



STAGERAGE

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annual GENERAL MEETING

The AGM for ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS was held on Tuesday, 23 April 2024. Your Board members for the 2024/25 year are;

- Allan Nagy (President), Samantha Peters, Jessie Feyen, Kerrie Simonsen, Kieran Peters, Jon Samia, Leanora Potten (seconded & Youth Representative), Adie Johansen (seconded), Lorna Stanley (seconded)

Our Administrator is Jen Lambert and the Board Secretary is Kay Nagy.

Current Life Members are;

David & Christina Pearce, Allan & Kay Nagy, Martin Carr, Carol Nagy, Craig Maxwell, Linda Warren, Merryn Osborne, Barry Jones, Jayne McQueen, Noeline Steward

Our Patron for the year is Grant Smith (Mayor).

Should you have any questions, queries, suggestions or compliments you may contact/chat with any Board member, the Administrator or the Board Secretary. If you have any specific queries please contact;

- Lighting – Samantha Peters
- Venue – Allan Nagy
- Sound – Allan Nagy
- Hireages – any Board member
- Future Shows/Forward Planning – Jessie Feyen, Kerrie Simonsen, Jon Samia
- Social Events – Kerrie Simonsen, Jon Samia
- Health & Safety/Wellbeing – Jon Samia, Adie Johansen
- Membership – Samantha Peters, Jessie Feyen
- MTNZ Conference 2025 – Lorna Stanley

Welcome to the 2024/25 year of ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS – a new exciting year is ahead.

MATILDA the Musical

Congratulations to the company of *Matilda the Musical*. What an amazing production this was. ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS and the company of *Matilda the Musical* should be extremely proud of this show, which saw over 12,000 people attend one of the performances. The feedback throughout our community was very positive and highlighted that the shows we are producing are appealing to our audiences and just the panacea we all need. Of course, a huge thanks goes to all our sponsors, but especially **CR Law** – our gold sponsor for *Matilda the Musical*. To remind yourselves how awesome this production was, below are two of the amazing critiques received.

Matilda the Musical: Blessed are the revolting children

by Matthew Dallas
– Manawatu Standard



Bruce, played by Manawa Te Wiki, and his classmates taking on the “revolting times” of *Matilda the Musical*
BEN PRYOR PHOTOGRAPHY / SUPPLIED

It’s incredible to think it’s less than 14 years since *Matilda the Musical* premiered in London. Many of its songs are already indelible, both in the context of West End songbooks and road trip playlists for many Kiwi families. It’s as much of a classic as *OLIVER!* or *The Sound of Music*, and it’s a real treat that Manawatū theatre-goers don’t need to travel the globe to experience a top-shelf production of it. The wit, cheek, and whimsy of the Roald Dahl tale and Tim Minchin songs are wonderfully expressed through the performances, music and enchanting set design of ACT THREE’s production. Much hinges on the appeal of the eponymous protagonist, a girl genius whose intellect and love of books is ridiculed by her idiot family while at school she is terrorised by the disciplinarian head mistress. Tanzi Good, who is sharing the role over the two productions with Sylvie Musso and Lucy Bennett, was a marvellous Matilda on Saturday night. Though a touch tentative in her singing of *Naughty*, any first-night nerves were swiftly stomped out as she came to embody the might and moxie of the character. She led a young, energetic cast who did remarkably well with extremely wordy songs. Phil Anstis was note-perfect as the totalitarian terror Miss Trunchbull. I’m not sure whether the director taking the role himself was by design or necessity, but if it was the latter, it proved extremely serendipitous. Crucial to the attraction of the story is the need for Trunchbull to be genuinely frightening in a couple of key scenes. Anstis nailed it. His Trunchbull, aided by superb lighting, provoked plenty of laughs as a caricature of a child-loathing brute, but also a shiver or two down the spines of young theatre-goers, and perhaps even a traumatic flashback for their parents. The mere sight of a vintage vaulting box from primary school gymnastics was enough for me. Shudder.

Jessie Feyen and Jacob McDonald had an absolute ball as the crass Mrs and Mr Wormwood, allowing every other mum and dad in the theatre to shine their halos, while Danica Manson brought suitable tenderness to Miss Honey. As the only character who didn't get to be mischievous or maniacal, it was a challenging enough role without Manson having to contend with the night's sole technical glitch; her microphone cutting out for a verse.



