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WELCOME

PRODUCER: JUDY CRAYMER



When we first opened *MAMMA MIA!* back in April 1999, we really had no idea how the show was going to be received and never imagined the global success that would follow. The audiences have been dancing in the aisles ever since and the show has now been seen by a staggering 60 million people in 16 languages around the world.

Productions such as *MAMMA MIA!* are the lifeblood of the West End and have helped make London the powerhouse of culture that it is today. And what's more, the huge demand for world-class theatre in the capital continues to grow and grow.

The West End is currently in impeccable health. Box Office records are being smashed and the range of shows on offer is staggering.

At present, the pool of exceptional talent on and off stage is quite incredible.



Judy is the producer of MAMMA MIA! She created the stage show and two films, and has won numerous awards

MAMMA MIA! showcases a cast packed with talent. It's so thrilling to see them raising the roof off the Novello Theatre with ABBA's brilliant music night after night. It is a testament to the performers that the show continues to play to packed houses every evening, and you, our audiences, keep coming back time and time again. It is because we share the same passion, and appreciate outstanding talent,

that British stage shows like *MAMMA MIA!* attract such huge audiences.

The musical's success was followed in 2008 by *MAMMA MIA! The Movie*, which had such phenomenal success around the world that an all-new original musical and much-anticipated sequel *MAMMA MIA! Here We Go Again* is now in production. The film opens in July, reuniting the original

stars with a stellar cast of new additions joining them, including Cher, Andy Garcia and Lily James.

It's been an incredible journey since opening in London nearly 20 years ago, and seeing the joy *MAMMA MIA!* and other shows bring to audiences reminds me of one of my favourite ABBA lyrics from the song, *Thank You for the Music*: 'Who can live without it, I ask in all honesty/What would life be?/Without a song or a dance, what are we?'

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STARS ON STAGE

The West End stage continues to welcome the most famous faces in the world, from Oscar winners to international movie stars

Words: Flora Neighbour and Kohinoor Sahota

WE MEET... KEN WATANABE

The star of *Inception* and *The Last Samurai* is making his West End debut as the King of Siam in *The King and I* (21 Jun-29 Sep).

Do you prefer stage to screen?

Well, I started out my career onstage. I went to drama school, and always had a great feeling whenever I was on stage acting. I can't really compare stage or screen. Right now, there is a lot of amazing technology and CGI in movies – but after that goes away, live acting is the best.

Tell us about taking it from Broadway to the West End.

On Broadway, the Lincoln Centre is a very particular stage and a very special venue. I want to try an authentic, traditional stage in the West End.

What work are you most proud of?

I can't really compare the pieces that I've done, though I would say that *The King and I* is the most special to me – this is my first whole play in English, and I'm doing it in a foreign country.

What aspect has been the most challenging?

I think conveying the King's sense of loneliness. He needs to keep up traditions, customs and government – he is always having to think about things.

What drew you to the story?

That's a tough question to answer. It's a really cold world right now. Many countries are becoming more narrow-minded. Hostility is growing towards foreigners, too, from Scotland wanting independence to 'America first'. Even Japan has changed its mindset. I wanted to do something with compassion and understanding – it is very important.

Kelli O'Hara and Ken Watanabe in *The King and I*

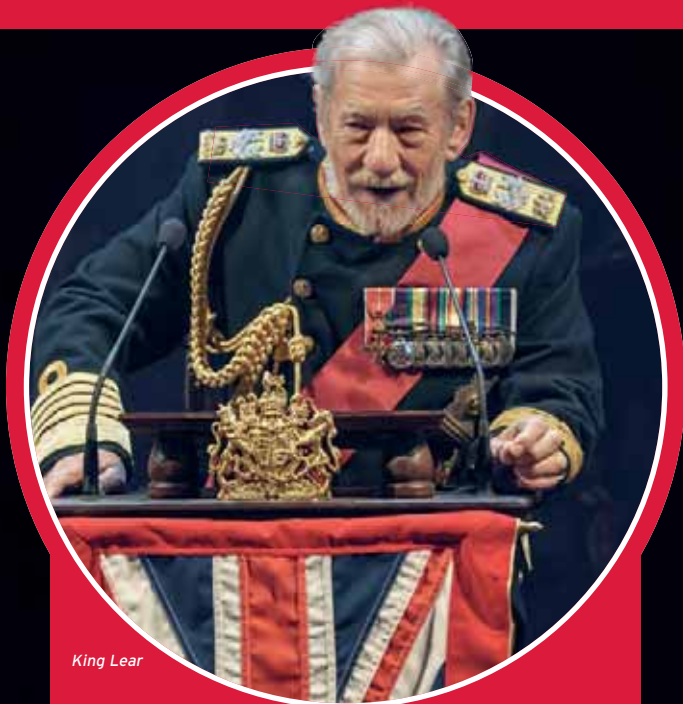
How is it being a Japanese actor in the West End?

When it comes to oriental roles, many people think of *The King and I* – it has an Asian actor playing a king. I will try to represent Asian feelings, the Asian mind in the 19th century and the different customs. I need to bring Asian feelings to the character.

What are you most looking forward to about bringing the story to London?

I like London! The story includes England – it shows an English woman going to Thailand. So I want to capture the feelings of the English people. Anna is an English woman and the audience will see the show through her eyes. There is also a lot of humour in the musical, which an English audience may enjoy more than the Americans.

www.kingandimusical.co.uk



King Lear

SIR IAN MCKELLEN

Few actors can boast of working for the Royal Shakespeare Company and then in a blockbuster franchise. Sir Ian McKellen, whose illustrious career spans decades, also spans roles, from supervillain Magneto in *X-Men* to Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*. The legendary actor takes on one of William Shakespeare's greatest plays when he stars as the protagonist in *King Lear* (11 Jul-3 Nov) at the Duke of York's Theatre.

McKellen has said that the role is his 'last big Shakespeare part', but this is now the fourth time that the six-time Laurence Olivier Award winner is playing the king. Directed by Jonathan Munby, this version takes the tragic lead and turns him into a military hero as he sees his kingdom and family divided. If that's not enticing enough, the theatre is removing half of its stall seats so the actors can roam freely, letting you see the legend up close. www.atgtickets.com

“THIS IS MY LAST BIG SHAKESPEARE PART”

VANESSA KIRBY

If you haven't been hooked on Netflix's original series *The Crown*, where have you been? Vanessa Kirby has been

gracing our screens with her flawless performance as Princess Margaret in the hit drama about the life of the Queen. She also starred in Richard Curtis' romantic comedy

About Time in 2013, and on stage as Stella Kowalski in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Now, as her time on *The Crown* comes to an end, the London-born actress has been cast in the National Theatre's production of *Julie* (31 May-4 Aug). The play follows the wild and newly single Julie, who throws a party which descends into a savage fight for survival. The Swedish playwright August Strindberg's masterpiece remains shocking yet relevant today, and has been adapted by one of the UK's greatest young playwrights, Polly Stenham. www.nationaltheatre.org.uk



“SHE HAS GRACED OUR SCREENS AS PRINCESS MARGARET”

AIDAN TURNER

If you're not sure who Aidan Turner is, then you might recognise his chest, which was voted the TV Moment of 2015 by *Radio Times* readers. Securing heart-throb status in *Poldark*, the Irish actor has demonstrated a diverse talent with roles such as Kili in *The Hobbit*, Ross Poldark in the 2015 BBC adaptation of the *Poldark* novels by Winston Graham, and his stint as the vampire in the TV series *Being Human*.

Turner began his career on stage, appearing in many favourites including *The Plough*, *Romeo and Juliet* and *A Cry from Heaven* – treading the boards in Ireland and London. Now, making his West End debut, Turner is swapping

Poldark's scythe for a cut-throat razor in Martin McDonagh's critically acclaimed *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* (23 Jun-8 Sep). The satire on terrorism sees Turner play Mad Padraic, a cat-loving terrorist deemed too violent to be a member of the IRA, in this hilarious, observation of violence in contemporary culture. Directed by Michael Grandage, following his production of McDonagh's *The Cripple of Inishmaan* in 2013, *The Lieutenant of Inishmore* is a comic stroll through a violent world.



The Lieutenant of Inishmore

“AIDAN SECURED HEART-THROB STATUS”

WE MEET... CUBA GOODING JR

The Academy Award-winning actor makes his West End debut as suave lawyer Billy Flynn in *Chicago The Musical* (to 30 Jun) at the Phoenix Theatre.

What made you want to come to the West End?

When I think of all the roles that really affected my career – from *Boyz n the Hood* to *The People v OJ Simpson* – they were always the roles that I thought were challenging. When my agents called and said, ‘You’ve been offered a musical,’ it scared me to death. If they offered me a musical in Los Angeles, I probably wouldn’t have done it. But, because it’s in London and it’s so removed from my life, I can be completely selfish in this character. I can also connect with an international audience – and the easiest way to do that is specifically in London.

