

TEACHER NOTES

METRO STREET

Book, music and lyrics by Matthew Robinson



Compiled by
Robyn Brookes – Education Manager





METRO STREET TEACHER NOTES

LENGTH OF PERFORMANCE

Approx: Act 1 – 1hr

Interval – 20 mins

Act 2 – 1 hr

METRO STREET

"It's so rare to find a new Australian musical with its own original voice, a fresh and exciting one, and in *Metro Street*, that's exactly what we've found. The story is both touching and comic, compassionate and contemporary, and the music is both melodic and ambitious."

Adam Cook, Artistic Director

DIRECTOR	Geordie Brookman
MUSICAL SUPERVISOR	Matthew Robinson
MUSICAL DIRECTOR	Matthew Carey
DESIGNER	Victoria Lamb
LIGHTING DESIGNER	Geoff Cobham
SOUND DESIGNER	Jane Rossetto
CHOREOGRAPHY CONSULTANT	Jo Stone
ORCHESTRATION	David Pritchard-Blunt

STARRING

SUE BARNES	Debra Byrne
CHRIS BARNES	Cameron Goodall
JO MCAULEY	Nancye Hayes
AMY FRANCIS	Jude Henshall
KERRY MALONE	Verity Hunt-Ballard

KEYBOARD	Matthew Carey
BASS	Lyndon Gray
GUITAR	Sam Leske
DRUMS	Ben Todd

CHARACTERS

CHRIS BARNES

A 23 year old final year university student studying Psychology. He is hard-working, bright, personable and deep-thinking, sometimes to the detriment of his relationships. He lives with his girlfriend Amy. Chris tries to protect his mother from finding out that his Dad has met someone and is moving on. He doesn't cope with his mother's illness and becomes angry, guilty and selfish.

SUE BARNES

Chris' mother. A 44 year old secondary school music teacher, desperate to maintain her dignity in the face of adversity. She has recently separated from her husband John, and he is organising the divorce proceedings and splitting the assets. She is desperately unhappy and lonely and going through a tough time. When she finds out she has breast cancer she tries to be strong and doesn't tell her son for fear of upsetting him. Sue continues to keep protecting Chris even when he comes to live with her.

JO McAULEY

Sue's mother. A 65 year old with the verve of a 21 year old. She is the clear matriarch of the family and possesses a 'mother earth' presence. Jo loves her family and takes good care of her daughter both before the illness and through the illness. She has a love of life and hasn't let old age weary her. She says it as she sees it and is frustrated by the way Chris behaves around his sick mum. Her poignant moment is when she's describing to Kerry what it's like to be a mum.

AMY FRANCIS

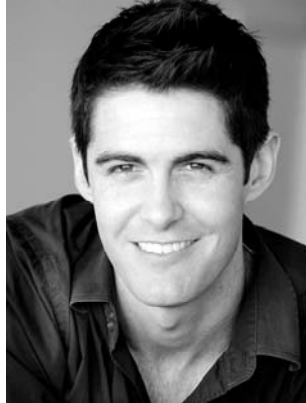
Chris's girlfriend. She is a 22 year old third year university student majoring in Economics and Women's Studies. Attractive and with a quiet dignity, she is the product of a family with money. Amy is desperately trying to be accepted by her parents, particularly her Dad, and resents the fact that her sister has done well and is the 'favourite' in their eyes. Amy is quite uptight about things, but befriends Kerry who helps her after she and Chris break up, but also helps her to find out what she wants and that her family should accept her for how she is.

KERRY MALONE

A 20 year old recent migrant to the city. She tells it like it is. Kerry hides a secret past as to why she left home and the country. Because of this secret she believes that her family don't want her anymore. Kerry has a crush on Chris, but because of Amy she is never able to pursue him. She is a friendly, bubbly girl who is sexually confident, but is afraid to move on.

PLAYWRIGHT, COMPOSER & LYRICIST

Matthew Robinson



How did the show *Metro Street* come about?

It grew out of a collection of narrative and theatrical songs that I'd written, and there were a few characters and relationships in there that I wanted to explore further.

Part of Matthew's inspiration came from an experience that a close friend of his had:

A friend from high school's mother had been diagnosed with cancer. I became interested in the family's reaction, and felt it was something that I wanted to delve into, so I started looking at relationships through individual songs and expanded the idea from there.

Ever since I was 21 and started writing theatre based music, I've been motivated by the idea of not only telling a story, but affecting an audience.

What do you think audiences will enjoy about *Metro Street*?

I think they will enjoy recognising themselves and the people they know in the characters and in doing so, really coming along the journey with us.

Matthew will be in Adelaide for the entire rehearsal process, and is looking forward to starting rehearsals for the show on 23 February.

It will be great to work with the five performers we've chosen to be part of the show and see what they'll bring out in each other and the piece. I'm really excited about seeing what the show will look like, with the set and lighting, and it being born for the first time on stage.

