

A Musical Analysis of the Transformations of
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In the two-act musical, Into the Woods, composer Stephen Sondheim significantly uses

darker tone. The brighter major sevenths and unisons alternating with darker minor sevenths and lyric syncopation in the first part of the opening serve to expose the imperfect relationship of the

serve to expose the solitary nature of the Baker, as this is the first time he is given a number alone as well. The first contrast is the style difference: while his wife begins ‘moderately’, signifying control of her own pace, he begins singing ‘*Ad libitum*’ and ‘Rubato’. Secondly, his music is played only by pizzicato violins, as opposed to legato, smooth strings with warm pedal tones. Both of these give the impression that he is indecisive, unsure, and less fixated on his task than his wife. This is again reinforced by the multiple caesuras in his melodic line.

Although he is evidently less confident than his wife, the Baker is able to resolve himself, as the music obtains “*Piú mosso*” and finally truncates. A closer comparison is necessary to explain this occurrence: for example, instrumentation analysis reveals that while almost the entire backdrop for the “Baker’s Reprise” is pizzicato strings, the parallel music for the Baker’s Wife involves every scored instrument playing a part in interwoven melodies and rhythms. Additionally, the Baker’s final bar of singing is accompanied by single note patterns, while the equivalent bar in “Maybe They’re Magic” contains fully dictated chords; the Baker’s Wife then continues, while the conclusion for the Baker is almost carelessly left to the orchestra. The conclusion of this comparison is that the Baker’s resolve is incredibly simpler than his wife’s. To reinforce this idea, “Baker’s Reprise” is in the key of F major, often known as “the key of complaisance and calm” (Steblyn). While the Baker’s Wife is dramatic, complex, and decisive, the Baker can only resolve his self-conflict to a certain degree of simplicity, as shown by the chord and instrumentation comparisons. This means that the Baker is a very simplistic character underneath his desires to complete the quest for a child on his own. Furthermore, while the antithesis of the two musical numbers is indicative of many character traits, “Baker’s Reprise” comes chronologically second due to its dependence on “Maybe They’re Magic”. The basic chord, rhythm, and form patterns throughout both numbers are nearly identical; thus, the

framework for the Baker's resolution of conflict has been set by his wife's resolution of conflict (Sondheim). The pattern here introduces the idea that the Baker is unknowingly dependent upon his wife to resolve his self-conflicts and insecurities.

Thus far, the music of the play has introduced the Baker as a man who, in attempting to get his wish, has been in conflict with his wife because of his attempts at independence. However, on his own in an underscore and in "Baker's Reprise", he becomes confused and disoriented until his wife's personality and mindset resolve his self-conflict. Likewise, the music of the first act establishes the Baker's Wife as an excitable, decisive character whose importance is not yet fully appreciated. Arguably, the Baker and his wife are like two puzzle pieces that have only been fitted together on the wrong sides. With this analogy in mind, the characters have been musically foreshadowed to fit together correctly. In terms of the plot, the expositions of the characters call for a climatic duet where the Baker accepts the fact that he cannot get his wish on his own and the Baker's Wife finally presents her love for the Baker undiminished by his pride.

Coincidentally, "It Takes Two" is the resulting synergy in the musical where 2 () -90.5 re5.7 (a) 0.2

flow while giving it a sustained, more emotional style. These characteristics reflect the best of her musical personality: variance, complexity, and passion. It is interesting to note that in order to emphasize the newfound pure connection between the Baker and his Wife, the transitions between sections of this number are quite smooth. As an example, the end of the first segment involves the quarter note pulse of the music characteristic to the Baker's Wife gradually picking up triplet anacrusis, as the bass pedal tone begins to lift into an anacrusis on beat 4 as well. As the Baker picks up where his wife left off, the triplets flow into ' ', and the bass continues its rhythm while changing its articulation to staccato. While the shorter notes here pattern the Baker's previous musical background, overall it seems that the Baker has musically changed drastically with his acceptance of his wife's role from hesitance to decisive freestyle. Using his wife's style for framework, the Baker finally realizes that his individualism can only be achieved ironically through dependence. The most significant characteristic of his new style is Sondheim's first use of a mode: G flat mixolydian. This mode transitions from the indecisive key of G flat that recurs in the Opening and "Baker's Reprise" into a mode that gives the music a bluesy tone, almost exhibiting embarrassment and subtly changing the Baker's musical infrastructure (Comp). His individualism is also

