

On the Trail of Two *Assassins*: Stephen Sondheim's and John Weidman's Reinvention of a Musical by Charles Gilbert

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That Stephen Sondheim's and John Weidman's *Assassins* originated with an "idea" by Charles S. Gilbert, Jr. (b. 1955) is well documented. Both Sondheim and Weidman referred to Gilbert's contributions in published interviews leading up to the Off Broadway opening of *Assassins* at Playwrights Horizons on 27 January 1991, and the playbill credited Gilbert in small, bold uppercase type with the names of donors and the theater (instead of the creators): "ASSASSINS is based on an idea by CHARLES GILBERT, JR."¹ (See Fig. 1). In the script, published later that year, Gilbert's name was relegated to the bottom of a page devoted to the names of the members of the original production team and cast, as if his idea were specific to that production.² And, at the Roundabout Theatre Company's 2004 Broadway revival, a new phrase, "From an idea by Charles Gilbert, Jr.," appeared at the bottom of the credits where it was printed in the smallest and least conspicuous type on the page.

Gilbert, as the secondary literature attests, was an aspiring composer-lyricist who had written a "play" entitled *Assassins*.³ His work had caught Sondheim's attention in the early 1980s, when Sondheim had acted as a judge for a new program at the Musical Theater Lab,

¹ Mervyn Rothstein, "Sondheim's 'Assassins': Insane Realities of History," *New York Times*, 27 January 1991, H5, 34.

² Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman, *Assassins* (New York: Theatre Communications Group, 1991), v.

³ Stephen Banfield, *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 48-49; Jim Lovensheimer, "Stephen Sondheim and the Musical of the Outsider," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, ed. William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 181-196; and Meryle Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim: A Life* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), 361-66.

Figure 1. *Assassins* Playbill, Playwrights Horizons, New York, p. 39

**PLAYWRIGHTS HORIZONS
20TH ANNIVERSARY SEASON**

Artistic Director
ANDRE BISHOP

Executive Director
PAUL S. DANIELS

presents

ASSASSINS

Music and Lyrics by
STEPHEN SONDHEIM

Book by
JOHN WEIDMAN

CAST
(in alphabetical order)

JACE ALEXANDER VICTOR GARBER LYN GREENE EDDIE KORBICH MARCUS OLSON	PATRICK CASSIDY GREG GERMANN JONATHAN HADARY TERRENCE MANN WILLIAM PARRY LEE WILKOF	JOY FRANZ ANNIE GOLDEN JOHN JELLISON DEBRA MONK MICHAEL SHULMAN
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<i>Set Design by</i> LOREN SHERMAN	<i>Costume Design by</i> WILLIAM IVEY LONG	<i>Lighting Design by</i> PAUL GALLO
<i>Sound Design by</i> SCOTT LEHRER	<i>Musical Director</i> PAUL GEMIGNANI	<i>Hair Design by</i> ANGELA GARI
<i>Production Stage Manager</i> CLIFFORD SCHWARTZ	<i>Production Supervisor</i> PAUL E. KING	
<i>Casting by</i> DANIEL SWEE	<i>Musical Theatre Program Director</i> IRA WEITZMAN	

Choreography by
D.J. GIAGNI

Directed by
JERRY ZAKS

ASSASSINS is based on an idea by **CHARLES GILBERT, JR.** ←

Playwrights Horizons gratefully acknowledges major support for our production of **ASSASSINS** from
JUDITH O. and ROBERT E. RUBIN
AT&T
ELEANOR NAYLOR DANA CHARITABLE TRUST
EDITH K. EHRMAN
THE GILMAN & GONZALEZ-FALLA THEATRE FOUNDATION
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which intended to pair novice playwrights with experienced theater professionals. “What a great idea for a musical,” Sondheim recalls examining the script. “I wish I had had that idea.”⁴ Gilbert was selected as a finalist, but the program dissolved before a winner could be selected. “The script and tape that arrived by return mail went onto the shelf,” Gilbert remembers, “and I turned my attention to other matters.”⁵

