



Put on a Happy Face: A Broadway Memoir

Three-time Tony Award–winning composer Strouse is best known for the musical *Annie* and his *All in the Family* theme, “Those Were the Days.” While “wary of the ghosts that appear,” he summons up memories of a career that spans decades, beginning with his Manhattan boyhood, study at Rochester’s Eastman School of Music, touring the South with Butterfly McQueen and early collaborations with lyricist Lee Adams. His 1950s pianist gigs ran the gamut from strip clubs to musical theater classes at the Actors Studio: “Typically, I would have accompanied Kevin McCarthy and Marilyn Monroe in a scene from *Oklahoma!*” After his 1960 smash hit *Bye Bye Birdie*, there were plenty of happy faces and more long runs. Although he covers his film scores and music for TV commercials, the book’s best chapters center on the staging struggles of *Annie* and *Applause*, plus breaking racial barriers with Sammy Davis Jr. in *Golden Boy*. Many songs are cited, but the lack of lyrics is disappointing, Strouse instead regales with fascinating, sometimes surprising, anecdotes, such as Mike Nichols, clad in a new camel-hair coat, skidding about in his own vomit at an airport. Detailing desperate rewrites, insecurities of theater people, footlight failures and humiliations, as well as theatrical triumphs, Strouse’s superb backstage memoir deserves a standing ovation. 16-page b&w insert. (July)