What will you bring to the role of Billy Flynn?

People have seen Billy Flynn done before, so what is Cuba Gooding Jr going to bring to it? It will be a different energy, with a little swagger and a certain amount of soul that you have never seen. I am excited for people to see the Billy that is starting to manifest itself in my psyche with certain movements, attitude and vocals. It’ll be fun!

How do you feel about singing onstage?

I never thought I’d be singing for a living, or playing a character that was in a musical. It was one of those moments where I said, ‘Yes, it’s time for me to do this.’ I was instructed to cut back on the karaoke!



How are you finding learning the dance routines?

Oh my goodness! Everything hurts. My pecs, my legs, my biceps. All dancing starts with core balance and strength. Even though I am a lot older than I was when I was a dancer, the muscle memory has come back so readily.

What do you think makes London special?

For me, London is a hub that connects to the rest of the world. In the UK, I think that the centre of the universe starts in London – I really do believe that. Your society is a melting pot of communities. If you go to certain cities, there is usually a section for Italians or Indians. But when you go to London, you feel that the people there are organic to London and they feel like Londoners – that energy is why people have always gravitated to the city.

Do you have any special memories about London?

When I did my first film, *Boyz n the Hood*, they put me up at The Dorchester. Now, every time I go through that lobby, I always think about the start of my acting career. Even though I’ve found other hotels that I’ve fallen in love with, that first Dorchester experience stands out as being very ‘London’ to me.

Tell us why people should see the show.

There is a movement going on with voices of people who have dealt with harassment on all different levels. If you look at *Chicago* and the genesis of statements by Bob Fosse [the original choreographer] on sexuality and the empowerment of women who are taking control of their lives – sexually, mentally and physically – there is no more timelier production to be had right now.
www.chicagowestend.com



Her Majesty's Theatre



Theatre Royal Drury Lane

A LONDON LEGEND

Everyone has heard of Andrew, Lord Lloyd Webber's shows, from *Cats* to *The Phantom of the Opera*. But did you know the British composer owns many of the theatres in the West End?

We take a tour of these landmarks to find out more

Words: Jo Caird

The theatre world would be a very different place without British composer Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Musicals including *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Cats*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Starlight Express*, *Sunset Boulevard* and *Evita* have not just delighted audiences in their millions around the world, but they have also reshaped musical theatre again and again. And in the process, they've exerted a profound influence on the work of every other composer since.

Lloyd Webber turned 70 in March, but he shows no signs of slowing down. Starting out at the age of just 19 with a 'pop cantata' for a school choir that became the musical *Joseph*, Lloyd Webber has created hit after hit and won almost every award going, including an Olivier Award for Best Musical for *Evita*, *Cats* and *The Phantom*. And *The Phantom*, of course, is still running in the West End after 31 years, along with the more recent *School of Rock*. *The Phantom* has become the third longest-running show in the West End, and the longest-running show on Broadway.

LANDMARK MOMENTS

That side of Lloyd Webber's working life is well known. Less familiar is his passion for heritage, architecture and historic buildings – as well as being arguably the leading composer of the 20th century, he owns several of the largest and most beautiful theatres in the West End. He bought his first, The Palace, in 1983, going on to control nearly a third of theatres in the West End by the turn of the millennium. His company, The Really Useful Group (RUG), currently owns seven theatres, including his



The London Palladium



The London Palladium



Andrew, Lord Lloyd Webber

most recent purchase in 2016, The Other Palace (formerly the St James Theatre).

The Other Palace, which Lloyd Webber bought as a nurturing ground for new musicals and musical theatre talent, is a modern building, but most of the RUG portfolio includes the type of grand historic theatres emblematic of London's world-famous theatre scene. Theatre Royal Drury Lane, for example, which Lloyd Webber has owned since 2000, was built in 1812 but dates back to 1663, making it the longest continuous-use theatre in Britain. The original warrant issued by King Charles II to theatre manager Thomas Killigrew is on display at the Victoria and Albert Museum, though there's a copy you can see at the theatre itself.

Major renovation works are due to begin in 2019 to restore the public areas of the theatre to their Regency-era glory and

add a new restaurant. These follow on from works that took place to the front of house areas in 2013. If you visit Drury Lane today, you'll find sculptures, paintings and architectural details that hint at its rich history, including the feud that led to the creation of two royal boxes – an anomaly in Theatreland. Tours come highly recommended.

The London Palladium, meanwhile, was designed by Frank Matcham, arguably the greatest theatre architect who ever lived, and opened in 1910. It's thanks to Matcham that you get a great view of The Palladium's stage from wherever you're sitting – he pioneered free-standing balconies in the 1880s and introduced the technology into all his theatres. The Palladium was known as a theatre for variety shows from day one and has sustained its reputation for the form to this day, hosting the *Royal Variety*

“THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA IS THE THIRD LONGEST-RUNNING SHOW IN THE WEST END”

THESE PAGES: ANDREW, LORD LLOYD WEBBER, IMAGE © JOHN SWANNELL; THEATRE IMAGES, COURTESY OF THE REALLY USEFUL GROUP; OVERLEAF: THE OTHER PALACE © CRAIG SUGDEN; THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA © JOHAN PERSSON

Performance more times than any other theatre, alongside major hit musicals such as the 1991 revival of *Joseph*.

Her Majesty's Theatre – which Lloyd Webber bought in 2000 at the same time as Drury Lane, The Palladium and the much smaller Cambridge Theatre – has a rich heritage too, with a theatre having been on this site since 1705. Its history as an opera house – Mozart's operas were performed in London for the first time here in the early-19th century – makes it a fitting home for *Phantom*.

The final two theatres in Lloyd Webber's portfolio are the New London, a modern



The Other Palace

theatre bought during the phenomenally successful run of *Cats* in 1991, and the Adelphi, an Art Deco gem restored by RUG prior to the London opening of *Sunset Boulevard* in 1993.

The Adelphi, like Drury Lane and several other historic West End theatres, is reputed to be haunted. The melodramatic actor William Terriss, who was fatally stabbed by a jealous colleague at the theatre's stage door in 1897, is said to haunt the Adelphi and the area near Covent Garden Tube station.

The composer sees it as his mission to safeguard these beautiful buildings for future generations. As well as ploughing

enormous sums of money into restoring and refurbishing them – the planned works to Theatre Royal Drury Lane will cost in the region of £35 million – he has used his position in the House of Lords to call on the government to work harder for West End theatres alongside private owners like himself.

So the next time you go to see a show in one of Lloyd Webber's theatres, take a moment to admire the drama that's taking place off stage: an Art Deco lamp, a Victorian balcony with no pillars to support it, a sweeping Regency staircase. It's not just the composer's hit shows that are his legacy. We salute you, Andrew Lloyd Webber!

www.reallyusefultgroup.com

★★ WEST END WONDERS ★★

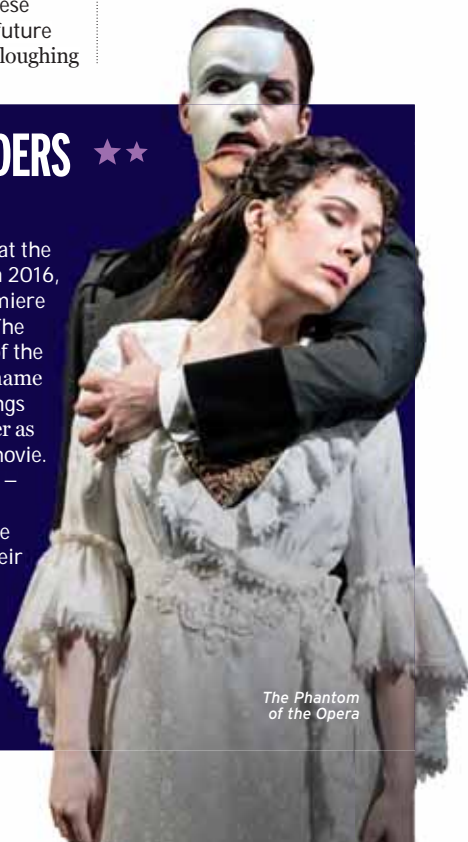
THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA

The West End wouldn't be the West End without Andrew Lloyd Webber – he was the first composer to have six productions running in the West End at the same time.