ACTOR PROFILES

Debra Bryne plays Sue Barnes



How are you preparing for your role?

I have had a personal experience with breast cancer with both my sister and mother going through it. So part of my preparation has been recalling the emotional and physical journey and the behaviour of people around someone who is affected. Illness brings out the best and worst in all of us. It also makes you look at the choices that are made – such as the choice to fight and at what cost that is to the quality of life. The character of Sue goes through all of these feelings.

What is your musical training/background?

My training was basically on the job and years of work as I started when I was 10 years old on 'Young Talent Time'. I worked with many brilliant people who I learnt from, but I also studied and read everything I could and applied what I learnt.

You've been in several musicals how do you feel working on a new Australian work?

It is a beautifully written musical by a young man with extraordinary insight into people. The musical is beautiful and I feel blessed to be a part of a piece that is still growing.

How have you enjoyed rehearsals so far?

Good. The emotions of the character have just started to creep in and it is starting to affect me. I need to let these emotions in and dealing with them is part of the process.

What are the challenges of the script in regards to your character, Sue?

The main thing is not to be a victim or sentimental – I need to keep it true and real.

What will audiences enjoy most about this production?

Hopefully they will be soothed and excited by the music, its quality and its beauty. Although the topic is difficult, the way it is handled in the show is respectful.

What are some memorable moments of your career?

Norma in 'Sunset Boulevard', Fontaine in 'Les Miserables' and Grizabella in 'Cats'. I've been really blessed because I've enjoyed all of the shows I've been a part of.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I am a Christian and study the bible and sing at worship. I also love fabrics both in fashion and making clothes. At the moment I live with my daughter and grandsons and that keeps me fairly busy.

Cameron Goodall plays Chris Barnes



How are you preparing for your role?

I have needed to prepare for the vocal demands of the show in particular. This means listening to the music and singing a lot to build up the stamina. I have been in a similar experience as Chris, with illness in my family life, so I have been reflecting back on that time.

What is your musical background?

I started learning the piano when I was four and guitar at seven by the Suzuki Method. Growing up I played in bands with my Dad either on guitar or bass. When I was at University I played at several pub gigs both solo and in bands. I also formed the band, 'The Audreys', which I still play in from time to time.

Where did you train and what course did you study?

I studied the acting course at the Flinders Drama Centre and graduated in 2000.

Is this your first musical?

No. I did 'Assassins' in 2008 and I have done a lot of music/theatre combination type shows – kids musicals, operettas and cabarets. This is the most character-based main-stage music theatre show though.

How different is this from other production like *Hamlet* or *Attempts on Her Life*?

Definitely the singing discipline that is required. There is something different you get from songs – it doesn't have the rhythm of normal lines. There is also the moment when a scene turns into a song – it helps further the story and you need to work out how it fits into the action.

It has also been fantastic having the writer in the room – Matthew Robinson is extremely gifted and has a lot of insight into the characters and the music.

How are you enjoying rehearsals so far?

I'm having a ball. It is an honour to be in company of Nancye Hayes and Debra Byrne – I'm humbled by their experience. It is an incredible group of people who are all bringing our individual experiences to the show, which invites discussion and brings strength to the group.

What are the challenges of the script in regards to your character?

As an actor the challenge is conveying the journey that Chris takes as it is a very different reaction from my own experience. Chris goes off the rails and treats everyone poorly. So discovering the dilemmas and the secrets of the character are very important.

What will audiences enjoy the most about this production?

I think they'll be touched by the story and the spirit in which it's told. Also the way that it is joyful, but can be sad with touching intimate moments. They will also be some people who can relate to the story of 'dealing with illness', whether it be a friend or family.

What are the memorable moments of your career?

'*Hamlet*', particularly the moment when Adam first introduced the idea to me – oh and when the sword broke on opening night. '*Attempts on her Life*' as it was so different from a normal play.

Being able to co-create shows as part of The Border Project theatre company -shows such as; '*Trouble on Planet Earth*'.

Most of all I really love the adrenalin of live theatre and how things can change on stage.

What do you do in your spare time?

Playing music, in 'The Audreys'. Listening to music and I love going out with friends, eating and drinking.

PLOT

ACT 1

Amy and Chris who are both studying at university and have recently moved in together. (*Love Is*) A new girl moves in next door, Kerry, who is loud, friendly and sensual, everything that Amy isn't. (*The Girl Next Door*) Amy is studying feminism and is a bit of a prude, but she befriends Kerry and takes her out shopping, along with Chris's grandmother, Jo. Jo and Kerry have very similar taste in clothing and in the beauty of being female. (*Yes I Know*) Amy is against the flaunting of women's sexuality in advertising.

Chris's mum, Sue is recently separated from her husband and is trying to cope with being alone. (*Never Going To End*) Her ex is demanding a divorce hearing so that they can split up their assets. What she doesn't know is that he has already moved on with someone else. Chris doesn't want to tell his mother, as he knows she won't cope with this.