Danica Manson, as Miss Honey, a ray of light and compassion at Crunchem Hall Primary School
BEN PRYOR PHOTOGRAPHY / SUPPLIED

But Manson sung on, turning a fault into something of good fortune, her unadorned voice amplifying Miss Honey's vulnerability. With songs as strong as *Naughty*, *School Song*, *Bruce*, *When I Grow Up* and *Revolting Children*, it's tempting to suggest you can't go wrong with *Matilda the Musical*. But success is never a given, particularly when so much is placed in the hands of young cast members, including the considerable burden of expectation. Many audience members will have read the book, watched the movie, experienced the musical before, and also movie based on the musical. It's a testament to the cast and the Act Three crew that its *Matilda* is every bit as magical - and naughty - as the Royal Shakespeare Company show that came to Auckland in 2017. Turn off the telly and get to the Regent, maggots.

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ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS *Matilda the Musical* at Regent on Broadway, Palmerston North

by Dean Mckerras
- Manawatu Guardian



Choreographer Ruby Jamieson creates visual magic for ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS' *Matilda the Musical*

Entering the theatre two towers of books have you intrigued - every time the gold curtain rises it's like opening the cover of one of the most colourful and vibrant stories produced on stage. Welcome to ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS' *Matilda the Musical*, starring so many!

If letter after letter spells 1,000 words, move after move creates 1,000 pictures and it's these pictures created by choreographer Ruby Jamieson that hold the show together with visual magic. In a style of choreography aligned with the professional version of *Matilda the Musical* the cast deliver her intricate numbers with ease. It's detailed and demanding – the combination of commitment between choreographer and cast members exploding on stage over and over again. A character is as full and dynamic as the person playing it can make it, and under Phil Anstis' casting and then direction, including of himself as Trunchbull, each and every character is a star, fit for the size of their role. There are no weak links, only fun-filled, entertaining larger-than-life characters every time they appear. Taking one of Trunchbull's trophies off her cabinet and renaming it "magic moment of the night" it would be awarded to Danica Manson as Miss Honey. Her My House is beyond beautiful, worth the ticket price on its own. The New Zealand Consortium set and costumes are amazing. Firstly, how fortunate we are to get to see it on the Regent on Broadway stage with an all local cast owning it with every move, but with a much darker design for the original professional staging. This design is like Dr Sues meets Matilda and it works in every way. This is definitely a story to be told loud and proud, big and beautiful – and tell it ACT THREE does! The visually spectacular, vibrant and fantastical in design production gets the glory on stage but I wish to equally acknowledge the mammoth task of managing two children's casts, multiple backing vocal groups, and understudies galore – possibly one of ACT THREE's largest populated projects to date. How wonderful it would be to see the show twice over giving each cast their deserved applause. A theatre full of families on opening night, with structured ticket prices enabling a greater reach in the community. May you all find a way to enjoy an amazing night of ACT THREE community theatre that entertains beyond expectation as we have come to expect. Lighting cues and operation along with backing vocal timings, sound and lighting – two aspects of a show that get the least amount of rehearsal time – will settle in and this show will have a season proving it anything but revolting!

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We are looking for volunteers to help with our production of *Kinky Boots*.

If you are keen to be part of an amazing company and experience a theatrical extravaganza, then let me hear ya say yeah!

Please e-mail the Administrator on admin@actthree.co.nz if you would like to help out in some way.

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Tickets on sale now

<https://premier.ticketek.co.nz/shows/show.aspx?sh=KINKY24>

Cast List

SIMON/LOLA	Paul Fagamalo
CHARLIE PRICE	Lindsay Yeo
LAUREN	Tamzin Price
LAUREN ALTERNATE	Peta Lynch
NICOLA	Milana Mariu-Reade
DON	Jayden Colban
PAT	Jo Sale
TRISH	Erica Ward
GEORGE	Steve Jenkins
HARRY	Kieran Murphy
MR PRICE	Stephen Paul Gregory
YOUNG SIMON	Manawa Te Wiki
YOUNG CHARLIE	Jackson Kingston/Oscar James

ANGELS

Alex Dinniss, Cam Baker, Clio Exconde, Finn Davidson, Hannah Newman, John Manville, Matthew Lyne

ENSEMBLE

Dalton Watson, Hawi Pere, Katie Clark, Katte Johnston, Lorna Stanley, Lottie Perry, Peta Lynch, Shawanda Scanlon-Parker

BACKING VOCALISTS

Charlotte Grant, Emilia Vibart, Ngamarama Tuariki, Danielle Macdonald, William Lyne

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You are invited to attend an **Open Forum** with the ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS Board

Wednesday, 26 June 2024

7.30 p.m.