The Phantom of the Opera opened at Her Majesty's Theatre in 1986 – so far, it's racked up more than 13,000 performances. The musical, which is about a mysterious masked man who terrorises the Paris Opera House and becomes obsessed with a young soprano, has played to 140 million people in 179 cities around the world. www.thephantomoftheopera.com

SCHOOL OF ROCK

School of Rock opened at the New London Theatre in 2016, following its world premiere on Broadway in 2015. The show is an adaptation of the 2003 film of the same name and features 14 new songs by Andrew Lloyd Webber as well as songs from the movie. All the kids in the show – there are three casts of 13 children who split the performances – play their own instruments; they won the 2017 Olivier Award for Outstanding Achievement in Music. www.schoolofrockthemusical.com



The Phantom of the Opera



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WONDER WOMEN

As the musical *MAMMA MIA!* enters its 20th year onstage and the sequel, *MAMMA MIA! Here We Go Again*, arrives in cinemas, we look at how three women turned an unlikely show into a global hit

Words: Kohinoor Sahota

JUDY CRAYMER

Tenacious is one way of describing Judy Craymer. After working as Tim Rice's executive producer on *Chess* – a musical co-written by the ABBA duo – she began to nurture her own idea for a musical based on their songs. She spent 10 years trying to persuade ABBA's songwriting duo, Björn Ulvaeus and Benny Andersson, to allow her to

produce a show with their songs and in 1996 the idea of *MAMMA MIA!* was originated by Judy.

Judy reminisces: 'First I had to approach Benny and Björn, who were understandably a little unsure of my intentions. They weren't one hundred per cent convinced at the time, but they didn't absolutely close the door, so I took hope.'

Judy then convinced the writer, Catherine Johnson, and director, Phyllida Lloyd, to come on

board. She says: 'We discovered that we all shared the same birth year and soon firmly bonded.'

At a time when musicals were the domain of men, from Sir Cameron Mackintosh to Andrew, Lord Lloyd Webber, it was not common to see women in charge. 'It was unusual, if not unheard of, for three women to be the collaborative creative force behind what was to become such a commercial success,' Judy reveals. 'From a personal point



“IT WAS UNUSUAL FOR WOMEN TO BE THE CREATIVE FORCE”

of view, I think it redressed the balance and had a great nurturing effect on the production – we were all happy to jump in and make the tea!

The show opened on 6 April 1999, 25 years to the day since ABBA won the Eurovision Song Contest with *Waterloo*. People in the audience were dancing in the aisles from day one, the critics said it ‘could put Prozac out of business’ and, just as importantly, Benny and Björn loved it.

Almost 20 years later, the show has been a success: it has played in more than 40 countries, in 16 different languages and been seen by over 60 million people. And as for Judy, she won the Carl Foreman Special Achievement Award at the BAFTAs for the film *MAMMA MIA!* and was awarded an MBE by the Queen for her services to the music industry. And she should be expecting more success, too, as *MAMMA MIA! Here We Go Again* is released in cinemas this summer (from 20 Jul).

CATHERINE JOHNSON

Catherine Johnson’s life sounds like the makings of a play: she was expelled from school at 16, married at 18 and divorced by 24. But when she entered the Bristol Old Vic’s playwriting competition, with one child to support and one on the way, she went on to win it with her play *Rag Doll*.

Catherine became a writer for Thames Television, and wrote plays for Bristol Old Vic and the Bush Theatre. When she was asked to work on an ABBA musical, however, she admits that she ‘laughed her head off’ and thought the idea was ‘extraordinarily funny’. But the once amusing idea is now her biggest success.

Judy Craymer, the producer of the show, says: ‘My brief to the writer was that no lyrics could change – the story should be a contemporary, ironic, romantic comedy. If she listened to ABBA, she’d notice how they fell into two generations: the younger, more playful songs like *Dancing Queen*, and the mature, emotional songs such as *The Winner Takes It All*. The idea of

a cross-generational love story was devised.’

Catherine – who at the time was a single mother – found herself writing about that topic. Even so, it’s not the lead, Donna, she identified with, but Rosie, a driven, independent character.

Judy says on having women in charge: ‘The show has three strong women in the story. Their characters are so different: bossy, practical and very high-maintenance. We’d have a lot of laughs about who is who in real life, and, as time goes by, it’s a little worrying that we have become more like those characters on stage.’

Those characters, which Catherine wrote, are a crucial part of the musical and film version’s success – she’s been nominated for a Golden Globe and BAFTA – and cemented her place in musical history. This is one story with a happy ending.





PHYLLIDA LLOYD

There are few directors who can boast championing women's stories as much as Phyllida Lloyd. Whether it's operas, musicals or blockbuster films, she has a flair for storytelling. From a female suicide bomber in Wagner's *The Ring Cycle* to Margaret Thatcher in *The Iron Lady*, Phyllida is a director who does not shy away from putting women centre stage. Even Shakespeare isn't off the cards – she created an all-female *Julius Caesar*, *The Tempest* and *Henry IV*.

Phyllida began her career working for the BBC, becoming the associate director of the Bristol Old Vic and the general director of Opera North. She has staged plays for Manchester's Royal Exchange, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the Royal Court, the Donmar Warehouse and the National Theatre.

MAMMA MIA! – a story driven by three middle-aged women, which went on to be loved by middle-aged women – is one of her greatest successes. Judy Craymer, the show's producer, says of Phyllida: 'Her background was serious, legitimate theatre and opera.' The show could have easily been written off as kitsch, but what she has done is bring a sense of Shakespearean structure to the musical, which has love triangles, a magical island and mistaken identity.

It's no wonder then that Phyllida was asked to direct the 2008 film *MAMMA MIA!* with an all-star cast including Meryl Streep, Pierce Brosnan,

“SHE CREATED ALL-FEMALE SHAKESPEARE PRODUCTIONS”

Amanda Seyfried, Julie Walters, Dominic Cooper and Colin Firth. The unexpected hit became one of the most successful British movies of all time and garnered many fans along the way.

If you want to see Phyllida's latest venture on stage, with a strong female story, head to the Aldwych Theatre for the new production of *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical*. It tells the tale of how the singer started off life as a farm girl, suffered domestic abuse and eventually became the global superstar we know today.

Phyllida, you're a star!
www.mamma-mia.com



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**“THE MORE
EVIL SHE IS,
THE MORE
HEROIC AND
PURE MATILDA
BECOMES”**

Matilda The Musical

A DAY IN THE LIFE: MISS TRUNCHBULL

Matilda tells the story of a gifted student who is at odds with her evil headmistress, Miss Trunchbull. As the hit show tours the UK, actor Craige Els explains what it takes for him to transform from a man into a woman

Words: Kohinoor Sahota

Matilda is a story that is adored across the world by different generations. Written by the much-loved author Roald Dahl in 1988, it has gone on to become a classic children's novel. Telling the tale of a gifted girl, Matilda, who is ignored by her parents and headmistress, it has captured the imagination of directors in film and theatre.

Matilda The Musical was created by the Royal Shakespeare Company and premiered in Stratford-upon-Avon's The Courtyard Theatre in 2010. Adapted by one of Britain's greatest modern playwrights, Dennis Kelly, and with music and lyrics by the comedian Tim Minchin, it combines heartfelt moments with witty humour.

Transferring to the West End's Cambridge Theatre in 2011, *Matilda* went on to receive critical and commercial acclaim. The winner of seven Laurence Olivier Awards, it played there for six years.

The show has now gone full circle and is back in regional

theatres, as it goes on tour across the UK, from Dublin to Cardiff.

One of its most memorable characters is Miss Trunchbull. Described by Dahl in the novel as 'more like an eccentric and rather bloodthirsty follower of staghounds than a mistress of a nice school for children', she has been portrayed brilliantly by Craige Els in the West End production. He is now bringing her to life on tour for the rest of the country.

Els loves taking the show's message to new audiences: 'No matter what your situation is in life, if you want to overcome it, you can, as long as you believe and work hard,' he says with enthusiasm.

Here he shares with us a typical day as a star in the show, and how he goes from being a friendly Liverpoolian man to one of the scariest women in children's literature.

MORNING

My routine may change from time to time. You've got to get a good night's sleep when you play parts like this, otherwise your body knows about it. My breakfast is usually porridge with berries and seeds, so I can make sure I'm getting a decent start to the day.

I try to have a bigger meal towards the middle of the day,

but I don't like to have too much just before the show. I have to squeeze myself into a fat suit and it's such a sweaty, fast-paced kinetic role – I do everything from spinning children to running up and down and around.

WARMING UP

Going through the stage door is exciting. It's one of those roles where you can't *not* be excited about it. I arrive at 5.45pm, a good half-hour before the warm up. I don't have a specific



Craige Els as Miss Trunchbull

routine: I get into my warm-up gear, fill up my water bottle and make sure all of my personal props are on the table, where I can see them, for peace of mind. I do a bit of stretching and I test my vocals. Warm up is usually at 6.15pm.