Chris and Amy talk about what's going on in their life. (*How's Life*) Chris tells Amy that he's been accepted to study in London, which is a huge opportunity for him, but Amy doesn't want to go and doesn't believe that Chris wants her there anyway.

A few weeks later they go out for a two year anniversary dinner but Chris is running late. (*Mobile Phone Quartet*) This forces Amy to see that they are on two different paths and that he doesn't seem to want her in his life. They break up. (*Never Going To End*)

Sue discovers that she has breast cancer and doesn't want to tell her son, even though Jo is telling her that she needs his support. Kerry is now working in a call centre and seeing someone new. The Act finishes with the company singing, (*Overcome*)

ACT 2

The act opens with, (*Got to Get to*). Six months have passed and Chris has stayed in Australia and moved back in with his mum to help her out. Jo is looking after her daughter and gets frustrated when Chris doesn't pull his weight. Chris has finished university, but is working in a café. This has made him angry, frustrated and selfish telling everyone that he put his life on hold for this.

Amy and Kerry have become good friends and spend many nights together drinking and going out on the town. (*A Girl Like Me*) Amy is working in an office and has a brief relationship with the photocopy boy. She starts to do things because she wants to, not because her parents like it, such as joining the young labour party. Kerry is still her outgoing self and is a good influence on Amy.

After a big night on the town we see Kerry at a café that Chris works at. He asks about Amy and she tells him that she always liked him. Amy turns up and she talks to Chris about how he's behaving. She's worried about him, but he is too angry to care. (*As night descends*)

Sue is going through chemotherapy and is not strong enough to go to Chris's graduation, so Jo goes in her place. The first signs that Sue isn't coping with her illness start to come through. (*Dignity*)

After another bust up with his grandmother he goes to Amy's apartment and tells her that he misses her. (*The Best Thing*)

Kerry asks Jo how Sue is doing and what it's like to be a mother. (*Love Is*) This is when we find out that Kerry has had an abortion, which is why she left home and why she thinks her family don't love her anymore. Kerry gets an amazing job as a personal assistant to a music company head, but is reluctant to take it. With a little convincing from Jo and Amy she jumps at the opportunity, even though it means going to Spain. She takes a leap of faith and organises to spend a week home with her family, who are excited to see her.

Meanwhile Sue's cancer has spread.

The story ends with Chris, Jo and Sue having a picnic together. Chris is finally getting back on track, but Sue is very ill. When Jo leaves to pack up the car Sue and Chris get some alone time and they talk about how scared they are and she talks about how she would like to be remembered. (*Invitation*)

SONGS

ACT 1

Metro Street – Chris and Cast
The Girl Next Door – Kerry
Love Is – Amy & Chris
Never Going to End – Sue & Chris
Yes, I Know – Amy, Jo & Kerry
How's Life – Chris & Amy
Taxi to the City – Sue
Mobile Phone Quintet – Company
Never Going to End (Reprise) – Chris & Amy
Overcome – Company

ACT 2

Got to Get to – Amy, Kerry & Chris
A Girl Like Me – Kerry & Amy
As Night Descends – Chris
Dignity – Sue
Love Is – Jo
The Best Thing – Chris & Amy
Invitation - Company

ANALYSIS OF SONGS IN A MUSICAL

In a musical, songs work to further the storyline. It can help with character development and in particular it is useful for the internal dialogue of characters. In a drama this could be a monologue to show the range of emotions. In song form it is easy to repeat certain elements of dialogue.

In the following example from the show Sue misses out on seeing her son's graduation because she is too unwell to attend. Whilst Chris is lamenting about the occasion, "*It's just a piece of paper. What's the big deal?*" to Sue the day reflects how proud she is.

The scene ends with Sue singing *Dignity*. The song is about the fear of what is happening to her, the '*begging for time*' as her body slowly breaks down. She is taking a look at herself and not recognising what she sees because the disease has changed her.

Sue is also challenging herself, can she '*stand up and pull through*' and fight or is it better to have a greater quality of life? Each time the line '*It is Wrong*' is repeated it conveys a different emotion. It goes from sadness to fear, to anger and loneliness, each time it is repeated it becomes a stronger emotion.

The song also has her asking her son if he can be strong for her and support her. Will his life go on? Will he be ok? The song seems to be able to ask the questions that she can't ask Chris to his face.

The music also supports the emotion of the song, by starting quietly so that it is almost reflective like the words. The song builds to the bridge with a rhythmic pulsing of the music and the rise in the pitch of the melody. The music then comes back down as a poignant moment before building again for the final chorus.

DIGNITY

Dignity

What do you expect from me?

I'm reaching and holding and running out of energy.

When I look at my hands, my face and my eyes

And all that adds up to this earthly disguise

It is wrong

It is wrong

To be holding your ground, when there's no to be found

It is wrong

It is wrong

To be begging from time, when the days will never unwind.