In 1988, *Pacific Overtures* librettist Weidman approached Sondheim with an idea for a musical about Woodrow Wilson and the Paris Peace Conference. His suggestion reminded Sondheim of Gilbert’s *Assassins*. “My reaction to the title alone,” Weidman recalls, “even before I knew what it was about, was that it was a great idea.”⁶ With Weidman’s encouragement, Sondheim contacted Gilbert, who, by then, was teaching part-time at Temple University and freelancing as a writer, composer, and director. Sondheim asked him for permission to “take his idea and run with it in our own way.”⁷ Gilbert recollects receiving the first letter from Sondheim:

Shuffling inattentively through my mail on a spring afternoon in 1988, I doubt I was looking for the letter that would change my life. Still, there was no mistaking the signature at the bottom of the page. It was a letter from Stephen Sondheim, inquiring about the status of *Assassins* and wondering if I would consider letting him write a work based on my idea.⁸

References to Gilbert’s contributions to Sondheim’s and Weidman’s *Assassins* stop there. None of the published commentaries engages primary source material, and the absence of any discussion of Gilbert’s original work—itsself actually a “musical” and not a “play”—creates a distorted picture of his “idea” and its role in the genesis of Sondheim’s and Weidman’s *Assassins*.

⁴ Cited in Rothstein, “Sondheim’s ‘Assassins,’” H5, 34.

⁵ Charles Gilbert, Jr., “A Tale of Two Assassins,” <http://chasgilbert/articles/assassins/html>.

⁶ Cited in Rothstein, “Sondheim’s ‘Assassins,’” H34.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Gilbert, “A Tale of Two Assassins.”

We learn a good deal more from that letter that Sondheim sent to Gilbert on 31 March 1988:

Dear Mr. Gilbert -

A number of years ago you submitted to Stuart Ostrow's Musical Theater Lab a script called *Assassins*. The idea of the show has haunted me ever since . . . I'm writing to ask if you would object to my exploring the basic idea on my own or possibly with a collaborator.

I don't know whether or not in the intervening years you decided to go back to the notion and redevelop it or to abandon it. Obviously, the idea of a show about assassins is not what the lawyers would call protectable, but I wouldn't want to interfere in any way with any plans you might have for it. If, however, it has been indeed consigned to your creative attic, I would greatly appreciate your letting me know. As a matter of curiosity, I would also like to read your script once again, if you could spare a copy.

I hasten to add that if this all is amenable to you . . . you and I would make suitable legal and financial arrangements beforehand.

I hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours sincerely,

Stephen Sondheim⁹

Gilbert first offered to collaborate with Sondheim on the piece. "I was pretty cheeky," Gilbert said. "It was like writing a letter to God. [Sondheim] phoned, very cordial, and said he had someone else in mind."¹⁰ Eager to find out what would happen to his musical in the hands of such experienced theater practitioners, Gilbert consented to Sondheim's proposal.¹¹

⁹ Letter from Stephen Sondheim to Charles Gilbert, Jr., 31 March 1988. I have been unable to ascertain what materials Gilbert furnished Sondheim at this point in time. Nor have I gained access to the nature or timing of the "suitable legal and financial arrangements."

¹⁰ Cited in Secrest, *Stephen Sondheim*, 361-62.

¹¹ Gilbert, "A Tale of Two Assassins."