MAKE-UP

I've got a fantastic team who help me with my wigs and wardrobe. I can get the suit on by myself, but I need someone to zip me into it and help negotiate my costume on and off as it's quite big. I started off with people helping me with my make-up and telling me what to do, but now I do it myself.

I get my base make-up on and put the red around the eyes, then I attach my mole and wart. The wig department helps me put on the Trunchbun and then I make sure that's all secure. My least favourite bit

is the finishing spray, which ensures that if you sweat too much, your make up won't run.



Matilda The Musical

From start to finish, I've got it down to half an hour – it started off a lot longer than that!

When my costume is on, I feel fantastic. You don't often get to play parts that are so much larger than life and as grotesque as Miss Trunchbull is. To get into the costume is sort of the finishing touch. You feel huge and ogre-like. When I stand next to my co-stars, who are more petite than I am, it definitely comes to life.

The outfit is more cumbersome than heavy. The design has changed over the years, especially since Bertie Carvel started doing it in Stratford-upon-Avon. It's more foam-based now. It is designed around you to make sure it's breathable and flexible. You have to work against it to keep your posture, but that's all part of the character as well.

GETTING INTO CHARACTER

It's a real treat to be playing Miss Trunchbull, as it's so well-known from the Roald Dahl books. You feel like you're stepping into huge shoes and that you have a responsibility to the role and for the audience. I approach her like any role: she is the baddie; you've got to find the reasons why you love her and the reasons why she is the way she is. The more truthful you make her, the more evil and maniacal and treacherous she becomes, and the more heroic and pure Matilda becomes. It's essentially a brilliantly told story of good and evil. I have the huge privilege of playing the evilest of evil.

GOING ON STAGE

I'm not on for the first 25 minutes of the show, so I can take my time, which is nice. I used to be terrible for pre-show rituals when I was younger and I'd

have superstitions, but I'm against that now. These days, only my prop – the whistle – goes on in a certain way so that it faces the left, and that's it.

There is always a sense of nervous excitement. I'm not as nervous now as

I was way back then, but as we are now on tour there is a sense of occasion. It's nice to have that adrenaline, especially when you are playing a part like this, as Miss Trunchbull is so fuelled by mania.

INTERVALS

I take off one costume and put on my next costume. I quite like having the downtime in between acts. There is a little bit of time before I go on in Act 2. I drink lots of water and chat to whoever comes to my dressing room.

POST-SHOW

The curtain comes down at about 10.05pm. I am out of costume and warmed down by 10.30pm. I have de-boobed, taken off my wig and de-Trunched. Reading reviews are part and parcel of it all, but I am more inclined to listen to the creative team.

I'll have a meal that is mainly protein based, and do a vocal warm down before bed. Taking *Matilda* to a new city each time, and being there for a short time, means there's an exciting energy.

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THE LYRIC KING

Sir Tim Rice is the lyricist behind some of the greatest musicals of all time, from *Aladdin* to *The Lion King*. He tells us what it takes to write a hit song

Words: Hannah Nepil

Sir Tim Rice

So how do you write a hit song? This is the first question I ask Sir Tim Rice, and he demurs. ‘You don’t sit down and think, ‘I’ll write a hit’ or ‘I’ll write a flop.’ You just think, ‘I’ll write a song and hope that somebody likes it.’ It’s a curious answer from one of the world’s best-known lyricists. After all, Rice, 73, is one half of the famous songwriting

duo behind Disney favourites such as *The Lion King*, and West End shows including *Chess* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

He has collaborated with Andrew, Lord Lloyd Webber, Sir Elton John and half of the ABBA team. His CV is awash with awards, including three Oscars, and all because he has a knack for writing songs that everyone

has heard of, from *Aladdin’s A Whole New World* to *Evita’s Don’t Cry for Me Argentina*. Audiences keep coming back for more: *Chess* (to 2 Jun) – on which Rice worked with ABBA’s Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus – has opened for a short run at the London Coliseum.

Is he sure he doesn’t know how to write a hit? All right, he concedes, you have to produce



“I WAS A HUGE FAN OF ELTON JOHN BEFORE I WORKED WITH HIM”

MEETING OF MINDS

Rice is a naturally cautious type. Though talented with words as a child, he never thought this could lead to a career. Instead, he became an article clerk in a legal firm. ‘I wasn’t gripped by the law, to put it mildly,’ he reminisces. So it was a stroke of luck when, soon after taking on the job at the age of 20, he met Andrew Lloyd Webber, and began writing songs with him in his spare time.

‘I enjoyed working with Andrew, but he had more belief in his abilities than I had in mine,’ Rice says. ‘Even after we’d written *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, I didn’t think we would have any success – that was something that happened to other people.’ In fact, it was only six years after meeting Webber, by which time Rice was working at EMI Records, that he was persuaded to give up the day job.

Half a century on, he’s glad he took the gamble, and counts himself lucky for ‘having worked with some of the greatest popular composers of our time’. I ask him what makes a successful musical partnership. ‘You have to be able to stand being in the same room as someone for more than 20 minutes. And you have to like

their music; it helped, for example, that I was already a huge Elton John fan before I worked with him on projects like *The Lion King*,’ he explains.

But however well you get on with your collaborator, he continues, the working process is rarely predictable as every composer has a different preference. ‘Elton John likes to get the lyrics before he writes the music. But that’s not

the case with everyone. When I did *One Jump Ahead*, the scene where Aladdin is being chased by all these thugs, Alan Menken wrote the tune, and I fitted the lyrics to that tune,’ Rice says.

Tim Rice has won three Academy Awards for songs in The Lion King, Aladdin and Evita

something that ‘people can relate to, even if they relate angrily to it and disagree with what it’s saying’. And yes, he tends to get a sense if a song is going well. There have, however, been a few surprises: ‘When I wrote *Don’t Cry for Me Argentina*, I thought it worked as part of the scene, but I never expected it to be taken out of context and become a hit song in its own right.’



The Lion King



Aladdin

FROM STAGE TO SCREEN

Rice also has to consider the unique demands of each project: 'A song from a West End show, for example, is more likely to be serious than a song from *The Lion King*,' he says. But ultimately, 'As a lyricist you have to come out with words that a character could plausibly say, and that's the case whether you're writing for an Argentinian dictator's wife or a warthog with wind problems,' he says.

Rice is referring, of course, to *Hakuna Matata*, one of his greatest hits. 'On the whole I find it easier to write funny songs than love songs,' he says. 'Love songs are quite tricky, firstly because everybody has expressed those same ideas 200 times before, and, secondly, because you can't use too many wacky words, like "forklift truck". In a funny song, on the other hand, you can get away with almost any word.'

Tim Rice was knighted by the Queen in 1994, which entitled him to be addressed as Sir

With lines such as, 'He found his aroma lacked a certain appeal/ He could clear the Savannah after every meal,' *Hakuna Matata* milks the potential.

Proud as Rice is of the result, he now tends to avoid listening to it – a policy he applies to all of his music. 'I'm sure there are people who do nothing but listen to their own stuff. But if I'm sitting in my drawing room, I'd much rather put on the Bee Gees,' he reveals. What if Rice

happens to hear his own music on the radio? 'Then I'll leave it on,' he admits. 'That's different, because you think of all the other people listening to it at the same time. I suppose it gives you a bit of a boost.'

www.thelionking.co.uk
www.aladdinthe musical.co.uk
www.eno.org

Cyndi Lauper



WRITE STUFF

JIM STEINMAN

The American lyricist is best known for *Bat Out of Hell*, the rock musical based on two albums written with Meat Loaf, Steinman's musical partner. It opened last year and later returned, after being named Best Musical at the 2017 Evening Standard Theatre Awards. www.batoutofhellmusical.com



Bat Out of Hell

DAN GILLESPIE

Gillespie, lead vocalist of British rock band The Feeling, wrote the lyrics to *Everybody's Talking About Jamie*, the hit musical inspired by a BBC Three documentary. Premiered at Sheffield's Crucible Theatre last year, it was named Best New Musical at the WhatsOnStage Awards. www.everybodystalkingaboutjamie.co.uk

CYNDI LAUPER

Lauper is the composer and lyricist behind the *Kinky Boots* the musical, which is inspired by the 2005 British film of the same name about a shoe factory owner and a drag queen. www.kinkybootsthemusical.co.uk

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The Sunday Telegraph



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THE ROLE OF RACE

Dreamgirls is the story of a black female singing group from Chicago. Marisha Wallace, Moya Angela and Karen Mav, who share the iconic role of Effie White, tell us about one of the West End's most vibrant shows

Words: Kohinoor Sahota

“IT MAKES THEATRE REALISTIC WHEN YOU SEE DIVERSITY”

Moya Angela

There is a powerful moment at the start of *Dreamgirls* when we see a dozen cast members line up at the front of the stage – singing, dancing and, significantly, all black. It wasn't long ago when having a mostly black West End cast was a rarity. Today, however, it is fitting that one of the most multicultural cities in the world has shows boasting black, Asian and ethnic-minority actors, and that producers aren't shying away from more diverse shows.