Infinity

Isn't there a way to separate you from me?

When I conjugate the feeling and falling and waiting

It's getting too much for me

When I look at my hands, my face and my eyes

And all that adds up to this earthly disguise

It is wrong

It is wrong

That wherever this lands, is out of my hands

It is wrong

It is wrong

That my eyes have run dry, and there's no reason why.

But why not give to me something to believe?

Walking the line works for now, but in time

Is it worth what you do to stand up and pull through?

The growing never knowing if I will let myself down.

When I look at my hands, my face and my eyes

And all that adds up to my earthly disguise

It is wrong.

It is wrong.

That you life would go on, even if I was gone

It is wrong

It is wrong

But as wrong as it may be, I need you to do this for me

Do this for me

Do this for me

Do this for me.

THEMES

RELATIONSHIPS

Amy & Chris: Have just moved in together and things seem to be going well. They are both studying, although in very different fields. Chris gets an offer to study in London and wants to go, but Amy is hurt that he hasn't talked about even applying for the course and that he doesn't ask her to go with him. Tensions build between them and they break up and go their separate ways.

Chris becomes angry at the world and feels as though he's thrown a great opportunity away by staying and looking after his mum. *"Just for the record, I live here. I am not in London. I am not working in my chosen profession. I'm not meeting anyone, I'm not seeing anyone. These are the choices I am making so my mother isn't here alone."*

Amy starts to loosen up a little and starts to focus on what she wants instead of what her parents, in particular her father, wants her to be.

After some months have passed Amy confronts Chris to see if he needs help as he doesn't seem to be coping with his mother's illness. He rejects her saying, *"I am not one of your special projects and I don't need rescuing."*

Late at night he comes and sees Amy and laments that she was the best thing that ever happened to him and why couldn't he see it at the time? Amy has had a hard time getting over him and isn't sure she wants to go back to that.

Chris & Sue: Chris loves his mum, but like everyone once they've moved out of home, they don't always have time to call or stay in touch. He tries to protect her from knowing that his Dad has met someone new and is moving on, as he knows this will hurt her. Sue tries to protect Chris from knowing how upset she is about the separation and she protects him from knowing about her illness as well.

She doesn't understand his behaviour around her when she is sick and constantly defends him to her own mother. She is very proud of her son and wants him to be happy. *"I hate what's happening to me. And I hate watching what it's doing to you."*

The final scene has them talking openly and honestly for perhaps the first time in a long time.

Sue & Jo: Jo is very protective over her daughter and fusses around her making dinner and tidying up her place. She is upset by Sue's separation from her husband, but tries not to show it. Jo is a very liberated woman and says what she thinks, often to her daughter and her grandson. But she truly loves her family and would do anything for her daughter, including looking after her through her illness.

Jo has a great sense of humour and tries to keep the mood light, but we get a glimpse of her strength and vulnerability when she opens up to Kerry.

Chris & Jo: Jo believes in Chris's strength to know the truth about Sue's illness. She wants Chris to know and be there for his mother. When Chris isn't around or helping she berates him, which sends him more into himself and his anger. *"I've had it with your self-indulgence Christopher. She is fighting for her life. If she wants you to listen, shut up. If she needs you to get your shit together, get your shit together."*

She desperately wants Chris to see how sick Sue is, but doesn't approach Chris very well so Chris resents his grandmother's nagging and tries to avoid her.

Kerry & Amy: Kerry helps Amy out once she and Chris have separated. She helps Amy to believe in her convictions and stand up for what she believes in. Kerry is much more liberated and enjoys life and helps Amy to find a little of this in herself. Amy helps Kerry to move on with her life and follow an incredible job opportunity, even though it means leaving the city behind.

Kerry & Jo: They are very similar in the way that they are liberated. They both know their strengths as a woman and try to install some of this in Amy. They are both family-orientated and when Kerry reveals that she had an abortion Jo shows most of her vulnerable side.

This is when Jo reveals what it's like being a mum, *"It's the easiest and the hardest thing you'll ever have to do."*

DEALING WITH CANCER

EMOTIONS

Patients and family go through an array of emotions when they or their loved ones are sick. These can be denial that the disease exists, or that it is getting worse. There is guilt from loved ones about how they could have changed it somehow or fix it.

Chris goes through many different emotions regarding his mother's illness. He is angry at having to stay when he could have gone to London to study. He goes through a denial period – this is when Jo is nagging him to clean the bathroom and to help out around the house. He feels quite alone as if no-one understands what he's going through. He eventually talks to Amy about this after losing himself in his anger.

Sue also goes through a myriad of emotions. She delays telling Chris about her cancer this could be partly denial about the disease and that fact that she needs help, but she also feels a deep sense of guilt about placing this burden on her son.

Sue's sadness and anger begin to show through and there is the moment when she doesn't want the treatments anymore as it becomes about the 'quality of living'.