Gilbert himself has chronicled his involvement in “A Tale of Two Assassins,” an article posted on his personal website that describes his work, its original production, his first interactions with Sondheim, and his reactions to the later version. Gilbert writes:

While the ultimate success of *Assassins* is largely attributable to the creative brilliance of its authors, who have fashioned a unique and remarkable piece of musical theater, I would like to think that part of this work’s persistence is the result of the potency of its subject matter . . . My feelings are those I imagine that a parent would have upon re-meeting a child he has given up for adoption. The “family resemblance” is clear to anyone who knows the history of the work’s development.¹²

The family resemblance of Gilbert’s script and score to Sondheim’s and Weidman’s has remained conjectural, and the scope and influence of Gilbert’s original “idea” have yet to be explored. What exactly was that idea? How closely based on that idea is Sondheim’s and Weidman’s *Assassins*? Do the two musicals share more than a title and partial cast of characters? Was Sondheim familiar with Gilbert’s score? Access to Gilbert’s unpublished script (dated 1979), the critical reception of his original production, correspondence between Gilbert and Sondheim, and my personal communications with Gilbert allow me to address some of these questions.¹³ Although one can identify concordances between the two scripts and scores, absent access to precisely what Sondheim and Weidman received from Gilbert in 1988, the documentary transmission, scope, and substance of the “idea” will remain somewhat speculative. Striking similarities between the two musicals raise important questions about the received historical narrative of the origins of Sondheim’s and Weidman’s *Assassins* and broader issues of authorship, influence, and genesis.

¹² Gilbert, “A Tale of Two Assassins.”

¹³ Charles Gilbert, Jr., *Assassins: A New Musical* (photocopy, Wilmington, DE, 1979).

The making of *Assassins* began fourteen years *before* Sondheim's and Weidman's musical opened in New York. In early November 1977, Gilbert, searching for an original subject for a musical, visited the library at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, where, a few months earlier, he had completed his graduate studies in directing. A collection of biographical sketches of American assassins and would-be assassins by James McKinley captured Gilbert's interest.¹⁴ The book contained excerpts from journals, poems, courtroom testimonies, and other fragments in which the assassins and would-be assassins explained the motivations for their crimes. As he flipped through the pages, Gilbert imagined how he could shape the material into a two-act musical with his own book, music, and lyrics. "My senses tingled as I turned the pages," Gilbert reminisces. "This was something big."¹⁵ He proposed his idea to William Turner, a former Carnegie Mellon classmate on whose senior directing project, a stage production of Sondheim's *Evening Primrose*, Gilbert had worked in 1976. Turner had since become the founding member and artistic director of Theater Express, a small, professional (and now defunct) company in Pittsburgh, where, from September 1977, Gilbert had been employed as musical director. With Turner's encouragement, and under his tutelage, Gilbert started adapting the assassins' and attempted assassins' stories for the musical stage.

Three months later, Gilbert had already written the first draft of his script. And, over the next year, he continued to rewrite and revise his new show entitled *Assassins*. Most of Gilbert's plot unfolds in 1972 in Duluth, Minnesota, where a fictional assassin, known as "G.," a down-and-out drifter modeled on Lee Harvey Oswald (1939-63), struggles to adjust to civilian life after three years in Vietnam. (See Appendix 1 for the musical layout of Gilbert's *Assassins*). Gilbert explained, "I decided to use the events leading up to that momentous gunshot as the

¹⁴ James McKinley, *Assassination in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

¹⁵ Gilbert, "A Tale of Two Assassins."

narrative through-line for my musical.”¹⁶ A second plotline takes place at Information Central, a hardly disguised analogue to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, where Index, a female clerk, compares the psychological and socioeconomic profiles of Presidential assassins and would-be assassins to those of regular Americans. Her research leads her to G. But, before she can stop him from assassinating the President, Index realizes that G. is caught in a web of conspiracy. In the final scene, a motorcade appears and G. shoots. He misses his target, and, seconds later, an unseen marksman kills the President. Secret agents run in to apprehend G., but he protests and breaks free. The musical concludes with one of the agents pointing his gun at G. and killing him.

