

## **THE AMERICAN MUSICAL: A HANDBOOK FOR TEACHERS**

### **WELCOME**

We look forward to welcoming you and your students for the presentation of “The American Musical” at the Sheldon Concert Hall. We hope that the perfect acoustics and intimacy of the hall will make this an important and memorable experience.

### **ARRIVAL AND PARKING**

We urge you to arrive at the Sheldon Concert Hall half an hour before the start of “The American Musical.” This will allow you to be seated in time for the performance and will allow a little extra time in case you encounter traffic on the way. Seating will be on a first come-first serve basis as schools arrive. To accommodate school schedules, we will start promptly at show time.

The Sheldon is located at 3648 Washington Boulevard, just around the corner from the Fox Theatre. A map is enclosed. Parking for school buses will be available on Washington near The Sheldon. Please enter by the steps leading up to the concert hall front door. If you have a disabled student, please call The Sheldon (314-533-9900) to make arrangement to use our new street level entrance and elevator to the concert hall.

### **CONCERT MANNERS**

Please coach your students on good concert manners before coming to the Sheldon Concert Hall. Good audiences love to listen to music and they love to show their appreciation with applause, usually at the end of an entire piece and occasionally after a good solo by one of the musicians. Urge your students to take in and enjoy the great music being performed.

Food and drink are prohibited in the Sheldon Concert Hall.

Any device (telephone, alarm watch or toy) that makes noise is a distraction for both the musicians on stage and your fellow audience members and should not be brought into the hall.

### **A Short History of the American Musical**

The musical is America's most popular form of live theater, combining drama, music and dance with dazzling spectacle. Of course, drama and music have been performed together throughout history. In the 18th century, Europeans enjoyed opera, operetta and ballad operas, which incorporated popular songs of the day into a comic or serious play. In the 19th century, European and American theaters performed melodramas, plays with live background music that emphasized the emotions of the characters, much like today's film scores.

Most historians call *The Black Crook*, produced in 1866, the first American musical. A French ballet troupe was scheduled to appear at the Academy of Music in New York City in that year, but the Academy theater building burned down. In desperation, the producers approached the manager of another New York theater, Niblo's Garden. Niblo's was rehearsing a new melodrama set in the Alps, called *The Black Crook*. So the ballet producers persuaded Niblo's manager to incorporate a series of ballets into the drama. The beautiful French dancers, the dramatic story, elaborate Alpine settings and costumes all combined to make a hit, and the American musical was born.

The first full-length musical written and performed by African-Americans, *In Dahomey*, starring the comedy team of Bert Williams and George Walker, opened in 1903. By World War I, African-American influenced music and dance forms such as ragtime, jazz and tap dance, were incorporated into many musical theater productions composed by both blacks and whites.

Two distinct styles of musical theater began to emerge in the early years of the 20th century, and both have continued up to the present. One, the small-cast, contemporary show with a jazz-influenced score, had its first big hit with *Very Good Eddie*, a comedy of mistaken identities among honeymooners with a score by Jerome Kern that opened at the Princess Theatre in 1915. The other style, showing a European, operatic influence, can be seen in shows like *Babes in Toyland* (1903) with music by Victor Herbert, *The Firefly* (1912) with music by Rudolf Friml, and *The Student Prince* (1924) composed by Sigmund Romberg.

Although the musicals of the twenties had some sort of plot and characters, they were usually flimsy, and little attempt was made to integrate the music and dance into the drama. When *Showboat*, by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II, premiered in 1927, it was the first Broadway show to combine American forms of music with a serious plot and well developed characters. Though *Showboat* was a long-running hit, this new integration of all the elements did not become a trend until 1943, when Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II's *Oklahoma* opened on Broadway. Like *Showboat*, *Oklahoma* was an adaptation of a serious novel with well developed characters. *Oklahoma*'s music and choreographer Agnes DeMille's dances advance the plot and reveal the characters' inner thoughts.