NORMAL EMOTIONS AND BREAST CANCER

A diagnosis of breast cancer is a great shock. Women report that they fear breast cancer more than heart disease.

Here are some emotions that sufferers and their family may experience;

- Fear, shock
- Denial
- Anger
- Depression
- Sadness
- Anxiety
- Stress

- Guilt
- Loneliness, alienation
- Hope

COPING WITH AND SURVIVING BREAST CANCER

A study published in the Journal of Psychosocial Oncology reports that women who get help with pain and emotional distress have lower levels of anxiety, fatigue and depression. Here are some ways that people cope with their emotions:

- Communicate with family and friends
- Visit with a counsellor or spiritual director
- Join a support group
- Express your needs and ask for help
- Report your symptoms to your healthcare team
- Keep a log of medical visits, save test results, keep receipts
- Educate yourself about your cancer and treatments
- Exercise
- Make plans for a crisis

http://breastcancer.about.com/od/diagnosis/a/emotions_coping.htm

SET DESIGN

The director and designer wanted to give the feel of an urban drama, which could be in any Australian city. Overall there are 23 scenes with 11 locations. The play also covers a 6 month time span which they have aligned with the seasons, starting in spring and ending in autumn.

The design is of a generic space, which is run down and minimalist to show the urban decay and grunginess. It looks like a run down old hall or theatre. This design helps when there are scenes at the same time, such as in songs where two or three places are shown at once. There are also stairs at the front of the stage to break down the fourth wall, which helps to create a more intimate setting.

The idea of a minimalist set is against the conventions of typical musical theatre shows. The idea springs from some of the contemporary musicals such as, *Spring Awakening* and *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. Costumes are realistic and typical style street clothing.

Spring Awakening (2007)



Hedwig and the Angry Inch (2004)



To show the shopping mall there will be for sale signs flown in and a huge poster of a woman in her underwear, which starts the song 'Yes I know'.

The band will be upstage the whole show, which is also a feature of these contemporary musicals.

Inspiration for the design came from several old movie theatres in the Art Deco period from 1920-1930s.

THE STYLE OF ART DECO

Was a popular international design movement from 1925 until 1939, affecting the decorative arts such as architecture, interior design, and industrial design, as well as the visual arts; fashion, painting and film.

This movement was an hybrid of many different styles and movements of the early 20th century, including Neoclassical, Constructivism, Cubism, Modernism, Art Nouveau, and Futurism. Its popularity peaked during the Twenties and continued strongly in the United States through the 1930s.

Art Deco was purely decorative -the style was seen as elegant, functional, and modern. Art Deco experienced a resurgence in the 1980s. The Chrysler building, designed by William Van Alen, is one of the most notable examples of Art Deco architecture today.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Deco

Some examples of Art Deco theatres.

Michigan Theatre (1926) Detroit.



Paramount Theatre (1939), California



Stanford Theatre, California (1925)



West Theatre, Cedartown, Georgia



2 local Art Deco designed theatres include;

Capri Theatre, Goodwood (1941)



Piccadilly Theatre, North Adelaide (1940)



INTERESTING READING

HISTORY OF MUSICAL THEATRE

1940s

Broadway professionals decided that audiences wanted entertainment that provided an escape from reality of the World War and the Great Depression. At the time great art was not the goal in musical theatre, most producers and critics were convinced that good songs and good fun were all that theatergoers required.

A few determined people took some creative risks to make the musical grow up. Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart took some creative risks with *Pal Joey* (1940), which featured a shady character in the lead role. Many critics objected to *Pal Joey's* subject matter, but it had a profitable run.

After this Rodgers started to collaborate with Oscar Hammerstein. This musical partnership became one of the most successful in musical theatre. They focused on what made the characters tick, where songs would fit and what the style and content of each number should be. Hammerstein wrote lyrics in a conversational style, each fitting specific characters and story telling needs.

Their first musical, *Oklahoma* was neither a typical musical comedy nor an operetta. It was something new – a fully rounded musical play, with every element dedicated to moving the story forward. *Oklahoma* opened at New York's St. James Theatre on March 31st, 1943 and became a cultural phenomenon, setting a new long-run record for Broadway musicals. It soon became clear that critics and audiences would no longer settle for slapdash musical comedies.

Before *Oklahoma*, composers and lyricists were songwriters – after *Oklahoma*, they had to be dramatists, using everything in the score to develop character and advance the action. Everything in a musical now had to serve a dramatic purpose. *Oklahoma* was also the first Broadway musical to have every major number recorded by the original cast and orchestra.

1950s

Showtunes became a major part of American popular music with hit songs from musicals topping the pop charts.

Rodgers and Hammerstein remained the musical theatre's most potent writing team. At one point, they had four musicals running on Broadway simultaneously. They also had film versions of *Oklahoma*, *Carousel* and *South Pacific* grossing millions of dollars worldwide.