Between scenes that develop G.’s storyline and Index’s assignment, Gilbert interwove slide projections; excerpts from diaries, poems, and newspaper accounts of real assassinations and assassination attempts; and vignettes that enact fictional and non-fictional circumstances surrounding eight of American history’s most notorious criminals. Five of them overlap the *dramatis personae* of Sondheim’s and Weidman’s *Assassins*: John Wilkes Booth (1838-65), Charles Guiteau (1841-82), Leon F. Czolgosz (1873-1901), Joseph Zangara (1900-33), and Lynette (“Squeaky”) Fromme (b. 1948). Gilbert rounded out his cast with three other assassins and attempted assassins, John Schrank (1876-1943), Charles Manson (b. 1934), and Sirhan Sirhan (b. 1944) (plus G. who acts as a thinly veiled Oswald). In their places, Sondheim and Weidman included Samuel Byck (1930-74) and Sara Jane Moore (b. 1930), who had both escaped Gilbert’s attention, and John Hinckley (b. 1955), who would not commit his crime until 1981 (see Fig. 2).¹⁷

¹⁶ Gilbert, “A Tale of Two Assassins.”

¹⁷ Ibid.

Figure 2. A Comparison of the Casts of Principal Characters in Gilbert’s *Assassins* and Sondheim’s and Weidman’s *Assassins*

Gilbert’s <i>Assassins</i>	Sondheim’s and Weidman’s <i>Assassins</i>
G.	Oswald
Index	
Booth	Booth
Guiteau	Guiteau
Czolgosz	Czolgosz
Joseph Zangara	Giuseppe Zangara
Fromme	Fromme
John Schrank	Samuel Byck
Charles Manson	Sara Jane Moore
Sirhan Sirhan	John Hinckley
The Fat Man	The Proprietor
	The Balladeer

Interpolations in Gilbert’s *Assassins* interrupt the linear narrative and redirect the story from 1972 to 1881, 1865, 1957, and so on. Act I, scene 8, for instance, occurs in 1865 and brings to life an inebriated Booth, who, from his dressing room at Ford’s Theatre, uses his lines in *Julius Caesar* to comment on the current political climate. Act I, scene 6 happens sixteen years later and shines a spotlight on Guiteau, who, from the pulpit, describes himself as a servant of God and his crime as a political necessity. According to eyewitness historical accounts, in the moments before Guiteau was hanged in front of a crowd of 250, some of whom had paid \$300 for the privilege, he sang a childish poem that he had composed earlier that morning. Gilbert included the text, which ended, “Glory hallelujah! I’m going to the Lordy!” as part of Guiteau’s scene.

Gilbert juxtaposed assassins and would-be assassins whose lifetimes didn’t overlap and thus could never have met: Booth and Zangara, for example, cross the boundaries of time to appear in church alongside Guiteau (I, 6), and Schrank, standing on a soap box, reads from his

diary as G. lies on a cot concentrating on a newspaper article, presumably about Schrank (I, 13).¹⁸ By breaking the constraints of chronological storytelling, Gilbert draws large-scale connections between the assassins' and would-be assassins' shared experiences. In so doing, they are made to seem far more human than they might first appear.

In about half of the scenes in Gilbert's version, a character called only the "Fat Man" breaks the fourth wall to guide the audience from scenes that develop the main storyline to the assassins' vignettes and back again. He also plays a pivotal role in the drama: the Fat Man recruits new assassins, including G., and manipulates them so that they act on their darkest dreams. In addition to appearing as "the man behind the assassins," as the script describes him, the Fat Man assumes supporting roles in several other scenes and eras: in ca. 1972, he acts as a bartender at the Neptune Tavern, a dive bar, where G. nurses a drink (I, 3); in the hours before Guiteau's death in 1882, the Fat Man dons a long robe to conduct a choir of assassins in singing Guiteau's hymn, "Going to the Lordy" (I, 6); and, as a present-day night watchman, he startles Index in her office where she struggles to crack the conspiracy surrounding G. (I, 10). In his double-role as an observer and instigator, the Fat Man looks ahead to Sondheim's and Weidman's Proprietor, but, in his recurring presence as a narrator, he adumbrates the Balladeer whose expository songs either develop the action or stop it to comment on characters, theme, and plot.