Small-cast, contemporary shows have continued in popularity, including the long-running favorite *The Fantastiks* (1960), Stephen Sondheim's *Company* (1970) and the recently revived *You're A Good Man, Charlie Brown* (1967). At the same time, Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Phantom of the Opera* (1986) continued the tradition of the large-scale, operatic spectacle. Shows like *Starlight Express* (1984) and *Miss Saigon* (1991) blend contemporary music with spectacular technical feats like rollerblading ramps and lifesize helicopters.

Broadway was slow to join the rock music bandwagon. Although *Bye, Bye Birdie* (1960) incorporated some rock and roll music to tell its story, *Hair* (1968) was the first true rock musical to achieve mainstream recognition. *Jesus Christ Superstar* followed in 1971 and *Grease* in 1972. Today, *Rent* (1996) is the long-running exemplar of a contemporary rock sound on Broadway.

## Glossary

**Adaptation:** A different version, created for a new purpose. For example, a novel's characters and plot can be *adapted* to create a musical theater production.

**Ballad Opera:** A form of 18<sup>th</sup> century musical drama that used popular songs of the day, sometimes with new lyrics, in the presentation of a play.

**Book:** The script and lyrics of a musical.

**Characters:** The people in a play. They are defined by the stage directions, by their words, actions, and appearance, and by what others in the play say about them.

**Choreographer:** The person responsible for creating the dances.

**Director (or Stage Director):** The person with primary responsibility for interpreting the script, rehearsing the actors, and coordinating all of the elements of a play or musical.

**Lyrics:** The words of a song.

**Melodrama:** A form of drama popular in the 19<sup>th</sup> century that tells a serious story pitting good against evil, in which justice triumphs in the end. Melodrama used live music to create mood and underscore the emotions of the characters.

**Musical Director:** The person responsible for training the singers and conducting the orchestra.

**Musical Review:** Performance of a series of songs and dances, sometimes loosely tied together with a plot or theme.

**Opera, Operetta:** An opera is a drama set to music for singers and instrumentalists. Opera began in Italy in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. An operetta is a shorter, more comic form of opera.

**Plot:** The story of a play or musical. Usually presents a conflict: a problem, question or series of obstacles that the protagonist must overcome.

**Protagonist:** The main character in a play or musical.

**Score:** The music written for a musical.

**Spectacle:** All the visual elements of a play including costumes, makeup, settings and props.

**Theme:** The ideas in a play or musical, the view of human nature that the play presents.

## LIST OF MUSICALS AND COMPOSERS AND LYRICISTS

GYPSY	Jule Styne and Stephen Sondheim
SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE	Stephen Sondheim
WEST SIDE STORY	Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim
THE LION KING	Elton John and Tim Rice
CHICAGO	John Kander and Fred Ebb
GREASE	Jim Jacobs and Warren Casey
WICKED	Stephen Schwartz
PHANTOM OF THE OPERA	Andrew Lloyd Webber
ANNIE GET YOUR GUN	Irving Berlin
HAIRSPRAY	Marc Shaiman
GUYS AND DOLLS	Frank Loesser
A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM	Stephen Sondheim
OKLAHOMA!	Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II
INTO THE WOODS	Stephen Sondheim
RENT	Jonathan Larson

## MUSIC YOU'LL HEAR IN OUR PROGRAM

<b>Song</b>	<b>Musical</b>
Overture	GYPSY
"Putting It Together"	SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE
"Cool"	WEST SIDE STORY
"One Hand, One Heart"	WEST SIDE STORY
"America"	WEST SIDE STORY
"Circle of Life"	THE LION KING
" And All That Jazz"	CHICAGO
"What is this Feeling"	WICKED
"Summer Nights"	GREASE
"The Music of the Night"	PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
"Anything You Can Do"	ANNIE GET YOUR GUN
"You Can't Stop the Beat"	HAIRSPRAY
"Sit Down Your Rockin' the Boat"	GUYS AND DOLLS
"Lovely"	A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM
"Oh, What a Beautiful Morning"	OKLAHOMA!
"Listen"	DREAMGIRLS
"Season of Love"	RENT

**MATCH THE COMPOSER TO THE MUSICAL** (from the list below)

Stephen Sondheim \_\_\_\_\_

Richard Rodgers \_\_\_\_\_

Leonard Bernstein \_\_\_\_\_

Cole Porter \_\_\_\_\_

Meredith Willson \_\_\_\_\_

Elton John \_\_\_\_\_

Jonathon Larson \_\_\_\_\_

RENT

OKLAHOMA

ANYTHING GOES

WEST SIDE STORY

SUNDAY IN THE PARK WITH GEORGE

THE MUSIC MAN

THE LION KING

**TRUE OR FALSE** (circle the correct answer)

T or F WEST SIDE STORY is an adaptation of a classical Greek play.