- ***The King and I* (1951)**
- ***Me and Juliet* (1953)**
- ***Pipe Dream* (1955)** – their only financial failure.
- ***Flower Drum Song* (1958)**
- ***The Sound of Music* (1959)**

Oscar Hammerstein died a few months after *The Sound of Music* opened, ending a career that spanned the golden age of musical theatre and film.

1960s

The decade's first and most enduring hit was born Off-Broadway - ***The Fantasticks* (1960)**. Dancer Gower Champion also had his breakthrough stage hit with ***Bye Bye Birdie* (1960)**. His definitive triumph was ***Hello Dolly* (1964)**.

While the Beatles conquered the world of rock and roll, the London stage more or less remained in a creative slump. Only three British musicals achieved international success during the 1960s;

- ***Oliver!* (UK 1960)**
- ***Stop the World I Want to Get Off* (UK 1961)**
- ***Half a Sixpence* (UK 1963)**

Broadway musicals still dominated the art form, and for most of the decade, the West End was clogged with imported American hits. Some critics suggested that the British musical was dead, but they would be eating their words before the 1970s were over.

1970s

Some insisted that the "Golden Age" of the Broadway musical was over, but the 1970s saw the art form thrive. There was a battle between rock musicals, "concept" shows and conventional musicals.

From an artistic standpoint, it proved to be one of the most exciting decades the stage musical had ever known.

In the wake of *Hair*, Clive Barnes (chief critic, New York Times) proclaimed, "Rock music was the one hope for the Broadway musical."

Broadway's first full-fledged rock opera, ***Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971)** came from two British newcomers, composer Andrew Lloyd Webber and librettist Tim Rice. With this hit, Webber and Rice initiated a new creative era for West End musical theatre.

Stephen Schwartz's musical on the same subject, ***Godspell* (1971)**, which started off-Broadway became a phenomenal success.

***Grease* (1972)** won America's heart with a 1950s rock n' roll score, great friendships and romance of students in their senior year. The show became the most commercially successful 1970s rock musical. *Grease* set a new record as Broadway's longest running musical – a distinction it would hold until *A Chorus Line* surpassed it in the 1980s. The 1978 big screen version became the highest-grossing musical in Hollywood history.

1980s

The more memorable success stories of the era include several musicals that are still produced;

- ***Barnum* (1980)**
- ***Woman of the Year* (1981)**
- ***Nine* (1982)**
- ***Little Shop of Horrors* (1982)**

Andrew Lloyd Webber and director Trevor Nunn reshaped the theatrical landscape with *Cats* (1982). This show based on poems by TS Elliot premiered in London, and then came to New York.

The revolutionary thing about *Cats* was not the show on stage – it was the marketing. Before this, most musicals limited their souvenirs to photo programs, songbooks and t-shirts. *Cats* splashed its distinctive logo (two yellow-green feline eyes with dancing irises) on coffee mugs, music boxes, figurines, books on "the making of" the show, greeting cards, baseball caps, satin jackets, stuffed toys, matchboxes, key chains and pins, to name just a few. Those feline eyes were everywhere.

Cats spread to places that had not seen professional theatre in years. From Vienna to Oslo, the show proved that marketing can boost a show's profits by millions of dollars. *Cats* was also an increasing rarity, a musical one could take children to. The show ran into the next century, becoming the longest running show in Broadway history.

1990s

1990 passed without so much as one memorable musical appearing on Broadway, but by this time less than 5% of the American public were attending the theatre on a regular basis. Some of the shows were;

- Revivals of *Guys and Dolls* (1992), *Carousel* (1994) and *Showboat* (1994).
- *Crazy For You* (1992)
- *Kiss of the Spiderwoman* (1993)
- *Tommy* (1993)
- *Passion* (1994).

The British brought in more mega-musicals, but the once invincible trend was losing steam.

- *Aspects of Love* (1990) lost over 8 million despite a year-long Broadway run.
- *Miss Saigon* (1991) opened in London and later conquered Broadway.
- *Blood Brothers* (1993) never recouped its original costs.
- *Sunset Boulevard* (1994) swept the 1995 Tony Awards, but the production had such high running costs that even a three year run could not turn a profit.

The real winner was in 1994. *Beauty and the Beast* (1994) was the first stage effort of Walt Disney Productions. Whatever the show lacked in finesse it more than made up for in box office appeal. People with no interest in the theatre were happy to pay top dollar to bring their children to the show.

Beauty and the Beast was replicated in cities all over the world, with actors giving imitations of the original Broadway cast in a rainbow of languages. Souvenirs became a bigger money maker than ever.

The triumph was complete by the time Disney's *The Lion King* (1997) came to Broadway. It premiered in The New Amsterdam Theatre, which the Disney Corporation purchased and restored, opened a large retail shop next door, and planned an ultra-modern Disney holiday just up the block. It was the biggest hit of the 1990s.