Gilbert's version opens with a loud gunshot and a slide projection of the word, "ASSASSINS." Then the Fat Man introduces the assassins and would-be assassins and invites them to explain their actions. One by one, they come forward to address the audience directly. Czolgosz asserts: "I did it because I done [sic] my duty . . . I didn't believe one man should

¹⁸ Quotations from the libretto will not have footnotes, but will be directly followed by a parenthetical note indicating the act, scene, and page number. Refer to Gilbert, *Assassins* and Sondheim and Weidman, *Assassins*.

have so much service and another man should have none.” Sirhan says, “I did it for my people.” And Zangara explains, “I have trouble with my stomach and I make my idea to kill the President . . . Kill any President, any kind. I see Mr. Hoover first, I kill him first. Make no difference.” (I, 1, 3-4) After presenting the assassins, the Fat Man adopts the likeness of a carnival barker, carrying a cane and wearing a straw hat, and ushers the audience to a shooting gallery. The stage directions read:

A sign proclaims, “Hit the Prez and Win a Prize.” Several passersby [Guiteau, Czolgosz, Booth, Fromme, and Zangara] quickly queue up; the Fat Man hands the first of them a rifle and signals for the machine to be set in motion. Gears whirl, lights flash; as if on a conveyor belt, a motorcade appears from one side of the stage, carrying the Prez and several secret agents. As the Prez waves mechanically, the first gunner fires. (I, 2, 7)

In August 1978, Theatre Express produced Gilbert’s *Assassins*, under Turner’s direction, as a workshop with a cast of nine actors and a nine-piece brass and percussion ensemble at the Mattress Factory, an alternative arts center on Pittsburgh’s North Side. On 18 January 1979, it opened as a mainstage production, funded in part by a \$4600 grant from the Ford Foundation’s New American Plays program.¹⁹ During its three- or four-week run, *Assassins* achieved modest success, but it has been not produced again to date.²⁰ As Gilbert has since noted, “Reading them with the benefit of hindsight, the reviews for *Assassins* seem strangely prophetic.”²¹ In the *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, Evey Lehner asserted, “Gilbert has come up with an idea for a theatrical experience that is innovative and could turn into a remarkable piece, with work.”²²

¹⁹ “Theatre Express Gets \$4600 Grant,” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, 22 December 1978, 18 and “Theatre Express Premieres ‘Assassins,’” *New Pittsburgh Courier*, 13 January 1979, 18.

²⁰ Perhaps the “suitable legal and financial arrangements” prohibit production of Gilbert’s *Assassins*.

²¹ Gilbert, “A Tale of Two Assassins.”

²² Cited in Gilbert, “A Tale of Two Assassins.”

Having obtained Gilbert's consent and presumably with suitable legal and financial arrangements negotiated, Sondheim and Weidman started by eliminating the hypothetical assassin and cumbersome conspiracy plot and developing the stories of America's actual assassins and would-be assassins. "That poem [by Guiteau]," Sondheim asserted, "and the letters and diaries, was what was most interesting about [Gilbert's script]."²³ At first, Sondheim and Weidman envisioned an account of assassins through the ages, from Julius Caesar to Charlotte Corday and beyond. Realizing that such a wide scope would involve too much material, they limited themselves, as had Gilbert, to Americans. (See Appendix 2 for the musical layout of Sondheim's and Weidman's *Assassins*).

Sondheim's and Weidman's script also mirrors Gilbert's non-chronological structure, which transplants assassins and would-be assassins across decades, even centuries. The deaths of Abraham Lincoln, shot by Booth in 1865, and John F. Kennedy, shot by Oswald in 1963, serve as a loose frame. To a greater extent and with more meaningful results than Gilbert's, Sondheim and Weidman combined villains from different eras in the same scene. By bringing together the assassins and would-be ones within the same set of circumstances, Sondheim and Weidman highlight important connections—similar political opinions, social injustices, backgrounds, and personal motivations. Sondheim told an interviewer, "The idea that people from different eras would have scenes together was exciting. I loved the notion that John Wilkes Booth could talk to somebody who lived fifty years after he died. Once the barriers are down, you can allow yourself to cross eras and find parallels and contrasts."²⁴ After connecting with one another throughout the course of the evening, the assassins form a kind of disjointed fraternity with its own set of criteria for initiation and membership. In the penultimate scene,

²³ Rothstein, "Sondheim's 'Assassins,'" H34.