It's been proven that if you tell stories which represent a diverse society, audiences – from all backgrounds – will come. From a black Hermione played by Noma Dumezweni in *Harry Potter and the Cursed Child* to the story of the American Founding Fathers played by non-white actors in *Hamilton*, we are seeing encouragingly more instances of colour-blind casting.

One such show that celebrates diversity is *Dreamgirls*, produced by Sonia Friedman, directed by Casey Nicholaw and premiered at the Savoy Theatre in 2016. With a huge number of roles for black performers, it tells the story of a soul group from Chicago in the 1960s who achieve fame and fortune, but discover the harsh realities of showbusiness along the way.

We follow Curtis Taylor Jr, who is determined to make black artists household names and has to deal with the setbacks. Early on, we see how a song by one of his black singers is reworked by white singers and becomes a commercial success. One of the musical's most iconic characters is Effie White – the powerhouse voice, larger-than-life lead vocalist who Curtis later replaces, in an effort to appeal to the mass market, with the softer, slimmer Deena.

TAKING THE LEAD

Effie is the character that so many actresses want to play, and in this version of the production there are three actresses sharing the role: Marisha Wallace, Moya Angela and Karen Mav. 'The show has three women leading, which you have rarely seen in all the history of musical theatre. There are three strong, powerful women in the lead – black women rarely get these roles,' says Wallace.

Effie, who was first played by Jennifer Holliday on Broadway, has proven to be a lucky part – if an actress can nail the character, they have got the audience and critics' attention. Despite only coming in seventh place on the TV talent show *American Idol*,

Jennifer Hudson won an Oscar for Best Supporting Actress after playing her in the 2006 film version, while Amber Riley, from the TV show *Glee*, won a Laurence Olivier Award

for Best Actress in a Musical after starring in the London stage show in 2016. Amber's

acceptance speech is itself like something out of a musical: 'Every

Effie White was told that her talents would be better in the background – that she wasn't pretty enough, maybe not light enough and that she could never be a star. Every night, when she gets to sing, she

Opening on Broadway in 1981, *Dreamgirls* has taken 35 years to arrive in the West End



Karen Mav

Marisha Wallace

wins and my confidence soars a little bit more. I hope that anyone who sees a little bit of themselves in me, and sees me standing on the stage, is inspired.'

So just how do these actresses follow in these award-winning footsteps? Marisha reveals: 'I really want audiences to feel as though Effie could be their best friend and that she's a real person – 3D. I think I bring humanity to Effie.' Meanwhile, Karen says: 'I'm the baby Effie; I'm just going into showbusiness. A lot of the show reflects what I'm going through right now. As the youngest Effie, I feel that I can resonate with the character.'



Dreamgirls

A DREAM FOR DIVERSITY

Moya opens up about how *Dreamgirls* has been influential: 'Before this show hit Broadway, there were no examples of a black story that was glamorous and had successful characters. It displays black actors differently.'

'I think it's about time the West End had more diverse shows. This world is full of many different colours and it makes theatre more realistic when you see more diversity on stage.'

And as for the future, how can theatre become more multicultural? 'I would say it

should open the door to more diverse writers,' Moya says. 'Allow them to tell their own stories and make the characterisation more authentic. Diversity is beautiful, and diversity can also be successful.' It can, indeed.

www.dreamgirlswestend.com



Dreamgirls

★★ MULTICULTURAL MUSICALS ★★

THE LION KING

The pride of London, *The Lion King* is

based on the 1994 Disney film. Now in its 19th year at the Lyceum Theatre, it has cast members from Japan and six African languages spoken in the show. The Cub School and open auditions, held twice a year, encourage children from all backgrounds, even ones with no acting experience, to be a part of the show. One of the production's most famous former stars is Jade Ewen, who was 12 years old when she played Nala, and can now be seen as Jasmine in the Disney production of *Aladdin*.
www.thelionking.co.uk

HAMILTON: AN AMERICAN MUSICAL

Few shows make headline news. *Hamilton*, however, did when its Broadway cast decided to read out a message to vice-president Mike Pence, who was sitting in the audience: 'We truly thank you for sharing this show – this wonderful American story told by a diverse group of men and women of different colours, creeds and orientations.' President Trump was outraged, which only helped to cement its status as a historically important show. Telling the story of America's Founding Fathers, it has historical figures played by non-white actors.
www.hamiltonmusical.com

THRILLER

Thriller became an unexpected success. Opening in 2009, it is the longest-running show at the Lyric Theatre. Celebrating the megastar Michael Jackson, it features talented performers channelling the spirit of the artist with non-stop dancing and singing. Hit songs range from *I Want You Back* to *Billie Jean*. One of the most unexpected things happened later that year: the tragic death of Jackson. The theatre then took on a symbolic importance for the public, becoming an unofficial memorial place for bouquets of flowers and a place for Jackson fans to congregate and sing.
www.thrillerlive.com



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DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

As *42nd Street* wows audiences with its big-number dance sequences, choreographer Randy Skinner reveals how he has made it a showstopper

Words: Jo Caird



London's West End is full of spectacular dance shows, but nothing quite compares with the sight and sound of more than 50 beautifully bejewelled dancers tapping their way across the biggest stage in the

capital. *42nd Street*, now in its second year at the Theatre Royal Drury Lane, gives audiences that jaw-dropping experience again and again with every number as it tells the story of Peggy Sawyer, a young dancer who is unexpectedly cast as the

star in a new Broadway show. Lulu has recently taken over the role from Sheena Easton.

'You're just taken into another world because not everybody can get up there and do that,' says the show's choreographer Randy Skinner. 'Dancing is powerful.'



42nd Street

MOVING UP

Skinner should know all about the power of dance, having started dancing at the tender age of just four years old, when his parents, showing an openness unusual for the American Midwest in the 1950s,

signed him up for classes along with a girl who lived nearby. While his little friend dropped out, Skinner continued dancing throughout his childhood and teenage years, going on to perform in and choreograph musicals at university.

“YOU HAVE TO REINVENT SHOWS FOR NEW GENERATIONS”

His big break came in 1980 when legendary director and choreographer Gower Champion hired Skinner as dance assistant on the original 1980 Broadway production of *42nd Street*, an adaptation of the 1930s Hollywood musical of the same name. Skinner hadn't considered a career as a choreographer – ‘My mindset was totally about performing and when I arrived in New York, that's all I really thought about’ – but this was too good an opportunity to pass up.

The show was a hit, running for nine years on Broadway and leading to productions in San Francisco, London and Sydney. With Champion having tragically passed away on the opening night of the Broadway run, Skinner says, ‘A lot of my life became about putting up *42nd Street!*’ This may not have been his original plan, but the choreographer has never looked back, today combining directing, choreography and teaching alongside occasional performing.

When it came to reviving the show on Broadway in 2001, Skinner was the obvious choice of choreographer – and he had bold ideas about what to do. ‘When you do a revival of a famous show, you must honour the past, but you have to look at it through new eyes,’ he says. ‘You have to keep reinventing shows for new generations – what was big in 1980 would not seem so big 20 years later.’



42nd Street

BROADWAY TO THE WEST END

It's this version, inspired by Champion's interpretation but also looking further back to the film, that garnered five-star reviews when it opened in London in April 2017. Skinner and director Mark Bramble (who co-wrote the show) put back some of the film's raciness that had been lost in the 1980 version, added a more spectacular finale and introduced some new song and dance numbers.

Supportive producers meant Skinner was able to be really creative and choreograph on a scale that's rare to see these days. This was particularly the case with songs that are part of *Pretty Lady*, *42nd Street's* show-within-a-show, Skinner explains. 'You can use your imagination, go wild and put out a good old dance number, and certainly that's what we do with *With Plenty of Money and You*, with Peggy, all the men and the two grand pianos.'

Making a success of a show such as *42nd Street* isn't just about spectacle. The audience needs to be dazzled by the tapping, but it also needs to empathise when injured star Dorothy Brock is unable to go

on and Peggy must step in to save *Pretty Lady*. Skinner says that he works hard to create a narrative for each scene and the production as a whole, so that the audience 'keeps discovering new things'.

The score is his starting point regarding the steps for each number. 'I

immerse myself in the song itself and the music, then I start to see things, especially patterns,' he says. With tap

there's the aural element

to consider, too. Solos, duets and small group numbers allow for more intricate rhythms, while large numbers of dancers mean 'painting in broader strokes to make the sound really clear'.