People who had never been interested in the theatre lined up for *The Lion King*, and even a price hike to \$80 a seat didn't prevent the show from selling out for a year in advance. *The Lion King* became the most desired ticket on both Broadway and the West End until well into the next decade.

2000s

Disney again scored a commercial hit with ***Aida* (2000)** and critics raved for ***The Full Monty* (2000)**.

Mel Brooks brought in his long-threatened musical adaptation of his 1967 screen classic ***The Producers* (2001)**. This comedy was so popular that few people complained, even when Brooks priced the best seats at a chilling \$485. But with *Full Monty*, *The Producers* and a sensational revival of *42nd Street* running strong, musical comedy was once again the dominant force on Broadway.

In London's West End the musical comedy based on the hit film *The Witches of Eastwick* and *The Beautiful Game* did not find an international audience. As far as musicals were concerned, the ball was once again very much in America's court, and Broadway tried to keep it that way.

When a terrorist attack destroyed the World Trade Center towers on Sept. 11th, 2001, every theater on Broadway went dark for two days, but theatre regrouped and carried on. Ten days after the attacks, the outrageous musical satire ***Urinetown* (2001)** opened to rave reviews. A dark send-up of every imaginable theatrical convention, it became the hit of the season and proved that playful satire still had commercial possibilities on Broadway.

The London-born ***Mamma Mia* (2001)** roared into town a few weeks later, offering a familiar comic plot rebuilt around old hit songs by the pop group Abba. Critics were underwhelmed, but audiences kept the show sold out for years to come. *Mamma Mia* was the first in a wave of jukebox musicals, shows built around existing pop songs. Some of these were revues, but most were book musicals where the songs came first, the plot second.

Next came the hit ***Thoroughly Modern Millie* (2002)**, a tap-happy adaptation of the 1967 movie musical, ***Movin' Out* (2002)**, a dance musical built around the pop songs of Billy Joel, and Baz Luhrmann's updated Australian Opera production of Puccini's opera ***La Boheme* (2002)**. But the new musical comedy trend kept going with the arrival of ***Hairspray* (2002)**.

The following season brought a lavish musical adaptation of ***Wicked* (2003)** and ***Avenue Q* (2003)** an intimate, low-budget musical comedy about life among struggling 30-somethings in New York's outer boroughs.

Comedy continued to reign with the zany *Monty Python's Spamalot* (2005), ***Dirty Rotten* (2005)** and ***The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (2005)**. Then there was another jukebox musical, ***Jersey Boys* (2005)**, ***The Drowsy Chaperone* (2006)** and an adaptation of the hit novel and film ***The Color Purple* (2005)**

During 1943 to the mid-1960s, Broadway musicals could be mounted for under \$250,000, and could turn a solid profit in less than a year. Now simple productions like *Rent* can cost \$3,000,000 or more, while *The Producers* is rumored to have cost over \$10,000,000. Even with ticket prices topping \$110, shows can run for several years and still close at a loss.

It is almost impossible to estimate the role musical theatre plays in the economic life of New York City. What theatergoers spend at hotels, restaurants and stores, it is estimated that Broadway contributes four and a half billion dollars to New York's economy. Off-Broadway musicals add millions more to that figure.

THE AUSTRALIAN MUSICAL

There is little known history about the Australian musical. There are many websites and books about the history of Broadway or the West End, but not much about our own musicals.

Many of our first productions were performed in London before they came to Australia such as; ***Chu Chin Chow (1916)*** a musical based on the tale of Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves.

In 1953 the show ***Reedy River*** which told the story of the Queensland Shearers' Strike of 1891 premiered in Melbourne. 1988 Peter Allen's starred on Broadway in the **musical *Legs Diamond***, for which he wrote the music and lyrics, but it didn't last due to bad reviews

Jump to 1995, ***Prisoner Cell Block H: The Musical*** burst onto the English scene. The musical was based on the television series *Prisoner* and was enormously popular, running for three months in London, before touring the United Kingdom in 1996 and 1997. But despite its English success, it has yet to appear on Australian stages.



The break-through Australian musical was ***The Boy from Oz(1998)*** a musical based on Peter Allen's life. This show had a hugely successful Australian tour and was later taken to Broadway where Australian actor Hugh Jackman played the title role of Peter Allen.

The producers of *The Boy from Oz* were enthusiastic about their achievement and gracious to those who might follow, "Our ambition is to create the first large scale Australian musical which will reverse the one-way traffic of musicals from other countries and become Australia's first export in the field". (Producers' note, *The Boy from Oz* Original Cast CD.)

Shout!(2001) was the next show that also relied on a home-grown icon with a story about Johnny O'Keefe. Both of these two shows required a suitable musical icon that endured self-destructiveness in their personal life, an early death and a desperately dependent relationship with their audience and identifiable songs.

