

Stephen Sondheim

Quotes

*Writing, Song, People, Art, Stories, Way, Children, World, Play, Ideas, Thinking,
Want, Musical, Mean, Pieces, Love, Character, Done, Hands, White*

If I cannot fly, let me sing.

~Stephen Sondheim

Success is like failure, It's how you perceive it, It's what you do with it, not how you achieve it.

~Stephen Sondheim

The only reason to write is from love.

~Stephen Sondheim

Art, in itself, is an attempt to bring order out of chaos.

~Stephen Sondheim

Any moment, big or small, Is a moment, after all. Seize the moment, skies may fall Any moment.

~Stephen Sondheim

Anything you do, let it come from you. Then it will be new.

~Stephen Sondheim

I love the theater as much as music, and the whole idea of getting across to an audience and making them laugh, making them cry - just making them feel - is paramount to me.

~Stephen Sondheim

Swing your razor wide! Sweeney, hold it to the skies!

~Stephen Sondheim

Musicals are, by nature, theatrical, meaning poetic, meaning having to move the audience's imagination and create a suspension of disbelief, by which I mean there's no fourth wall.

~Stephen Sondheim

All the best performers bring to their role something more, something

different than what the author put on paper. That's what makes theatre live. That's why it persists.

~Stephen Sondheim

I'm interested in the theater because I'm interested in communication with audiences. Otherwise I would be in concert music.

~Stephen Sondheim

The situation's fraught, Fraughtier than I thought, With horrible, impossible possibilities!

~Stephen Sondheim

Everything depends upon execution; having just a vision is no solution.

~Stephen Sondheim

Best to take the moment present as a present for the moment. . .

~Stephen Sondheim

The more you cling to things, The more you love them, The more the pain you suffer, When they're taken from you.

~Stephen Sondheim

I like neurotic people. I like troubled people. Not that I don't like squared-away people, but I prefer neurotic people. I like to hear rumblings beneath the surface.

~Stephen Sondheim

You may know what you need, but to get what you want, better see that you keep what you have.

~Stephen Sondheim

I read to see myself in other people's lives.

~Stephen Sondheim

The dumbing down of the country reflects itself on Broadway. The shows get dumber, and the public gets used to them.

~Stephen Sondheim

Opportunity is not a lengthy visitor.

~Stephen Sondheim

After the Rodgers and Hammerstein revolution, songs became part of the story, as opposed to just entertainments in between comedy scenes.

~Stephen Sondheim

When you trance out properly, when you're completely in that world, there is no other world, so there's no conflict.

~Stephen Sondheim

I chose and my world was shaken. So what? The choice may have been mistaken; the choosing was not. You have to move on.

~Stephen Sondheim

Just remember, Someone is on your side (our side) Someone else is not While we're seeing our side Maybe we forgot: they are not alone. No one is alone.

~Stephen Sondheim

It's not so much do what you like as it is that you like what you do.

~Stephen Sondheim

The more restrictions you have, the easier anything is to write.

~Stephen Sondheim

Work is what you do for others, liebchen. Art is what you do for yourself.

~Stephen Sondheim

Art is craft, not inspiration.

~Stephen Sondheim

If I got involved with the chat rooms and Facebook and everything - I would probably never leave. That's why I don't do it. I literally don't do it. At all.

~Stephen Sondheim

Music straightjackets a poem and prevents it from breathing on its own, whereas it liberates a lyric. Poetry doesn't need music; lyrics do.

~Stephen Sondheim

The difference between a cow and a bean is a bean can begin an adventure.

~Stephen Sondheim

Stay a child while you can be a child.

~Stephen Sondheim

My personal life and my artistic life do not interfere with each other.

~Stephen Sondheim

I firmly believe lyrics have to breathe and give the audience's ear a chance to understand what's going on. Particularly in the theater, where you have costume, story, acting, orchestra.

~Stephen Sondheim

A close-up on screen can say all a song can.

~Stephen Sondheim

Two of the hardest words in the language to rhyme are life and love. Of all words!

~Stephen Sondheim

Into the woods you go again You have to every now and then
Into the woods, no telling when Be ready for the journey
Into the woods, each time you go There's more to learn of what you know.

~Stephen Sondheim

Math and music are intimately related. Not necessarily on a conscious level, but sure.

~Stephen Sondheim

I was raised to be charming, not sincere.

~Stephen Sondheim

I've always preferred actors who sing to singers who act in all the shows I've done.

~Stephen Sondheim

Deciding what is to be sung and what is not to be sung is really what writing a musical is about.

~Stephen Sondheim

Pointillism takes emotional images, character, etc., and makes them all come together and make a whole that tells a story.

~Stephen Sondheim

Music is structure out of Chaos

~Stephen Sondheim

Perpetual anticipation is good for the soul but it's bad for the heart.

~Stephen Sondheim

Oh if life were made of moments Even now and then a bad one--! But if life were only moments, Then you'd never know you had one.

~Stephen Sondheim

When the audience comes in, it changes the temperature of what you've written.

~Stephen Sondheim

The nice thing about doing a crossword puzzle is, you know there is a solution.

~Stephen Sondheim

Friendship, obligation and greed are not good enough reasons to write anything.

~Stephen Sondheim

Everyone tells tiny lies, what's important really is the size.

~Stephen Sondheim

I prefer neurotic people. I like to hear rumblings beneath the surface.

~Stephen Sondheim

Lyrics have to be underwritten. That's why poets generally make poor lyric writers because the language is too rich. You get drowned in it.

~Stephen Sondheim

White. A blank page or canvas. So many possibilities.

~Stephen Sondheim

Nice is different than good.

