

November 2, 2016

Dear Mr. Tichenor —

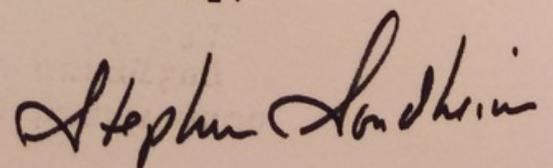
Thank you for your letter, although I must say that it reaches a height of disingenuousness that I've rarely seen. You say that you didn't intend to accuse me of plagiarizing moments from *The Fantasticks*, but you open your article with the sentence, "Has Stephen Sondheim ever acknowledged a debt to Tom Jones...?" Debt? If that's not an accusation, I don't know what is.

The fact is that not only was I not in any way influenced by *The Fantasticks*, but my opinion of that show is best summed up by the fact that when someone recently asked me the definition of the word twee, I replied, "Have you ever seen *The Fantasticks*?" (The only aspect of the show that doesn't make me want immediately to take a hot shower is Harvey Schmidt's music.)

Your article is clearly an attempt to trash much of what I've written, as evidenced by your dragging in your criticism of *Assassins* for no reason at all. Or, as you say, "for what it's worth." It's worth nothing, Mr. Tichenor.

I have no idea what prompted you to write such a mean-spirited piece, but I suspect you've been waiting to do it for many years. You call it "honest curiosity," but I think you should take a good look in the mirror and see if you can be honest with yourself about your reasons.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephen Sondheim". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large, prominent "S" at the beginning.