Eureka! The Musical (2004) about the killing of 25 miners at the Eureka Stockade near Ballarat by government troops in the early hours of 1854, was part of the 2004 Melbourne International Arts Festival. Audience reaction to the show was positive but it did not translate into business at the box office.

Keating!(2005) a musical about former Prime Minister Paul Keating, was a surprise hit at the 2005 Melbourne International Comedy Festival where it enjoyed a sold out run. It was revived in 2006 by Company B which toured Australia receiving strong reviews and winning the Helpmann Awards for Best Musical and Best Regional Touring Production.

The two big Australian musicals of 2006 ***Dusty*** and ***Priscilla Queen Of The Desert - The Musical*** were both jukebox musicals.



Priscilla Queen Of The Desert - The Musical(2006) is about to open in the West End. Further productions are being considered for Canada, Scandinavia and Germany with interest also from South Africa, Brazil, Italy, France and Japan. The enormity of this production comes with a \$1m scene-stealing bus, 28 glamorous performers and 500 outrageous costumes from the movie's Oscar-winning designers Tim Chappel and Lizzy Gardiner.

Eurobeat – Almost Eurovision(2004), the show celebrating everything Eurovision and in 2006 became the first Australian musical with an original score to tour Australia in 20 years. The show also heralded the dawn of the interactive musical as the audience vote for their favourite song via text messaging. *Eurobeat – Almost Eurovision* has also toured in the UK and Scotland and in 2008 appeared on the West End, London.

Shane Warne the Musical(2008) is the most recent success story of an Australian musical. This show is described as, “a new breed of Aussie music theatre that smokes, drinks, carries a few extra kilos and still brings home the Ashes.”
(<http://www.shanewarnethemusical.com.au/about.html>)

There is a difficulty mounting productions of original musicals in Australia which have a relative shortage of private investors. Australian producers also often only consider producing an Australian musical if it could have a life overseas.

But the real enemies to the development of local writing are the regular return seasons of the giant musicals like *Phantom Of The Opera*, *Cats*, *Annie*, or *The Sound of Music* often with television personalities in the lead roles.

Maybe the future of the Australian musical will be okay, the low-budget style musical taking a good hard look at ourselves with sporting or political icons or an institution or event. This new style of musical seems popular during the past few years with ***Centrelink –the musical*** and ***Beaconsfield the Musical***, and I believe there even is, ***Howard the Musical?***

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. What range of emotions does Chris go through in relation to his mother's illness?
2. Chris seems to have trouble communicating his feelings both with his girlfriend Amy and his mother, Sue. How does Chris cope with these relationships?
3. Compare the style of a dramatic play to the musical, '*Metro Street*'. What do the songs do to the storyline? How is that purpose served in drama?
4. '*Metro Street*' has been described as 'a play with music'. Look at the conventional style of musical such as; '*Oklahoma*' or '*Gypsy*' and compare the staging of the show with '*Metro Street*'.
5. Jo as the family matriarch is a very strong character and knows and is confident about who she is. The three young characters, Amy, Chris and Kerry have trouble with seeing who they are, how they see themselves and how they think others perceive them. Compare the three character's journey.
6. How important do you think the discussion that Sue and Chris have at the end of the play is? Do you think this helps Chris and/or Sue?

DESIGN ELEMENTS

7. Costumes can create characters. In this musical the costumes are 'naturalistic'. Explain how each costume helps to shape the characters. How do the changes in their clothing style help develop the characters?
8. Part of the set design is looking at the various locations and the changes that are needed. In '*Metro Street*' there is the added complication of multiple scenes at once during songs. With this in mind re-design the set.
9. The set breaks down the fourth wall by coming past the proscenium arch. This can create a sense of intimacy with the audience. Did you think this achieved this and how?

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<http://www.musicalsaustralia.com/NewsRoom/TheDish3.html>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Boy_from_Oz

For a list of musical theatre shows;

www.musicals.net/?shows=1
<http://www.australianmusicals.com/musicalslisting.htm>

Further Reading;

Stories of those affected with breast cancer;
<http://www.bcna.org.au/content/view/187/289/>

Pamela Bone, "Bad Hair Days", Melbourne University Press, VIC 2007

Professor Fred Stephens & Professor Richard Fox, "Cancer Explained – The Essential Guide to Diagnosis and Management", Ebury Press, 2008

EDUCATION SHOW COMING SOON

THE DUMB WAITER by Harold Pinter



18 – 21 May Space Theatre
(nearly SOLD OUT)

22 May - Shedley Theatre, Elizabeth

25 May - Golden Grove Arts Centre

26 May - Arts Centre, Port Noarlunga

29 May - Chaffey Theatre, Renmark

1 June – Sir Robert Helpmann Theatre,
Mt Gambier

3 June – Keith Michell Theatre, Port Pirie

4 June – Port Augusta Secondary School

5 June – Middleback Theatre, Whyalla

For more details or to book for the show please ring me on 8231 5151.