²⁴ Ibid.

their newest recruit, Oswald, joins the ranks when the assassins push him to point his gun at the President in the passing motorcade, an act, they claim, will unite them and give them a voice.

Aspects of the two scores make the resemblance between the two *Assassins* even more striking. Gilbert's music starts with what the script refers to as "a sort of carnival tune . . . and the sound of a distant calliope" (I, 2, 6), and Sondheim's begins with "calliope music." (I, 1, 5) Gilbert's stage directions also describe the music as creating "a kind of Ives-ian pandemonium." (I, 2, 6) Gilbert's mention of Ives may have sparked in Sondheim a renewed interest in musical borrowings. Sondheim had drawn from a extensive variety of sources already in his career, but his references generally alluded to a familiar source with much broader strokes: he had turned to the musical languages and performance styles of Kay Thompson and Hugh Martin ("Me and My Town" from *Anyone Can Whistle*), the Andrews Sisters ("You Could Drive a Person Crazy" from *Company*), George Gershwin ("I'm Losing My Mind" from *Follies*), Gilbert and Sullivan ("Please, Hello" from *Pacific Overtures*), and others.²⁵ His *Assassins* score includes allusions to Stephen Foster ("The Ballad of Booth"), the close, unaccompanied harmonies of a barbershop quartet ("Gun Song"), and The Carpenters ("Unworthy of Your Love") but also showcases another, different type of pastiche: it features direct quotations of and thinly veiled references to specific pieces of music from "Hail to the Chief" and John Philip Sousa's "El Capitan" and "The Washington Post" to Leonard Bernstein's (and Sondheim's own) "Maria," "Tonight," and "America" from *West Side Story*. The result is an intricate tapestry of highly recognizable, distinctly *American* musical fragments intentionally distorted to critical effect. Although these similarities suggest that Sondheim may

²⁵ Rare examples among Sondheim's output of direct musical and textual quotations include "Three cheers for the red, white, and blue" and "Ours not to reason why, Ours but to do or die" in "Simple" (*Anyone Can Whistle*) and the *Dies Irae* motive from the Requiem Mass (*Sweeney Todd*).

have heard or perused Gilbert's score, Sondheim claims to have been familiar with only Gilbert's script and the musical descriptions contained therein. Gilbert recalls:

The score was part of the materials that I provided to the Musical Theater Lab when I submitted my *Assassins* musical to them as a portfolio piece . . . But I recall (I'm a little vague on this, it was twenty-five-plus years ago) that Steve said he hadn't listened to it, and that he didn't want to, lest it influence him in some way. That said both Steve's score and mine use a significant element of pastiche . . . as a rich source of musical irony.²⁶

By now it should be apparent that “based on an idea by Charles Gilbert, Jr.” is something of an understatement. The offer of receiving credit, any credit, for a work by Sondheim and Weidman—especially as a director in the early stages of his own career—likely exceeded Gilbert's expectations. As Gilbert explains, he still claims to feel “slightly giddy at the thought of having become a part of theatrical history, a minor supporting character whose story was now a footnote to a great man's career.”²⁷ Nevertheless, crediting an “idea” instead of a “musical” downplays the degree to which Gilbert had developed his work and the advantage that Sondheim and Weidman enjoyed in basing their musical on an existing one.²⁸ The connections between Gilbert's *Assassins* and Sondheim's and Weidman's—from its title to comparable characters, circumstances, settings, set designs, and the words on banners—make obvious the extent to which Gilbert's “idea” shaped Sondheim's and Weidman's conception of specific details of their script and score. That Sondheim also incorporated similar musical styles, instrumentations, and techniques at parallel points in his score justifies Gilbert's continuing participation in royalties for every performance of the work.