75 The Square, Palmerston North

This forum is an opportunity for you to ask questions of and share thoughts and experiences with the ACT THREE PRODUCTIONS Board, and create social connections and a sense of community. This forum aims to encourage dialogue and provides a platform on which ideas, thoughts and questions can be expressed and discussed in an open environment. The Bar will be open and snacks/nibbles will be provided. Please RSVP to the Administrator on admin@actthree.co.nz



The Regent on Broadway have some dark days coming up and during those days, they are offering our members the opportunity to undertake some training/learning of new skills at the Regent with their technicians. The dark days in June are;



Wednesday, 12 June 2024

Friday, 21 June 2024

Monday 24 June 2024, to Friday, 28 June 2024

between the hours of 9.00 a.m. and 5.00 p.m. For more information, please contact the Regent Tech team as follows;

Braden: technician@regent.co.nz

Kieran: techsupport@regent.co.nz



The 10 Best Movie Musicals of the 2020s So Far, Ranked

by Robert Lee III

The 2020s have been a great time for musicals.

The movie musical has been a staple of cinema and film making for nearly as long as film making has been a thing. It makes sense, as musicals and stage performances have been a powerful expression of art and storytelling long before the silver screen, so adapting and creating musical events for the medium of film was a necessary adaptation. There have been many iconic movie musicals over the years, from genuine classics like *Singin' in the Rain* to more recent hits like *La La Land*. The success and high quality of movie musicals have only continued into the current decade, the 2020s, with a multitude of great and iconic movie musical experiences being released constantly. Ranging from modern remakes and re-imaginings of classic musicals to wildly creative original stories, the movie musical shows no signs of stopping and has thrived in the digital, streaming service era. While the decade is far from being over, there are still a multitude of iconic movie musicals that have cemented themselves as being in the conversation for the best of the decade.

10 *Dicks: The Musical (2023)*

Directed by Larry Charles



Image via A24

Adapted and based on the comedic off-Broadway musical *Fucking Identical Twins*, *Dicks: The Musical* brings back original musical creators and stars Josh Sharp and Aaron Jackson for a higher-budget cinematic recreation. The film follows the story of two self-obsessed businessmen who come to discover that they're actually long-lost identical twins, having been separated from each other at a young age. With their newfound discovery, they hatch a scheme to reunite their eccentric divorced parents so that they can be one big happy family. Just like the original musical, *Dicks: The Musical* is a wildly crass and chaotic satire of musicals as a whole, revelling in the absurdity and the unpredictable nature of its songs and comedy. The story mostly takes a back seat to the comedy and songs, ranging from great renditions of already hilarious songs from the original musical to new, iconic additions, such as the song featuring Megan Thee Stallion. While the film received mostly positive to mixed reception from critics, it's the type of film that is built to amass a powerful following and become a cult classic in the years to come.

Dicks: The Musical

R

Comedy / Musical

Cast: Josh Sharp, Aaron Jackson, Nathan Lane, Bowen Yang, Megan Mullally, Megan Thee Stallion

9***Mean Girls (2024)***

Directed by Arturo Perez Jr & Samantha Jayne



Image via Paramount Pictures

Adapted from the stage musical that was in itself adapted from the teen movie classic, *Mean Girls* follows new exchange student Cady Heron (Angourie Rice) in her struggles adjusting to the social climate of high school. The school is run by the terrorising trio of girls known as "The Plastics", with their ruthless leader, Regina George (Renee Rapp) holding an iron grip over the entire school. Cady is soon enticed by her new friends to infiltrate The Plastics and destroy them from the inside, but it doesn't take long before Cady begins to enjoy the pleasures of being at the top of the social ladder. It's difficult for any modern remake to live up to the original film, especially when the original film is something as iconic and beloved as 2004's *Mean Girls*. However, 2024's *Mean Girls* decision to adapt the stage musical gives it a completely different energy and identity from the original film, allowing them to co-exist despite telling the same story. The film is an absolute love letter to fans of the stage musical, perfectly adapting songs to the medium of film as well as bringing over several iconic cast members directly from Broadway.

Mean Girls**PG-13****Musical / Comedy****Cast:** John Hamm, Angourie Rice, Ashley Park, Jenna Fischer**8*****The Little Mermaid (2023)***

Directed by Rob Marshall



Image via Walt Disney Studios

A live-action remake of the original Walt Disney Renaissance classic, *The Little Mermaid* follows the story of Ariel, a young mermaid who has wild aspirations of exploring what the world has to offer beyond the sea. However, mermaids are forbidden from interacting with humans, a facet made worse by the fact that Ariel has begun to develop a crush on Prince Eric. In an act of rebellion against her father, Ariel makes a deal with the evil sea witch, Ursula, giving her a chance to experience life on land, but she is soon placed on a timer as her life and the entire kingdom are in jeopardy. The Disney live-action remakes have been incredibly hit or miss over the years, with some being genuine upgrades to the original, like *The Jungle Book*, while others are outright terrible, such as with *Pinocchio*. *The Little Mermaid* is certainly on the more positive side of things, with some exceptional visuals and a great leading vocal performance from Halle Bailey as Ariel. While still not as high quality as the masterpiece original film, 2023's *The Little Mermaid* is far from being devoid of qualities, being one of the most memorable and well-crafted live-action remakes by Disney.

