

WASHINGTON COLLEGE

CITATION

Mark Bramble

In musical theatre circles, it has been said that the book writer gets almost no credit if a show succeeds, and most of the blame if it fails. Although least appreciated, the libretto is the most dramatically important element of musical theatre. Without that narrative structure, the score is little more than a disjointed medley of songs. To the delight of thousands of Broadway theatre patrons, Mark Bramble is a master storyteller. He wrote the book on one of the longest running shows on Broadway, and has been nominated for Tony Awards three times: in 1980 as Best Book (Musical) for “Barnum,” in 1981 as Best Book (Musical), with Michael Stewart, for a revival of “42nd Street,” and in 2001 as Best Director (Musical) for another revival of “42nd Street.”

A native son of Chestertown, Mark Bramble learned the art of musical theatre from the best of Broadway: producer David Merrick and manager Jack Schlissel. After attending Emerson College and New York University, Mark went to work for the Merrick organization in New York, where Schlissel taught him to read and understand the structure and nuance of the musical. Mark became a play reader in the Merrick office, and later managed several shows himself. Inspired by the spectacle of musical theatre, he conceived the idea of making a musical based on the life of another great showman, P.T. Barnum. Mark wrote the libretto and Merrick produced it, persuading playwright Michael Stewart and songwriter Cy Coleman to collaborate on the score. The original Broadway production ran for 854 performances and was followed by a London production, among others.

After collaborating with Stewart on the book for a revival of “42nd Street,” Mark took on his first directing assignment in London, opening the show at Theatre Royal Drury Lane in 1984. This show proved wildly popular: Mark directed a second revival of “42nd Street” that opened in 2001. The art of telling stories through song and dance is an ancient one, employed by the Greeks in their stage comedies and tragedies as early as the 5th century B.C. In this great tradition, Washington College is delighted to present to Mark Bramble the honorary degree of Doctor of Arts.

Baird Tipson
President
October 2, 2009

BIOGRAPHY



Mark Bramble

MARK BRAMBLE has been involved in the writing, directing and producing of stage musicals all over the world. He attended The McDonogh School, Emerson College and New York University, and began his theatrical career under the tutelage of David Merrick, for whom he worked on 20 Broadway productions. As author, his shows include *Barnum*, which introduced Glen Close as a leading actress, with songs by Cy Coleman and Michael Stewart (Outer Critics Circle award for Best Musical, and ten Tony Award nominations including Best Book and Best Musical), *42nd Street* with songs by Harry Warren and Al Dubin, produced by David Merrick (Tony Award for Best Musical, Laurence Olivier award for Musical of The Year, *Evening Standard* Drama award for Best Musical, Plays and Player Citation For Musical of The Year, etc.) and *The Three Musketeers* with the music of Rudolph Friml. His collaborations with Michael Stewart include *The Grand Tour* with songs by Jerry Herman, *Treasure Island* with songs by Jule Styne, and the off-Broadway opera *Elizabeth & Essex* based on Maxwell Anderson's *Elizabeth the Queen*. At the Haymarket Theatre in Leicester, England, Mr. Bramble and Henry krieger (composer of *Dreamgirls*) created *Fat Pig*, a rock-and-roll extravaganza about health. In London he adapted and staged *Notre Dame* at Saddler's Wells and created the first radio musical, *In With The Old*, for BBC radio. He directed the 2001 Tony Award winning Best Revival of *42nd Street* on Broadway, as well as productions of the show in London, Sydney, Shanghai, Tokyo, Amsterdam and Vienna. He is a member of The Dramatist's Guild, The Society of Stage Directors and Choreographers and The Association of Theatrical Press agents and Managers.