²⁶ Charles Gilbert, Jr., e-mail message to author, 3 November 2010. He added: “I did give him [Sondheim] and John [Weidman] a cassette of several selections from that tape as an opening night present in 1991 after the opening at Playwrights Horizons.”

²⁷ Gilbert, “A Tale of Two Assassins.”

²⁸ Sondheim's earlier adaptations identify a broad swath of authors and media: *Gypsy* is “suggested by the memoirs of Gypsy Rose Lee,” *Forum* is “based on the plays ‘Miles Gloriosus,’ ‘Pseudolus,’ and ‘Mostellarra’ by Plautus (251-183 BCE),” *A Little Night Music* is “suggested by a film by Ingmar Bergman,” and *Merrily We Roll Along* is “from the play by George S. Kaufman and Moss Hart.”

Appendix 1. Musical Layout of *Assassins* (1979) by Charles Gilbert, Jr.

Time: 1972 or thereabouts, with flashbacks

Place: Duluth, MN and elsewhere

ACT	SC.	SETTING	CHARACTER(S)	MUSICAL NUMBER	NOTES	
I	1	The Fat Man's pleasure palace, in the mountains of Ancient Persia.	Fat Man, Charlie Manson, Charles Guiteau, John Schrank, Leon F. Czolgosz, John Wilkes Booth, Sirhan Sirhan, Lynette "Squeaky" Fromme, and Joe Zangara	"Hashish Fantasy"	• "chaotic counterpoint" ("Simple," <i>Anyone Can Whistle</i>)	
				"We Can Shoot You"	• madrigal, contrapuntal • chorus line • two-step	
	2	A shooting gallery	Fat Man (as a carnival barker), passersby, Prez, Secret Agents, "G." (Gomer), and Raoul		• carnival-like atmosphere with calliope, carnival barker, targets moving as though on a conveyor belt, and sign ("Hit the Prez and Win a Prize") • Charles Ives • played in dumbshow	
	3	The Neptune Tavern, in Duluth	Fat Man (as a bartender), G., and Raoul	"Not What I Expected"	• reference to Gomer Pyle	
	4	A prison cell	Fromme, Prison Matron, and Secret Agent			
	5	Index's office, Information Central, Washington, DC	Index and Mr. Spinelli	"Information Queen"	• reference to <i>The Manchurian Candidate</i>	
	6	A church [ca. 1881]	Guiteau, Assassins, Fat Man (as the conductor of the church choir), Booth, Schrank, and Zangara	"Going To The Lordy"	• poem by Guiteau	
	7	K and S TV Repair Shop, Duluth	G., Mr. Simpson, and Kim	"Somebody's Gonna Get Hurt"	• described in stage directions as a "mad aria"	
	8	A dressing room in Ford's Theatre [ca. 1865]	Prompter, Booth, and Secret Agents (Lafayette C. Baker, Dennis Cossini, James Hosty)		• quotations from Shakespeare's <i>Julius Caesar</i> (Act II, sc. 1)	
	9	The Neptune Tavern	Raoul, G., and Fat Man (as a bartender)	"Why Not Dream?"		
	10	Index's office and inside the computer	Index, Crypto, Assassins, and Fat Man (as a night watchman)			
	11	A nursing home (1972) and G.'s boyhood home (1957)	G., Nurse, G.'s mother (young), and G.'s mother (old)	"Don't Look at G."		
	12	A prison cell	Fromme, Prison Matron, and Secret Agent			
13	G's boarding-house room, Index's office, and elsewhere	Schrank, G., Index, and Assassins	"Be A Man"			
			"Act I Finale"			

