

The Professor's Song

from *The Physical Revue*

words by Tom Lehrer

music by Arthur Sullivan
"If You Give Me Your Attention"
from *Princess Ida*

If you give me your attention, I will tell you what I am
I'm a genius and a physicist (and something of a ham)
I have tried for numerous degrees, in fact, I've one of each
Of course that makes me eminently qualified to teach
I understand the subject matter thoroughly, it's true
And I can't see why it isn't all as obvious to *you*
My lectures all are masterpieces, excellently planned
Yet everybody tells me that I'm hard to understand
 And I can't think why!

My diagrams are models of true art, you must agree
And my handwriting is famous for its legibility
When I write "gravitation" (*scrawls on blackboard*), say, or any other word
For anyone to say he cannot read it is absurd
My demonstrations all get more amazing every year
Though, frankly, what they go to prove is sometimes less than clear
And all my explanations are quite lucid, I am sure
Yet everybody tells me that my lectures are obscure
 And I can't think why!

Consider, for example, oscillation of a spring
The force that acts upon it is a very simple thing
It's kx^3 --- or kx^2 --- no, just kx , I'll bet
The sign in front is plus – or is it minus?, I forget
Well, anyway, there *is* a force, of that there is no doubt
All these problems are quite trivial if you only think them out
Yet people tell me, "I have memorized the whole term through
Everything you've told us, but the problems I can't do."
 And I can't think why!

The Professor's Song (math version)

words by Tom Lehrer

music by Arthur Sullivan
"If You Give Me Your Attention"
from *Princess Ida*

If you give me your attention, I will tell you what I am
I'm a brilliant math'matician (also something of a ham)
I have tried for numerous degrees, in fact, I've one of each
Of course that makes me eminently qualified to teach
I understand the subject matter thoroughly, it's true
And I can't see why it isn't all as obvious to *you*
Each lecture is a masterpiece, meticulously planned
Yet everybody tells me that I'm hard to understand
 And I can't think why!

My diagrams are models of true art, you must agree
And my handwriting is famous for its legibility
Take a word like "minimum" (to choose a random word) *
For anyone to say he cannot read that is absurd
The anecdotes I tell get more amusing every year
Though, frankly, what they go to prove is sometimes less than clear
And all my explanations are quite lucid, I am sure
Yet everybody tells me that my lectures are obscure
 And I can't think why!

Take differentiation, it's as simple as can be,
Like finding the derivative of tangent x --- let's see ---
It's tangent squared ---
No, secant squared ---
No, just secant, I bet.
The sign in front is plus --- or is it minus? I forget ---
Well, it *does* have a derivative, of that there is no doubt.
All these formulas are trivial if you only think them out
Yet students tell me, "I have memorized the whole year through
Ev'rythng you've told us, but the problems I can't do."
 And I can't think why!

**The song was performed at a blackboard, and the professor wrote
"minimum" in script without dotting the i's, making it illegible.*