

# OPENING NIGHT: “We’re show people!”

## *Detailed Synopsis*

“Let the curtains part, let the spot light glow...”  
- *A Tough Act to Follow*

### ACT I

It’s 1959 and the opening night of Boston’s Colonial Theatre’s *Robbin’ Hood*, “a new musical of the Old West.” The curtain rises on the show’s merciful finale (“*Wide Open Spaces*”). Jessica Crenshaw, a former star who has lost all talent, takes her bow and after gathering her bouquets, collapses on stage.

A few hours later, the show’s composer Aaron Fox, lyricist Georgia Hendricks, financial backer Oscar Shapiro and co-producer Carmen Bernstein search the newspapers for a single positive review from the critics (“*What Kind of Man*”).

They are joined by director Christopher Belling, who announces that since Georgia helped create the show, she will take over until Jessica returns. After the split with her husband, it’s no secret to the company that Georgia has recently rekindled a past romance with leading man Bobby Pepper (“*Thinking of Him*”). Soon Carmen announces Georgia will have the role permanently, because Jessica is dead (“*The Woman’s Dead*”). An impromptu

funeral ceremony is interrupted by the arrival of Homicide Lieutenant, Frank Cioffi, a musical theatre lover who thinks the show and all the performers are magnificent. He and Carmen remind the cast that despite Jessica’s murder, the show must go on (“*Show People*”).

Cioffi explains that Jessica swallowed poison pellets during the last minutes of the show, and therefore was murdered by a member of the company. Cioffi feels the surest way to solve the crime will be to keep the entire cast of suspicious characters sequestered in the theatre.

Cioffi is left alone with local neophyte actress Niki Harris, who is now Georgia’s understudy. Cioffi is clearly smitten with Niki and learns they are both married to their respective careers (“*Coffee Shop Nights*”).

The next day, *Boston Globe* drama critic Daryl Grady pays the cast a visit and agrees to re-review the show when it re-opens with Georgia as the lead. Chris Belling prepares to restage a troublesome number and Cioffi suggests Aaron write a different number for the show (“*In the Same Boat #1*”) Aaron agrees, but is saddened when he realizes he misses Georgia, both as his writing partner and his wife (“*I Miss the Music*”). As Georgia is in her first rehearsal, murder rises to the occasion (“*Thataway!*”).

### ACT II

The cast laments the murder of yet another company member (“*The Man is Dead*”).



Original Broadway Cast. Photo by Joan Marcus.

A makeshift dormitory has been set up on the stage of the still-sequestered Colonial Theatre. In the middle of the night, the members of the company accuse one another of committing the murders (“He Did It”).

Cioffi sends Aaron’s next re-write back to the drawing board (“In the Same Boat #2”). Carmen approves Bambi’s pleas for a spotlight pas-de-deaux dance with Bobby but reminds her daughter that she needs to work hard and be a star on her own (“It’s a Business”). Bambi shines in the rehearsal of the restaged square dance number (“Kansasland”). But even as Bambi gets her big shot, another star gets his, from a gun offstage. When Niki finds the gun, Cioffi takes center stage as he traces the bullet’s torturous path (“She Did It (Reprise)”). After talking with Cioffi, Aaron and Georgia discover ample reason to renew their vows (“Thinking of Him/ Miss the Music (Reprise)”).

With the spotlight suddenly on romance,

Cioffi and Niki spend some time alone and indulge Cioffi’s theatre fantasies (“A Tough Act to Follow”).

Soon, another performer is killed. Cioffi’s investigation takes him high above the stage and, hearing the chorus below as they rehearse “In the Same Boat,” he hits upon a solution to some of the production’s problems (“In the Same Boat Completed”).

After successfully saving the show, Cioffi manages to piece together the clues he’s gathered, correctly unmask the killer, save the life of the murderer’s next intended victim, render the fiend harmless and find a new finale for the show. In doing so, Carmen Bernstein gives Cioffi the highest praise he could ever hope to receive: he is truly a theatre person (“Show People (reprise)”). The curtain comes down on the show (“Wide Open Spaces Finale”), but for Lieutenant Frank Cioffi, the curtain is just about to rise on the greatest joy of his life (“A Tough Act to Follow (reprise)”).



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