Dancing has always been a passion for Skinner but bringing shows like *42nd Street* to life has wider-reaching implications, born of his love for old-fashioned movie musicals. He recalls working with stars from the Golden Age of Hollywood, such as Ginger Rogers and Ann Miller. 'They all knew I had an affinity for the old movies,' he says. 'They all said, "You have to carry on our tradition. It's our art form, the American musical."' www.42ndstreetmusical.co.uk

The show opens with the curtain rising slightly to reveal 40 pairs of feet, tap-dancing in unison

DANCE VENUES

THE PEACOCK

The Peacock hosts longer runs of commercial shows, including tap spectaculars, Argentinian tango and the much-loved annual family show, *The Snowman*.

www.peacocktheatre.com

THE PLACE

This theatre in Bloomsbury presents innovative dance performances in an intimate setting, with many shows staged by students from the London Contemporary Dance School. Emerging artists are featured, and there's the annual Resolution Festival.

www.theplace.org.uk

ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

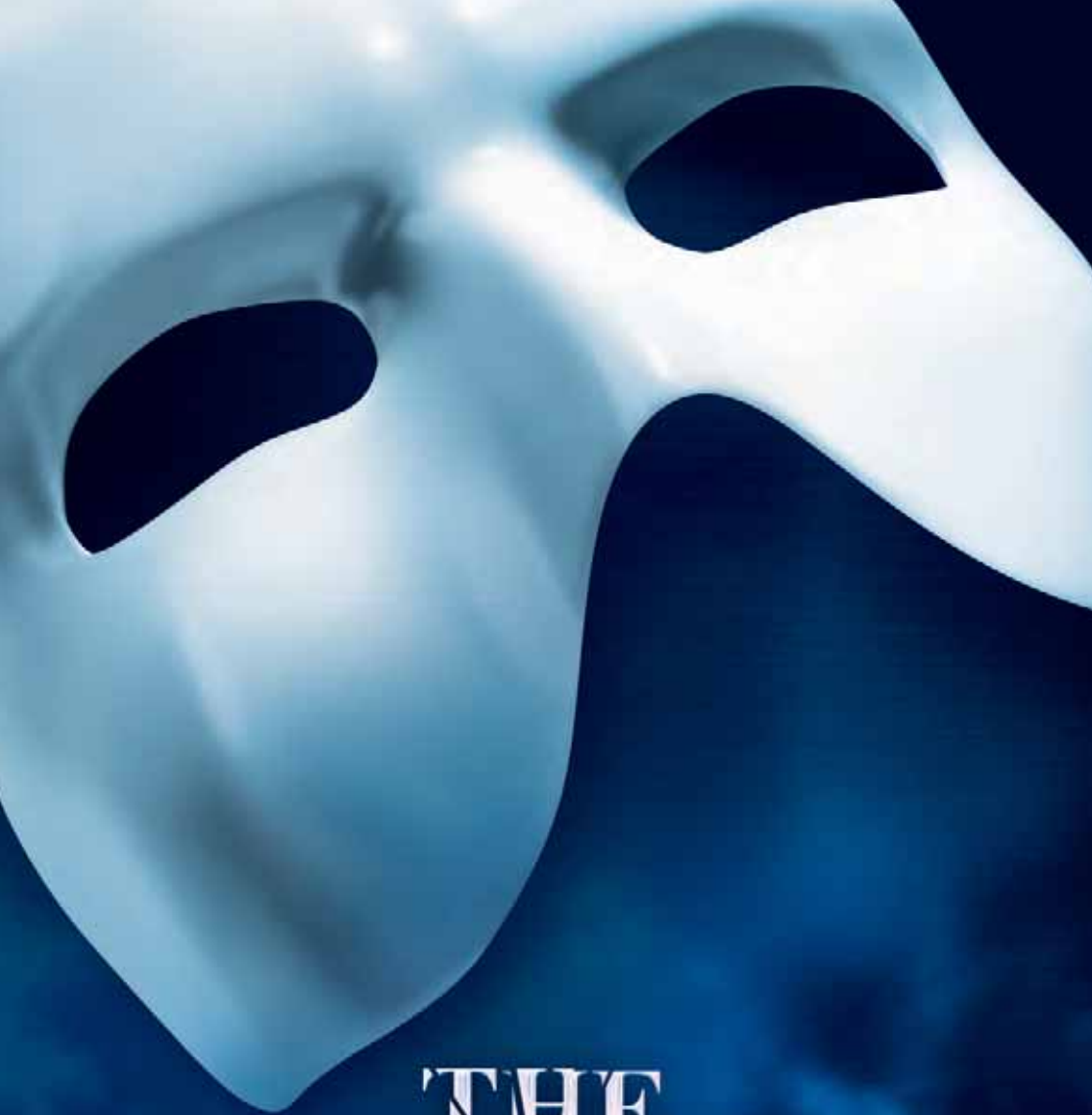
The Royal Ballet presents 19th-century classics as well as works by its founder choreographer Frederick Ashton and new shows from leading choreographers Wayne McGregor and Christopher Wheeldon.

www.roh.org.uk

SADLER'S WELLS

Sadler's Wells is one of the capital's oldest specialist dance theatres, dating back to the 1930s. Home to resident companies, New Adventures and hip-hop dance troupe ZooNation, and attracting global artists, it presents contemporary dance.

www.sadlerswells.com



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TELLING THE TRUTH

How do you take a true story, about a struggling factory in Northampton that saves itself by producing boots for drag queens, and turn it into a musical? Dominic Shaw, UK Associate Director of *Kinky Boots*, tells us
Words: Stuart Render





“BY TAKING THIS TRUE STORY, I FEEL WE’VE DONE NORTHAMPTON PROUD”



Adapting a true story for the West End stage presents a director with a unique set of challenges. But when that story is *Kinky Boots*, and there’s a major Hollywood film and a multi award-winning Broadway show already in place, the process suddenly gets very interesting indeed.

A struggling shoe factory based in Northampton, a town 70 miles north of London, found cheap, fashionable imports were flooding the market. Looking for ways to save the business, the managing director of WJ Brooks Ltd was forced to make redundancies. When the company received a phone call from a woman from a fetish shoe shop in Folkestone, Kent, asking if they could supply her with women’s shoes in men’s sizes, it was a turning point.

A BBC documentary about the factory was spotted by film

producers, which resulted in the 2005 film *Kinky Boots* being released. The story went on to become a musical of the same name. It opened in Chicago in 2012, and six months later was on Broadway. The show, which became a critical success, was written by American actor, playwright and Tony Award-winner Harvey Fierstein, directed by Jerry Mitchell, and features music and lyrics specially written by Cyndi Lauper.

LONDON CALLING

In September 2015, the show opened at the Adelphi Theatre in London’s West End under the watchful eye of UK Associate Director Dominic Shaw. From the start he had one very clear mission: ‘Jerry Mitchell had

entrusted his show to me,’ he says, ‘it was quite an honour. Here’s an award-winning director basically saying:

“Here’s my show, look after it.” In a way, that made everything easier for me. All I had to do, all I’m still doing, is maintaining the vision and keeping his spirit in his absence. I’m his eyes and ears.’

As UK Associate Director, Shaw is responsible for making sure the West End version stays true to Mitchell’s vision.

He leads rehearsals, gives the actors notes when required, and very much keeps the show on track. But there’s one area where he has definitely made his own mark. ‘Jerry had done a magnificent job with the show,’ Shaw says. ‘He’d used the 2005 film as his source material.

The original factory sold boots to drag queens, with its brand name Divine Footwear

'The stage version is very much based on the film. But there's always been one little challenge – there are very few American actors who can master a Northampton accent. For the West End production, we've been able to bring an authenticity to the show that just wasn't there in the American version.

'Part of my job is to audition new cast members. We're now going into our fourth company. I use a specialist dialect coach to bring our cast as near as we can to a true Northampton accent. The original US version also contained a handful of lines that were perhaps more Dickensian than contemporary British. I've changed those. I've spoken with former factory employees who've seen the show and they love it!

Shaw explains that being able to visit the factory with Jerry

“THE REAL STORY IS A SAD ONE, SO WE INTRODUCED A NEW ENDING”

Mitchell proved to be invaluable. 'Meeting the people proved to be a wonderful source of inspiration and material for both Jerry and myself,' he says. 'What you see on the stage, from the factory frontage to the workers on the factory floor, are based on the real thing. It's rare to have that opportunity.'

THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS

Adapting a true story for the stage inevitably means taking a few liberties. Shaw is candid: 'The real story of the factory is a sad one,' he says. 'In the end, even by diversifying, the company closed. That's not a great ending for a musical, so we introduced a new, upbeat ending that takes the action to the catwalk in Milan. It's

a glitzy and uplifting finale to a fun, fabulous and entertaining show. We also simplified parts of the story but made sure that, at its heart, a message of accepting change remains.'

