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## **Put on a Happy Face: A Broadway Memoir.**

**Strouse, Charles (Author)**

**Jul 2008. 256 p. Sterling/Union Square,  
hardcover, \$19.95. (9781402758898). 792.6.**

Strouse is best-known for having written the music for the Broadway hits *Bye Bye Birdie* and *Annie*, both somewhat lightweight shows—the first, a lighthearted look at teen life, circa 1960; the other, a singing dancing version of the classic comic strip *Little Orphan Annie*. Yet both have grace and power that haven't diminished over the years. The same may come to be said of this lively, highly readable memoir. Strouse touches on the darker themes in his life—his mother's mental illness, his own battles with self-esteem—but lightly. He spends much more time recounting, in a gentle, amusing tone, the episodes of his life: Depression-era childhood, years of struggle working for summer camps and playing dance rehearsals, and myriad triumphs and bombs on Broadway and off. What is truly remarkable is how free of ego and bitterness this autobiography is. Even Strouse's two much-publicized Broadway flops, *Nick and Nora* and *Dance a Little Closer* (speciously aka *Close a Little Faster*), are handled with aplomb. One finishes the book utterly charmed by the man and his wit.

— *Jack Helbig*