~Stephen Sondheim

There's a hole in the world
Like a great black pit
And the vermin of the world
Inhabit it ...
And it goes by the name of London.

~Stephen Sondheim

Sometimes people leave you
Halfway through the wood
Others may deceive you
You decide what's good
You decide alone
But no one is

alone

~Stephen Sondheim

The man i'll never be, Who remembers him?

~Stephen Sondheim

Over a period of time it's been driven home to me that I'm not going to be the most popular writer in the world, so I'm always happy when anything in any way is accepted.

~Stephen Sondheim

Sometimes colleagues in performance are absolutely astonishing.

~Stephen Sondheim

One of the hardest things about writing lyrics is to make the lyrics sit on the music in such a way that you're not aware there was a writer there.

~Stephen Sondheim

They all deserve to die. Even you, Mrs. Lovett Even I. Because the lives of the wicked should be made brief For the rest of us death would be relief.

~Stephen Sondheim

My cage has many rooms.

~Stephen Sondheim

The movie adaptations of stage musicals that I've seen, without exception, in my opinion don't work. A lot of people would disagree with me.

~Stephen Sondheim

If people have split views about your work, I think it's flattering. I'd rather have them feel something about it than dismiss it.

~Stephen Sondheim

Tonight, tonight, won't be just any night. Tonight there will be no morning star.

~Stephen Sondheim

By the time I was 22, I was a professional. A young and flawed professional, but not an amateur.

~Stephen Sondheim

Gotta watch out for directors.

~Stephen Sondheim

It's not so hard to be married, I've done it three or four times.

~Stephen Sondheim

Am I not sensitive, clever, well-mannered, considerate, passionate, charming, as kind as I'm handsome and heir to a throne?

~Stephen Sondheim

Nowadays, there are sometimes more producers than there are people in the cast, because it takes that much money to put a show on.

~Stephen Sondheim

There's something inimical about the camera and song.

~Stephen Sondheim

What justifies a character singing one idea for 3 minutes on the screen? I get impatient and want the story to carry on. I don't get impatient in the theatre.

~Stephen Sondheim

Content dictates form and style.

~Stephen Sondheim

Teaching is a sacred profession. And art is a form of teaching.

~Stephen Sondheim

The art of making art, is putting it together.

~Stephen Sondheim

It's age. It's a diminution of energy and the worry that there are no new ideas. It's an increasing lack of confidence. I'm not the only one. I've checked with other people.

~Stephen Sondheim

Musical comedies aren't written, they are rewritten.

~Stephen Sondheim

My mother wanted me off her hands. She was a working woman. She designed clothes, and she was a celebrity collector. It's my mother's ambition to be a celebrity.

~Stephen Sondheim

A song is such a short form ... that 'the slightest flaw seems like a mountain.' And so every song needs to be revised 'til it's close to perfection... But achieving perfection takes a lot of energy.

~Stephen Sondheim

Every writer I've ever spoken to feels fraudulent in some way or other.

~Stephen Sondheim

For me it's more fun to find an unexpected moment for a character to sing when you don't expect them to.

~Stephen Sondheim

If you're dealing with a musical in which you're trying to tell a story, it's got to sound like speech. At the same time it's got to be a song.

~Stephen Sondheim

If the end is right, it justifies the beans!

~Stephen Sondheim

I get some flak for and some resistance from colleagues for because I'm interested in storytelling. I mean what I like about songwriting is songs used to tell a story.

~Stephen Sondheim

You get used to the exact amount of space between lines. You write a word and then you write an alternate word over it. You want enough room so you can read it, so the lines can't be too close.

~Stephen Sondheim

Ah, but if you have no expectations, You can never have a disappointment.

~Stephen Sondheim

Writing is a form of mischief.

~Stephen Sondheim

Into the woods--you have to grope, But that's the way you learn to cope. Into the woods to find there's hope Of getting through the journey.

~Stephen Sondheim

Anything that is white is sweet. Anything that is brown is meat. Anything that is grey, don't eat.

~Stephen Sondheim

Let Pirelli's / Miracle Elixir / Activate your roots, sir... Keep it off your boots, sir- / Eats right through. Yes, get Pirelli's! / Use a bottle of it! / Ladies seem to love it... Flies do, too!

~Stephen Sondheim

I liked my father a lot, but I didn't see him very often because my mother was bitter about him. He remarried, and I used to have to sneak off to see him.

~Stephen Sondheim

I was watching him crawl, Back over the wall-! Then bang! Crash! And the lightning flash! And- well, that's another story, Never mind- Anyway.

~Stephen Sondheim

I was never much of a reader. I'm a slow reader, which is unusual, because I'm so into language and I love words so much. But it's hard for me to read.

~Stephen Sondheim

The Tonys ignored West Side Story. The Tonys ignored Gypsy. It's a kind of public humiliation.

~Stephen Sondheim

I'm a lazy writer. My idea of heaven is not writing. On the other hand, I'm obviously compulsive about it.

~Stephen Sondheim

The truth is that I don't like rehearsals. I get embarrassed hearing my own work. I assume that the cast is embarrassed to sing the stuff.

~Stephen Sondheim

Having just the vision's no solution, everything depends on execution

~Stephen Sondheim

I like murder mysteries, the Agatha Christie kinds of things where you know that it's all going to be neatly wound up at the end.

~Stephen Sondheim

One difference between poetry and lyrics is that lyrics sort of fade into the background. They fade on the page and live on the stage when set to music.

~Stephen Sondheim

Almost all the shows I've been connected with have been extremely well cast. They're playing the show, not just doing the songs.

~Stephen Sondheim

You're so nice. You're not good, you're not bad, You're just nice. I'm not good, I'm not nice, I'm just right. I'm the witch. You're the world.

~Stephen Sondheim

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