Shaw's next challenge is taking *Kinky Boots* on tour, while the West End production continues at the Adelphi Theatre. 'Jerry Mitchell is leaving the show to me. I guess I've shown him his show is in safe hands. There are some changes, as there always are when you take a show on tour. What's great is that we open in Northampton. I just know the audiences will love the show. By taking a true story and adapting it for the West End stage, I feel we've done Northampton proud.' www.kinkybootsthemusical.co.uk



EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE

Inspired by the 2011 BBC documentary *Jamie: Drag Queen at 16*, *Everybody's Talking About Jamie* is an award-winning musical that focuses on the life of a 16-year-old boy living on a Sheffield council estate.

★★ THE REAL THINGS ★★

Jamie doesn't fit in: he wants to grow up to be a drag queen and wear a dress to the school prom. Premiering in Sheffield last year, it has now been running at the Apollo Theatre to critical acclaim. Watch as Jamie, supported by his loving mum and surrounded by his friends, beats the bullies and steps out of the darkness and into the spotlight. With songs by lead singer-songwriter of The Feeling, Dan Gillespie Sells, this fabulous feel-good musical sensation of a show has been wowing audiences. www.everybodys.talkingaboutjamie.co.uk

TINA: THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL

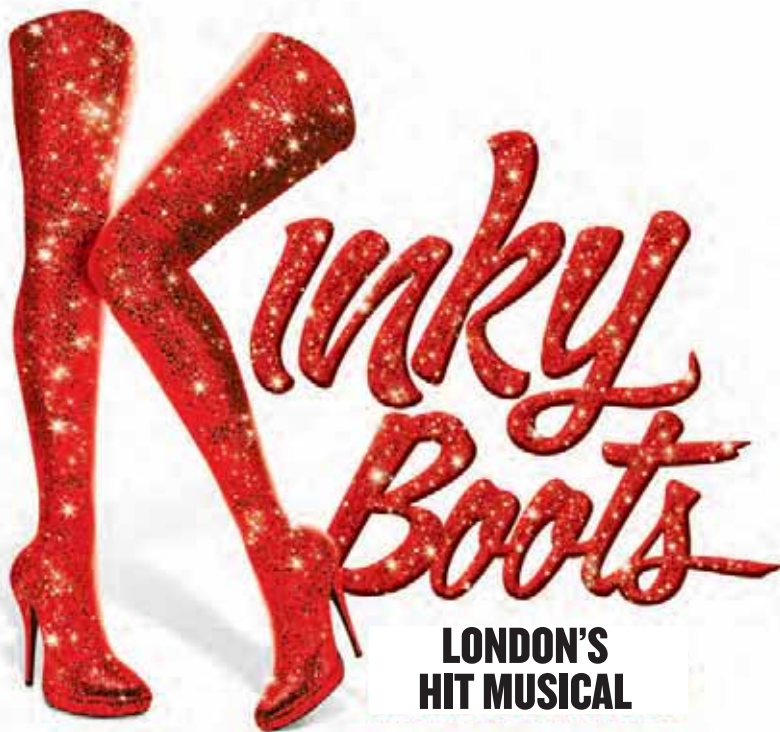
'London is a place that means so much to me – telling my full story in the city I love feels like an important chapter,' says Tina Turner as *Tina: The Tina Turner Musical* runs at the Aldwych Theatre. See how the farm girl became an icon, and learn about her troubled romance with Ike Turner. www.tinathemusical.com



EVERYBODY'S TALKING ABOUT JAMIE © JOHAN PERSSON; TINA: THE TINA TURNER MUSICAL © CRAIG SUGDEN

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The Hollywood News



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ALL THE COUNTRY'S A STAGE

Britain is home to world-famous festivals and venues, from the Edinburgh Fringe Festival to the cliff-edge Minack Theatre. We take a look at the biggest shows across the country

Words: Flora Neighbour and Kohinoor Sahota

REGIONAL THEATRES BRISTOL OLD VIC, BRISTOL

The Bristol Old Vic is the longest continuously running theatre in the UK, and, after a £12.5 million redevelopment project,

the theatre is on to the second phase of works that will transform the front of house, studio theatre and public spaces. Watch *A Monster Calls* (31 May-16 Jun), the story of 13-year-old Conor and his sick

mum, and what happens when something at his window wakes him. *Three Sisters* (12-16 Jun) is a new take on Chekhov's classic, taking the audience on a philosophical journey. www.bristololdvic.org.uk

BURTON TAYLOR STUDIO, OXFORD

This intimate space is something rather special. Richard Burton received his first standing ovation here while he was studying at Oxford University. His English tutor made him promise that he would return to the theatre – and he did. In 1966, he performed with his wife Elizabeth Taylor, then the highest-paid star in the world, in *Doctor Faustus*. It was in the 1980s that the name of the theatre changed to honour the pair. Watch ballet LORENT dancers perform *Rumpelstiltskin* (1-2 Jun) and Sebastian Faulks' *Birdsong* (16-21 Jul). www.oxfordplayhouse.com

“THE BEATLES CAME TO THE LIVERPOOL EMPIRE EARLY IN THEIR CAREER”

GRAND OPERA HOUSE, BELFAST

Designed by theatrical architect Frank Matcham, who also built the London Coliseum and London Palladium, this theatre presents drama and concerts. But it is also a majestic venue for opera and dance, including *The Kite Runner* (18-23 Jun) and *The Wizard of Oz* (26-29 Jul). Dating back to 1895, the theatre's interior boasts plush red curtains and seats – visitors will feel like they are in the midst of a magical evening. www.goh.co.uk

EMPIRE THEATRE, LIVERPOOL

Two theatres have been on this site in London Road in Liverpool. The current theatre has the largest two-tier auditorium in Britain, and seats 2,348 people. Created in 1925, The Beatles performed here early in their career. The theatre offers a mix of popular shows, including *ABBA Mania* (1 Jul), *Shrek the Musical* (12-24 Jun) and comedy via Jason Manford's *Muddle Class* (15 Jul). www.liverpooltheatres.com

★★ EDINBURGH FRINGE FESTIVAL ★★

There's one special time of the year when it feels like the whole world is in Edinburgh, and that is during the Edinburgh Fringe Festival (3-27 Aug). The world's biggest arts festival, with 50,000 performers, 3,000 shows and 300 venues, is now in its 71st year.

In an effort to enrich cultural life after World War II, the story dates back to 1947 when eight theatre groups turned up – uninvited – to perform at the Edinburgh International Festival. These origins define the welcoming atmosphere of the festival, which sees professionals perform alongside newcomers.

As you walk around the city, you'll bump into groups trying to persuade you to

watch their show and street performers who are ready to entertain you. Whether it's music, dance or comedy – in venues ranging from rooms above pubs to big auditoriums – this festival makes the arts accessible to everyone – many performances are free.

Edinburgh is worth visiting in its own right; this festival makes it even more appealing. www.edfringe.com





Minack Theatre

THE LOWRY, MANCHESTER

Following a Europe-wide competition, the British architect Michael Wilford designed The Lowry in Salford. Completed in 2000, it was designed to resemble a ship with portholes and windows. The venue includes an exhibition space as well as a theatre. *War Horse* (13-30 Jun) gallops to The Lowry as part of its tour following eight record-breaking years in London's West End. Based on the novel by Michael Morpurgo, this moving drama, filled with stirring music, tells the story of Joey, a beloved horse, during World War I. www.thelowry.com

MINACK THEATRE, PENZANCE

Eighty years ago, when Rowena Cade wanted to perform *The Tempest*, she couldn't have created a more fitting venue than the Minack Theatre. With its cliff-side location, it feels like you are on the edge of the earth as the stars come out and the waves lap. Enjoy alfresco plays, including Shakespeare. This year, World War I's trenches are reimaged on the cliffs in *Journey's End* (18-22 Jun); you can also catch Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* (25-29 Jun). www.minack.com

ROYAL EXCHANGE, MANCHESTER

This Grade II-listed building is the latest theatre in the round in the country – which means that every audience member is able to see the performance. Established in 1979, the venue has welcomed many famous faces, from Hugh Grant to Kate Winslet. Classic stories, including Samuel Beckett's *Happy Days* (25 May-23 Jun) and Maxine Peake's *Queens of the Coal Age* (28 Jun-28 Jul), are being staged. www.royalexchange.co.uk

THEATRE ROYAL, BATH

Built in 1805, the Theatre Royal, Bath is one of the oldest theatres in Britain. It survived extensive bombing during World War II, and today is a beautiful building complete with chandeliers and an ornate ceiling. Catch Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (4-9 Jun), or watch the family-friendly show starring the grumpy, ginger cat *Sourpuss* (16 Jun). www.theatreroyal.org.uk



Thoroughly Modern Millie

THEATRE ROYAL, NEWCASTLE

Sir Ian McKellen described the Theatre Royal as his favourite venue in the world. More than 175 years old, it was granted a royal licence by King George II in 1788. Excelling in concerts and comedy, you can see shows from *Gangsta Granny* (30 May-2 Jun) to *Stomp* (13-18 Aug). www.theatreroyal.co.uk

TOURING SHOWS

AN OFFICER AND A GENTLEMAN

One of the all-time most romantic movies is brought to life onstage. The 1983 film, which starred Richard Gere and Debra Winger, tells the story of Zack Mayo as he trains to become a US Navy pilot and falls for one of the local girls. Laced with '80s anthems, from *Girls Just Want to Have Fun* to *Heart of Glass*, this is a feel-good show. Its world premiere took place at Leicester's Curve Theatre, which celebrated its 10th birthday this year.