II	1	Index's office and elsewhere	Fat Man, Assassins, Secret Agents, and Raoul	"We Serve The Hoove"	
	2	G.'s room and the stage of a rock concert	G., Manson, Assassins, and Raoul	"I'm A Show"	• rock music with electric guitar
				"Assassin's Lullaby"	
				"G.'s Hallucination"	
	3	Index's office	Mr. Spinelli, Index, and Secret Agents	"Don't Let the Bogeyman Make You Blue"	
	4	G.'s room and elsewhere	G., Raoul, Squeaky, Manson, and Assassins	"Squeaky's Song"	
	5	The Fat Man's office	Mr. Spinelli, Fat Man, and Index		
	6	G.'s room and elsewhere	Manson, G., Mr. Spinelli, Index, and Assassins	"I Hear The Call"	
	7	The shooting gallery	Fat Man (as a carnival barker), G., and Secret Agents	"Act II Finale"	

Appendix 2. Musical Layout of *Assassins* (1991) by Stephen Sondheim and John Weidman

SC.	SETTING	CHARACTER(S)	MUSICAL NUMBER	NOTES
1	Shooting Gallery in a fairground	Proprietor, Leon Czolgosz, John Hinckley, Charles Guiteau, Giuseppe Zangara, Samuel Byck, Lynette (“Squeaky”) Fromme, Sarah Jane Moore, and John Wilkes Booth	“Everybody’s Got the Right”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • carnival-like atmosphere with calliope, carnival barker, conveyor belt with moving targets, and sign (“Hit the Prez and Win a Prize”) • James Sanderson’s “Hail to the Chief”
2	Nighttime in a barn in rural Virginia, 14 April 1865	Balladeer, Booth, and David Herold	“The Ballad of Booth”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stephen Foster minstrel song • Aaron Copland
3	A saloon	Hinckley, Czolgosz, Bartender, Zangara, Booth, Byck, and Guiteau		
4	Bayfront Park, Miami, 15 February 1933	Bystanders, Zangara, and Photographer	“How I Saved Roosevelt”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John Philip Sousa’s “El Capitan” and “The Washington Post” • tarantella
5	An anarchist rally in Chicago, 1901	Czolgosz and Emma Goldman		
6	A public park, ca. 1975	Fromme and Moore		
7	Empty stage	Czolgosz, Booth, Guiteau, and Moore	“Gun Song”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • waltz • barbershop quartet • lullaby
8	The Temple of Music Pavilion at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, 6 September 1901	Balladeer, Czolgosz, President William McKinley, and fairgoers	“The Ballad of Czolgosz”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lowell Mason’s hymn tune • Copland’s <i>Rodeo</i>
9	A park bench, 24 December 1973	Byck		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bernstein and Sondheim’s <i>West Side Story</i> and extensive textual references to American songs and traditions • “Hail to the Chief”
10	Basement rec room, ca. 1981	Hinckley and Fromme	“Unworthy of Your Love”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Carpenters, 1970s soft rock
11	Target practice, then the Baltimore & Potomac Railroad Station in Washington, 2 July 1881	Moore, Guiteau, President Garfield, and James Blaine		
12	The gallows, 30 June 1882	Guiteau, Hangman, and Balladeer	“Ballad of Guiteau”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • poem by Guiteau • minstrel number • cakewalk
13	Empty stage, ca. September 1975	Moore, Fromme, boy, and President Ford		
14	Driving in a ’67 Buick, 22 Feb. 1974	Byck		

15	Empty stage	Czolgosz, Booth, Hinckley, Fromme, Zangara, Guiteau, Moore, Byck, and Balladeer	“Another National Anthem”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • national anthem • chorus line
16	A storeroom on the 6 th floor of the Texas School Book Depository, 22 November 1963	Lee Harvey Oswald, Booth, Guiteau, Czolgosz, Zangara, Fromme, Moore, Byck, and Hinckley		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • country-western music • quotations from Arthur Miller’s <i>Death of a Salesman</i>
17	Limbo	Booth, Czolgosz, Moore, Guiteau, Zangara, Byck, Hinckley, Fromme, and Oswald	Reprise: “Everybody’s Got the Right”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sanderson’s “Hail to the Chief”

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