



# The Guide to Musical Theatre

## CANTERBURY TALES

a musical adapted from Chaucer by Nevill Coghill and Martin Starkie: Music by John Hawkins and Richard Hill: Lyrics by Nevill Coghill

Eugene O'Neill Theatre, Broadway - 3 February, 1969 (121 perfs)

Phoenix Theatre, London - March 21, 1968



### SYNOPSIS

Chaucer sets the mood, and the host of Tabard Inn, Harry Bailey, the plan for a pilgrimage to the shrine of Thomas à Becket at Canterbury. Harry proposes that each pilgrim tells a tale as they ride, and to ensure the merriment of the trip he will go along as a guide.

The group is off next morning, and the Miller is the first to offer his story - a tale of Alison's seduction from her carpenter husband by a young Oxford lad. The telling of the tale inspires the Steward, once a carpenter himself, to unreel a sordid tale of a pilfering Miller duped by two Cambridge students who seduce both his wife and his daughter.

The Merchant's tale is of young Damian who outwits his rich old master for his new wife's hand. The mental ability of the two young lovers versus older duly proven the Wife of Bath sets forth her thoughts of woman over man and offers proof with a tale of a doomed Knight in King Arthur's court who must find out what women really want. The answer he needs comes from an old hag whom he must then marry. However, when he denies despair and pledges his undying love, she becomes young and beautiful.

But it is the Knight whose words conquer when he presents his personal ideas, in lieu of a tale:

"When courtesy and reason say their say,  
The greater strength may lie in giving way;  
In married love, obedience interlocks  
With courtesy - and that's love's paradox!"

The journey is ended at Canterbury Cathedral and Chaucer steps forward for a few last humble words and a fond good night.

### MUSICAL NUMBERS:

1. April Song - Prioress and Village Girls
2. Beer Is Best
3. Canterbury Day
4. Chanticleer and Pertelote Duet
5. Chanticleer, Pertelote and Fox Trio
6. Come On and Marry Me Honey - The Wife of Bath
7. Darling, Let Me Teach You How To Kiss
8. Good Night Hymn - Company
9. Hymen, Hymen
10. I Am All A-Blaze - The Young Squire

11. I Have A Noble Cock - Nicholas
12. If She Has Never Loved Before - Old January and Guests
13. I'll Give My Love A Ring - May and Damien
14. It Depends On What You're At
15. Love Will Conquer All - The Prioress
16. Pear Tree Quintet
17. Some Call It Love - Old Man
18. Song Of Welcome - The Host, Harry Bailey
19. There's The Moon
20. What Do Women Most Desire? - The Young Knight
21. When I Was A Boy - The Miller, the Steward & Company
22. Where Are The Girls Of Yesterday? - The Clerk of Oxford

#### **INSTRUMENTATION:**

Trumpet I-II, III; trombone I-II; horn (bass tuba); piano; elec. organ; guitar I-II; bass; percussion I-II

#### **DISCOGRAPHY**

Original London Cast Recording starring Wilfred Brambell, Jessie Evans & Kenneth J. Warren - TER 1076