

Monday, March 10, 2007

Charles Strouse, composer of 'Annie,' has a busy 80th birthday year

By Michael Kuchwara, AP Drama Writer



NEW YORK — Charles Strouse, the composer of such shows as *Annie*, *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Applause*, celebrates his 80th birthday this year on June 7. But that's not the half of what promises to be a party that will last throughout much of 2008 and into next year.

Strouse's autobiography *Put on a Happy Face*— one of the better known songs from *Birdie*— also arrives in June.

"I didn't know if I would be able to remember as much as I did," he said recently in a telephone interview. "I never kept a journal. But shows are a wonderful marker and that's what this (the book) is about. It's so much more fun than writing music, which is very hard for me."

Among other events planned: concerts, seminars, panel discussions and more at such esteemed places as the Library of Congress and the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in Washington, D.C., and the Juilliard School in New York. Check out the composer's website, www.CharlesStrouse.com, for details.

But best of all, Strouse is currently working on a new musical, *The Night They Raided Minsky's*. The show has lyrics by Susan Birkenhead. The director is Casey Nicholaw and the book is by Bob Martin. *Minsky's* is not connected to a 1968 film with the same title for which Strouse also wrote a score.

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