To 15 Sep. www.officerandgentlemanmusical.com

THE BAND

If you were to guess what the fastest-selling musical of all time is, you would probably think of a show by the likes of Cameron Mackintosh or Andrew Lloyd Webber. But it's

The Band, which tells the story of one of the UK's most successful UK boybands, Take That. Formed in Manchester, the group went on to have 12 number ones, sell-out tours, a break-up and a reunion. Songs include *Relight My Fire* and *Back for Good*. To Mar 2019. www.thebandmusical.com

CALENDAR GIRLS

When a group of women decided to pose nude for a Women's Institute charity calendar, they probably never imagined that it would inspire a film and a hit musical. The true story sees women take on the challenge in order to raise money in memory of one of their friends who died of cancer. Gary Barlow and Tim Firth, who grew up in the same village, worked on the music and lyrics. The duo turned this story into a heart-warming stage comedy starring TV presenter Fern Britton. *30 Oct-20 Apr 2019.* www.calendargirlsthemusical.com

JERSEY BOYS

Can't Take My Eyes Off You, December 1963 (Oh What a Night) and Making My Way Back to You are just some of the hit songs that make up the musical, *Jersey Boys*. Based on the true story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons, who became global superstars in the 1960s, this musical opened in London in 2008 and ran until last year. It's since been on tour. *To 30 Mar 2019.* www.jerseyboysuktour.com



KISS ME, KATE

Cole Porter's musical *Kiss Me, Kate* is coming to Leeds, Edinburgh, London and even Ravenna, Italy. '*Kiss Me, Kate* is a real treat of a show, boasting what is probably Cole Porter's richest, most accomplished theatrical score. It's serious fun!' says Richard Mantle, general director of Opera North. This play within a play follows a company putting on a musical of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Hit numbers include *Too Darn Hot*. *23 May-7 Jul.* www.kissmekatthemusical.co.uk

LES MISÉRABLES

'This latest version comes hot from its recent Broadway triumph, and is even more spectacular than the original. I'm very proud that this extraordinary Boublil and Schönberg musical remains as fresh, thrilling and exciting as ever,' says producer Cameron Mackintosh about his musical, *Les Misérables*. The show is based on Victor Hugo's novel about the French Revolution. Songs include *I Dreamed a Dream*. *3 Nov-30 Mar.* www.lesmis.com

SHAKESPEARE'S ROSE THEATRE



Stratford-upon-Avon may be the birthplace of William Shakespeare, but this year York is also the place to visit if you want to pay homage to The Bard. The theatre is inspired by London's Rose Theatre – the first to stage a Shakespeare play.

As Europe's first pop-up Shakespearean theatre, this venue is based on the historic design of the 16th-century theatre. The large space has capacity for 900 people across three tiered balconies and an open courtyard – and no seat is more than 15m away from the action.

Shows include *Romeo and Juliet* and *Richard III*, directed by Lindsay Posner, or book tickets to Olivier Award-winning director Damian Cruden's *Macbeth* or *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. The fun continues in the free-to-enter Shakespearean village with jesters and musicians playing medieval tunes. *25 Jun-2 Sep.* www.shakespearesrosetheatre.com

MAMMA MIA!

The ultimate in feel-good theatre, *MAMMA MIA!* has played to more than 60 million people around the world. Set on an idyllic Greek island, it tells the story of a young woman who is determined to discover the identity of her father before she gets married, resulting in three men from her mother's past returning after 20 years. Chaos follows alongside singing and dancing to ABBA hits. *31 May-14 Jul.* www.mamma-mia.com

MISS SAIGON

Cameron Mackintosh's *Miss Saigon* is one of his most successful musicals. Set during the last days of the Vietnam War, it follows 17-year-old Kim who is forced to work in a bar in Saigon and falls in love with an American GI. With music by Claude-Michel Schönberg and lyrics by Richard Maltby Jr and Alain Boublil, it is a tragic story of lost love. As this production received standing ovations each night on Broadway, you know you are in for a treat. *To 17 Nov.* www.miss-saigon.com

ROCK OF AGES

Do you love rock 'n' roll? Well, put another dime in the jukebox, baby, and book your tickets to see this musical that features more than 25 rock anthems, from *We Built This City* to *The Final Countdown*. Follow Sherrie Christian – as an aspiring singer – who's hopped off a bus from the Midwest of America in Los Angeles, where her dreams are as big as the hair. *20 Sep-27 Jul.* www.rockofagesmusical.co.uk

Wicked has been performed in more than 100 cities and in 15 countries around the world

THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE

Flapper dresses, bobs and jazz music. This musical, which is based on the 1967 Academy Award-winning musical, starring Julie Andrews, follows Kansas girl Millie Dilmount as

she is determined to make it big in New York City. Millie is played by soap star Hayley Tamaddon, who has starred in *Emmerdale* and *Coronation Street*. Packed with dance routines, which are inspired by Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers, this show delivers family-friendly fun. *To 5 Aug.* www.modern-millie.co.uk



Wicked The Musical

★★ WICKED ★★

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz, written in 1900 by L Frank Baum, is a classic story that's loved across the world and by different generations – especially after the 1939 film, starring Judy Garland, made it a family favourite.

In 2006, *Wicked: The Untold Story of the Witches of Oz* – an ingenious reimagining of the stories and characters, from the perspective of the Witches of the Land of Oz – opened in the West End.

The alternative version follows two friends, Elphaba (*Wicked Witch of the West*) and

Galinda (*Glinda the Good Witch*), who share an unlikely but profound friendship.

The London production, residing at the Apollo Victoria Theatre, has become one of the longest-running West End musicals of all time. It celebrated its 10th anniversary in September 2016 and has been seen by almost six million people.

Due to its massive success, *Wicked The Musical* will be touring the UK this year, stopping off in Edinburgh, Leeds, Dublin and Sunderland. *To 5 Jan 2019.* www.wicked-themusical.co.uk



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London & Partners is the official promotional body for London, and the official partner of all West End theatres. Its site offers up to 60 per cent off ticket prices. The site shines a spotlight on shows big and small, helping you find deals at a good price. www.theatre.london

MATINEE SHOWS

Matinees occur during the afternoon, normally on a Wednesday and Saturday. Tickets for these, along with evening performances during the week, are often cheaper than those at the weekend.



CONCIERGES

If you're staying at a hotel, the concierge is your key to the city. Many of them are members of The Society of the Golden Keys, and have long-standing relationships with box-office managers. After tickets for a popular show? They can get you the best seats in the house.

STAR MEMBERS

Most theatre tickets are bought with no problems. Unfortunately, things go wrong occasionally. Follow STAR's (Society of Ticket Agents and Retailers) advice: identify the face value and booking fees and check the terms and conditions, including transferability, cancellation and viewing restrictions. STAR represents most UK ticket agents and box offices. www.star.org.uk

OFFICIAL LONDON THEATRE

No one should miss out on enjoying London's West End. If you need captioned, signed or audio-described performances, visit Official London Theatre for comprehensive listings. www.officallondontheatre.co.uk

VISITBRITAIN SHOP

For more than 50 years, the official shop of the British Tourist Authority has been ensuring tourists have great holidays. Save money when you book your tickets online, and collect them from Leicester Square's Ticket Information Booth. www.visitbritainshop.com

STANDBY AND RETURNS

If the show you want to see has sold out, don't panic. Go to the theatre's box office, as many theatres will get tickets returned and release them each morning. Get there early and be prepared to queue!

More than 15 million people attend West End theatres each year

KIDS WEEK

Don't let the name mislead you, as Kids Week has now extended throughout August. The annual event sees more than 30 West End shows offering free tickets to anyone under 16 for every full-paying adult. www.officiallondontheatre.co.uk

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WE BOTH REACHED **FOR**
THE GUN
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