In the second half of “It Takes Two”, the styles of the Baker and his wife become more distinct, and finally combine. The Baker’s Wife’s music incorporates the bassoon of the Baker in evermore frequent triplet anacrusis as she repeats her melody from the beginning of the song with fuller chords. The Baker again seems to nearly change style completely, singing in D Lydian while his music makes use of various techniques such as secondary dominance and syncopation that are not characteristic to his original style. His backdrop begins with quarter note staccatos with which he has previously been associated, and transitions to slurred eighths that accompany rich chromatic, secondary dominant progressions to D major. These all reflect the newfound complexity of his personality that comes directly from association with his wife, while his wife is evidently able to express herself without being repressed by the Baker’s pride. Finally, at the end of his second solo, the Baker transitions into a duet with his wife in “the key of triumph”, D major (Steblin).

The climax of the song occurs when the first harmony of the musical is sung as the styles of the Baker and his wife combine brilliantly into the most powerful four measures of the entire musical. The long, minor seventh pedal tones of the strings, the triplet anac() -62.7 (T) 0.2 (w) -0.2 (

conflict has not changed as the other characters' has. The rhythmic alternation, the clarinet and bassoon doubling voices, and the cries of the baby create the same tension that existed between the Baker and his wife initially; hence, the personality clash has returned, and it seems as if the story is starting anew for these two characters.

Progressing into Part 2, the conflict between the Baker and the Baker's Wife is much worse in harmonic analysis than it was in Part 8 of the Act 1 Opening. One underscore in particular as they speak calmly foreshadows something much worse than an argument:

The Baker's Wife's dance with the prince involves a repetitive song, "Any Moment", as characteristic to the Prince's musical style: steady, rolling eighth notes, constant I-IV chord progressions, dynamics all centered around mezzo-piano, and unchanging instrumentation. The Act 1 analysis of the Baker's Wife, in contrast, gives her many creative aspects in terms of style. But as the Prince leaves the Baker's Wife from the glade, the transition into "Moments in the Woods" is the last type of music we expect to hear from the Baker's Wife: repetitive orchestration and rhythm. The first twenty-one measures of the song are exact reverberations of the Prince; the next six measures are the Baker's Wife waking up from her dream, attempting to shake off the repetition by changing time, tempo, key, and instrumentation. She tends to sing in common time, but literally stutters between it and the Prince's beat in three; the bassoon of the Baker irritates her as it plays grace notes that emphasize the stutter effect; and she finally manages to settle into B flat major, ironically the key of a "clear conscience" (Steblin). As she transitions into 'her own style', however, it is evident that the Prince's motifs are embedded into the Baker's Wife's music. Hints of "It Takes Two" sneak in during smooth lines, and she even maintains her a cappella standards. But unfortunately, her fate is determined because, indeed, she cannot accept the Prince as a 'moment in the woods'. The rolling eighth notes underneath the "It Takes Two" motif, the caesuras, and the I-IV chord progression betray her music as the Prince echoes in her soul.

It would seem as if Sondheim would have been forgiving if the Baker's Wife had not mentally let the Prince become a part of her past. In lieu of the fact that we all make mistakes, her mistake is different and cannot be forgiven because she accepts it without regret. Because she loses her musical style due to her actions, she is no longer a complement to the Baker and his insecurity; unfit to be a wife or even sing a duet, Sondheim disposes of her. This is extremely

characteristic of Sondheim, described as one who “illuminat[ed] levels of discontent that exist

Mysterious Man assists his form one last time...”Like father, like son”. The Baker’s rhythm at measure 83 simplifies to half note unison; the full orchestra takes part in the harmony; and the chord progression eventually reverts to the Baker’s I-IV that appears throughout all of his music. Without his wife, the Baker settles down to achieve ultimate simplicity. This is the core of the Baker’s personality that could not be observed in the first act. By steady decline in musical complexity, Sondheim explicates the innate nature of the Baker as almost beneficially simplistic, relaxed, and rational. Fortunately for the Baker, “No One is Alone” (Sondheim).

Overall, the drastic changes and differences of the music of the Baker and his wife reveal their personalities, their faults, and the reasons they end up the way they do. Sondheim’s orchestration in this case truly displays the power of love: the first act is a representation of love in its perfection, while the second act criticizes the relationships of the real world, judges the boundaries of forgiveness, and even suggests that one like the Baker can always find love in places other than marriage. To Sondheim, musical synthesis represents the existence of the soul mate; chord dissonance remembers conflict; permanent changes in style signify betrayal of oneself; and the absence of a musical framework reveals the true nature of the average person. Certainly, dialogue and plot cannot delve as deep into a composer’s meaning.

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