thing that puts me off most is that most opera composers seem to have little sense of theater. . . . And they too often resort to recitative to carry the plot along—a problem easily solved by dialogue.”

HIS APPROACH TO *PASSION*:

- “I chose to think of [*Passion*] as one long rhapsodic love song: musically relentless, the recitative where necessary morphing into formal patterns, and as much of the dialogue underscored as possible.
- “The ‘songs’ in *Passion* lie somewhere between aria and recitative, with an occasional recognizable song form thrown in.”

—*Look, I Made a Hat* (2011)

Passion (1994): The Songs*

Setting: 1863 Italy—Milan and A Military Outpost

- | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> “First Letter” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Sunrise Letter” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Second Letter” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Is This What You Call Love?” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Third Letter” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Soldiers’ Gossip” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Fourth Letter” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Transition” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “I Read” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Forty Days” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Transition” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Loving You” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Garden Sequence” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Transition” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Transition” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Soldiers’ Gossip” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Trio” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Farewell Letter” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Transition” | <input type="checkbox"/> “No One Has Ever Loved Me” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “I Wish I Could Forget You” | <input type="checkbox"/> “Finale” |
| <input type="checkbox"/> “Soldiers’ Gossip” | |

* As listed on the 1994 Cast Recording

Passion: Scenes 1-8

A Brief Review



Scene 1: “Happiness”



**All this happiness
Merely from a glance
In the park.
So much happiness,
So much love . . .**

I thought I knew what love was.

I didn't know what love was.

I've never known what love was.

**And now I do.
It's what I feel with you.**

Scene 2: “I Read”



I do not read to think.
I do not read to learn.
The truth is hardly what I need,
I read to dream.

I read to live, to get away from life!

I do not hope for what I cannot have!
I do not cling to things I cannot keep!

The more you cling to things,
The more you love them,
The more pain you suffer
When they're taken from you

Scene 3: “Garden Sequence”



I've watched you from my window.
I saw you on the day you arrived.
Perhaps it was the way you walked,
The way you spoke to your men.

I saw that you were kind and
different then.
I saw that you were kind and good.

They hear drums,
You hear music,
As do I.
You and I are different.
They hear only drums.

Scene 6: Dialogue



FOSCA: You love this woman very much?
GIORGIO: I wrote to you . . .

F: Is she beautiful?

G: An angel.

F: Then why don't you marry her?

G: She is already married.

F: Aha! And you respect her?

G: Respect has everything to do with love.

F: That's not true, but it hardly matters.

And is your angel also a mother?

G: I find your sarcasm most distasteful.

F: I have many flaws, Captain

Scene 7: "I Wish I Could Forget You"



**FOSCA DICTATES A
LETTER FOR GIORGIO
TO WRITE (TO HER)**

I wish I could forget you,
Erase you from my mind.
But ever since I met you,
I find

I cannot leave the thought of you behind.

I know that I've upset you.
I know I've been unkind.
And though I cannot love you,
I wish that I could love you.

For now I'm seeing love
Like none I've ever known,
A love as pure as breath,
As permanent as death,
Implacable as stone.

Scene 7: “I Wish I Could Forget You”



I don't know how I let you
So far inside my mind,
But there you are and there you will stay.
How could I ever wish you away?

I see now I was blind.
And should you die tomorrow,
Another thing I see:
Your love will live in me.

**FOSCA DICTATES A
LETTER FOR GIORGIO
TO WRITE (TO HER)**

Scene 8: “Flashback”



Fosca's tragic back story . . .

Passion: Scenes 9-16

. . . and then?



Scene 9: “Surise Letter” & “Is This What You Call Love?”



Marin Mazzie, Jere Shea, Donna Murphy • 1994 • [6:41]

Sondheim on “Is this what you call love?”



Wiring about the difficult preview period of *Passion*, as he and Lapine were revising the show to reduce audience hostility. . . .

[Long passage to be read aloud]

—*Look, I Made a Hat* (2011), p. 171

Scene 10: “Soldiers’ Gossip” & “Transition”



Frances Ruivivar, Chris Groenendaal, George Dvorsky,
William Parry, Marcus Olson • 1994 • [1:19]

Scene 11: “Forty Days” & “Loving You”



Marin Mazzie, Donna Murphy, Jere Shea • 1994 • [6:57]

Sondheim on “Loving You” (1)



“‘Loving You’ was written during previews to give Giorgio, and the audience, a moment of empathy with Fosca, a moment to understand her behavior and find her sympathetic, but without sentimentalizing her.

“That moment clearly belonged in the train scene, because it’s the turning point for Giorgio. More important, we wanted the audience to understand *why* he begins to turn, to empathize with his empathy, so to speak.

—*Look, I Made a Hat* (2011), pp. 172-173

Sondheim on “Loving You” (2)



“It turned out to be a turning point not only for Giorgio, but for the show, just as ‘Children and Art’ and ‘Lesson #8’ had been for *Sunday in the Park with George*.”

—*Look, I Made a Hat* (2011), p. 173

Scene 12: Giorgio Asks Clara to Leave Her Husband



Jere Shea & Marin Mazzie • 1994 • [2:49]

Scene 13: “Farewell Letter”



Marin Mazzie, Jere Shea • 1994 • [3:43]

Scene 14: “No One Has Ever Loved Me”



Jere Shea, Donna Murphy • 1994 • [5:51]

Scene 16: “Finale”



Jere Shea, Donna Murphy & Company • 1994 • [4:20]

Sondheim on *Passion* (1)



“As far as I know, *Passion* is the only epistolary musical ever written—that is, a musical whose story is not only developed through letters but one in which the emotional climaxes (Fosca’s dictated letter, Clara’s farewell letter and Fosca’s final letter) are read rather than acted.

“This was part of the challenge that excited me about writing it: how to make something dramatic out of something inherently static.

—*Look, I Made a Hat* (2011), p. 177

Sondheim on *Passion* (2)



“Fulfilled by James’s theatrically inventive staging, the piece worked for me, but certainly not for everyone.

“The story struck some audiences as ridiculous. They refused to believe that anyone, much less the handsome and saintly Giorgio, could come to love someone so manipulative, relentless and menacing, not to mention physically repellent, as Fosca.

—*Look, I Made a Hat* (2011), p. 177

Sondheim on *Passion* (3)



“The violence of their reaction, however, strikes me as an example of ‘The lady doth protest too much.’

“Perhaps they were reacting to the realization that we are all Fosca, we are all Giorgio, we are all Clara.

“Which, as far as I’m concerned, is what gives Tarchetti’s stodgy novel and Scola’s elegant movie such profound power.”

—*Look, I Made a Hat* (2011), p. 177