



ORIGINAL CAST ALBUM

COMEDY FROM THE SECOND CITY



PHOTO BY MORTON SHAPIRO

MERCURY hi-fidelity

MERCURY • THE SECOND CITY



THE SECOND CITY

RECORDED LIVE AT THE SECOND CITY CABARET THEATRE, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS • ON JANUARY 19, 1961

- (a) Emma
- (b) Great Books10:02
- CULTURAL F.M.8:08
- BUSINESS MAN
 - (a) Japanese Competition
 - (b) Southern Lunch Counter 6:16
 - (a) Caesar's Wife
 - (b) No George, Don't5:09
- MAN IN THE NIGHTCLUB 7:54

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CAST

HOWARD ALK
ALAN ARKIN
(ROGER BOWEN ON SABBATICAL)
SEVERN DARDEN
ANDREW DUNCAN
BARBARA HARRIS
MINA KOLB
PAUL SAND
EUGENE TROOBNICK

Composer-Pianist
William Mathieu

Director
Paul Sills

Produced By
Howard Alk
Bernard Sahlins
Paul Sills



PHOTOS BY MORTON SHAPIRO

KLEIN-WASSMANN/DESIGN

If the tide of satirical humor now rising in this country had a birthplace, it was among the small band of actors who populate "The Second City," a velvet-draped cabaret and coffee house on Chicago's North Side.

For among the Second Citizens are most of the original members (six men + two girls + a director + a composer-pianist) of a now famous company called the Compass Players, which flourished—sporadically and all too briefly—a few years ago in Chicago. The Compass Players were improvisors and irreverent satirists of the first water. From the company sprang such as Mike Nichols and Elaine May and Shelley Berman.

It was at the University of Chicago, in 1951, that Paul Sills, Second City's director, and Eugene Troobnick, Howard Alk, Severn Darden, Andrew Duncan, and Nichols and May all met, found a common interest in theater and decided to do something about it. After sharpening their skills for two years at the University Theatre, they left the south-side campus for a north-side ex-chop suey house. Together with writer-director David Shepherd, they pooled their vast artistic resources and their tiny financial ones in a repertory theater company called Playwrights Theatre Club. Barbara Harris of the present company joined them there and, in two years, under the tutelage of Sills and Shepherd, they produced twenty-five plays for a theater-starved Chicago. Salaries and living-scales skyrocketed: from \$5 a week each and peanut butter sandwiches, to \$55 (most weeks) and hamburgers. Bernard Sahlins joined as co-producer at the beginning of the second year. At the end of that year the fire department demanded extensive remodeling and the final curtain was rung down.

David Shepherd organized The Compass Players, an improvising group that played at night clubs, developing the form that has become so familiar in the persons of Nichols and

May, and in the work of Second City. Sahlins, meanwhile, formed the Studebaker Theater Company in a 1200-seat house on Chicago's Michigan Avenue. Sills and the actors oscillated back and forth between the two, and new faces appeared, among them Shelley Berman's.

Studebaker lasted a year, then folded, and after much struggling, the Compass too broke up. Mike and Elaine went on to club dates and eventual Broadway fame on their own. Shelley succeeded in television and concerts. The rest of the company disbursed, but they always kept in touch, always hoped the Compass could be reborn again.

In the fall of 1959, the rebirth started. The remnants of the dauntless band, together with two new actors, Paul Sand and Mina Kolb, and composer-pianist William Mathieu, later joined by actor Alan Arkin, approached the owner of a defunct Chinese laundry on the fringe of Old Town, Chicago's revitalized near-Loop community, and asked about renting his building. It took some persuading (a coffee-house revue in a city that consistently refused to support even name theater?) but they won. Taking their name from the title of A. J. Liebling's derisive profile of Chicago in the New Yorker magazine, in December of 1959 they opened their own club to instant success and immediate national attention. Before the startled actors knew it, they were inundated with praise from the daily press. The cry was taken up by national news magazines which rhapsodized over the sharp political and social satire of The Second City. Reporters and photographers from Time, Newsweek, Holiday, Vogue, The Nation, Playboy, Theater Arts, The Saturday Review, and Rogue covered Second City as journalists and as eager audience. It also has become a source of pride to the Second Citizens that their small club has become a must-see stopover for the professionals of the acting world. Entire troupes—The Royal Ballet, The American Shakespeare Festival Theater, casts of visiting plays—show up *en masse*.



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In the belief that eight, or nine or ten heads are better than one, Second City develops most of its material in a performing situation. The actors improvise on ideas suggested by the audience, by director Sills, or by some of their own number. Shepherd continues to supply material, as does another Compass alumnus, Roger Bowen. Though the basis of the material is improvisational, rehearsals are as thorough as though for a legitimate play, with Sills culling, pruning, blocking and "editing" the action. Subjects range from politics to movies, from great books to puppy love. Without sets, employing only a few hand props, and with six hats on the costume shelf, they create an entire world of satire.

After only about a year-and-a-half of operation, The Second City is well on its way to becoming an institution. Next door to its nightclub-cabaret it is building a nightclub-theater, a comfortable place where patrons will eat and drink at their tables while they watch experimental and traditional plays. There is also a Second City school and workshop which trains young people to the kind of discipline involved in The Second City's operation. This has become necessary since the new theater will need actors versed in the philosophy of the club and The Second City is planning further expansion: in the fall of 1961, New Yorkers who never venture west of Broadway will have an opportunity to view these skits themselves. A Second City branch will open in Liebling's First City—on 56th between Lexington and 3rd Avenues in the heart of Manhattan.

At the time this record was made, there had been four shows presented at The Second City. This record represents some of the best of the skits from each show. Since the Second Citizens are essentially fine actors, much of their humor combines words and visual effects. Collected here are those which are funny without being seen, amply demonstrating what has made The Second City the cradle of modern satire. MALCOLM WISE



This Mercury Custom Hi Fidelity recording is the result of the most modern recording technique of our time. The masters for this album were transferred through an Ampex 301 tape machine, a Pultec Filter and Equalizer, Altec limiting amplifier, McIntosh monitor amplifier and a 150 watt power amplifier designed especially to drive the BBC Gramplan Feedback Cutting Head.

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OCM 2201

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COMEDY FROM
THE SECOND CITY

OCM-2201
Side 1

A Custom High
Fidelity
Recording

- 1. A) EMMA
- B) GREAT BOOKS - 10:02
- 2. CULTURAL F. M. - 8:08

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COMEDY FROM
THE SECOND CITY

OCM-2201
Side 2

A Custom High
Fidelity
Recording

- 1. BUSINESS MAN - 6:16
- A) JAPANESE COMPETITION

- B) SOUTHERN LUNCH COUNTER
- 2. A) CAESAR'S WIFE
- B) NO GEORGE, DON'T - 5:09
- 3. MAN IN THE NIGHTCLUB - 7:54

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