T or F Tony and Maria are the modern-day names for Romeo and Juliet.

T or F When words are set to music and they are sung, they become lyrics.

T or F The book of a musical is the score used by the pianist.

T or F Dance is never used in a musical.

T or F The style and look of a musical are the responsibility of the director.

T or F The choreographer creates dances.

T or F The musical is a uniquely European art form.

## The Performers

**Rochelle Walker**, also known as Coco Soul, had been performing for over 10 years, putting on shows at Jazz at the Bistro, The Pageant, and Blueberry Hill, as well as performing at the St. Louis Jazz Festival. She won 2<sup>nd</sup> place in the Midwest Grammy Competition which placed her in the Mid-South Grammy Competition in Memphis, Tennessee. Rochelle's theatrical beginnings were with the St. Louis Black Rep performing *Tell Me Something Good*, *Caroline or Change*, and *Dreamgirls*. Recently she played Powerwoman in *Menopause the Musical* and Joanie in *The Full Monty*. Rochelle has been Music Director and Choral Instructor at Cardinal Ritter College Prep High School and is the founder of Café Soul which is a live open mic held at various venues throughout the city of St. Louis.

**Zoe Vonder Haar** toured in the First International Company of *A Chorus Line* for 2 ½ years then returned to her home town of St. Louis. She has since performed in over 75 shows in her career. A resident actress at Stages St. Louis, Zoe also performs regularly at The Muny and The Repertory Theatre of St. Louis. She received a Kevin Kline Award for Outstanding Actress in a Musical for *Hello Dolly!* and was nominated again in 2006 for her role as Ms. Pennywise in *Urinetown, the Musical*. Zoe shares her passion for musical theater by teaching dance and choreographing at 9 area schools.

**Darin Wood** is a St. Louis native who has since lived in Boston, Massachusetts; New York City, New York; Vail, Colorado; Orange County, California and Hollywood. He spent several years in L.A. as a stand-up comedian performing regularly at The Hollywood Improv and other comedy clubs in Southern California. In 2004, he created and starred in The Darin Wood Comedy Hour & ½, a variety show in Hollywood that ran for over two years featuring dancers, comedians and live music. Throughout his career, he has worked as a professional singer, dancer, actor, stand-up comedian, singing impressionist, videographer and emcee. Wood has performed in dozens of theaters throughout the U.S. including numerous musicals at the 12,000 seat St. Louis MUNY. Some of his favorite roles include: Billy Flynn in *Chicago*, Tulsa in *Gypsy*, Marquis de Sade in *Marat/Sade* and Tony in *West Side Story*. Wood attended The Boston Conservatory and Millikin University.

**John Flack** has performed in Elementary Schools throughout the Midwest. He toured with both The Muny 1st Stage and The Imaginary Theatre Company, appearing in hundreds of schools, performing for thousands of children (and loving every minute of it!). John also enjoys acting in front of grown-ups. He has the pleasure of being a long-time acting company member at Stages St. Louis, where he has appeared in over 30 productions. From the several professional theatres he is associated with, favorite roles include: *Smoke on the Mountain* (Reverend Oglethorpe), *Art* (Marc), *I Do! I Do!* (Michael), *Fire in the Soul* (Theo Van Gogh), and the title role in *Snoopy!*

**Larry Pry** has been teaching voice, piano and musical theater for over 15 years. He studied at Webster University and Southern Illinois University at Edwardsville, plays keyboard in orchestras for the Fabulous Fox Theater, and works as Assistant Director of Marketing for The Muny in Forest Park.

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