The Little Mermaid (2023)

PG

Animation / Fantasy / Musical

Cast: Halle Bailey, Jonah Hauer-King, Melissa McCarthy, Javier Bardem

7

Roald Dahl's Matilda the Musical (2022)

Directed by Matthew Warchus



Image via Netflix

Adapted from the classic Roald Dahl novel, *Matilda the Musical* follows the story of Matilda, a bright young girl who wants nothing more than to learn and experience the joys of life. However, nearly every aspect of her life seems to find a way to bring her down, from her ignorant family to the super-strict superintendent at her new school. However, after Matilda discovers her potential and unearths her superpowers, she begins to do what she can to help others and take charge of her destiny, standing up for what is right. It's difficult not to want to compare *Matilda the Musical* to the iconic and incredibly charming '90s adaptation of *Matilda*, but much like before, being a musical allows it to stand on its own, and in some ways surpass the original. The songs, choreography, and production design are all massive highlights for *Matilda the Musical*, bringing to life the world and characters in such a distinct and powerful way to make them especially stand out. The film also more closely parallels and adapts the original novel and stage play over the '90s film, so while some plot changes may be a bit jarring for fans of the '90s film, it's still certainly worth checking out thanks to its incredibly high quality.

Matilda the Musical

PG

Musical / Adventure / Comedy / Family

Cast: Alisha Weir, Lashana Lynch, Stephen Graham; Andrea Riseborough, Emma Thompson

6

Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey (2020)

Directed by David E. Talbert



Image via Netflix

Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey follows the fantastical and imaginative world of eccentric toymaker Jeronimus Jangle (Forest Whitaker), who is world-renowned for his masterful work as a toymaker. However, after his apprentice, Gustafson, steals his book of inventions to start his own toyshop, Jangle falls into a deep depression and hasn't created toys for 30 years. Now his young granddaughter, Journey, has arrived at his doorstep with her own passion for inventing, looking to lift Jangle's spirits to bring back the legendary toymaker inside of him. It can be especially difficult for an original movie musical to stand out in the modern era of IP repetition, as studios and audiences are more likely to give attention to franchises and remakes over new stories. This makes it all the more impactful and notable when an original movie musical like *Jingle Jangle*, which is filled to the brim with a highly creative steampunk Christmas aesthetic and incredibly catchy songs, arrives. The film is easily one of the best Christmas movies of recent memory, and will only continue to cement itself as a modern holiday classic in the years to come.

Jingle Jangle: A Christmas Journey

PG

Musical

Cast: Forest Whitaker, Keegan Michael Key, Hugh Bonneville, Anika Noni Rose, Phylicia Rashad

5

Wonka (2023)

Directed by Paul King



Image via Warner Bros

Acting as a prequel and origin story to the legendary Willy Wonka character, *Wonka* sees Willy Wonka's initial adventure and quest to become a renowned chocolate maker. As he travels to the chocolate capital of the world in search of becoming the next big name in chocolate, he faces numerous hurdles on his way, from predatory hotel owners to corrupt monopolistic businessmen who own the police force. Still, he manages to stay ever optimistic and gleeful, able to prove to everyone just what he's capable of, one bite at a time. Director Paul King has always had a knack and talent for creating films filled with whimsy and wholesome charm, something ever-present in his legendary *Paddington* duology. This combination of childlike wonder and quirky charm lends itself perfectly to the movie musical genre in *Wonka*, finding the perfect balance between wit and purity that made the original films so great. The original songs are also all as delightful as Wonka himself, doing a great service to the character's legacy.

Wonka

PG

Fantasy / Adventure / Children / Family

Cast: Timothee Chalamet, Hugh Grant, Olivia Colman, Keegan Michael Key, Rowan Atkinson, Sally Hawkins

4

The Color Purple (2023)

Directed by Blitz Bazawule



Image via IMDb

A modern musical rendition of the iconic period drama, *The Color Purple* is a story told across multiple decades of the struggles and tribulations of Celie Harris-Johnson (Fantasia Barrino). From losing contact with her sister at a young age from being forced into a painful and unrelenting relationship for years, Celie manages to find a way to stay resilient and headstrong even in the worst of times. Celie's life suddenly turns around after an encounter with independent jazz singer Shug Avery (Taraji P Henson), who begins to teach Celie the ways and importance of standing up for oneself. *The Color Purple* was already a massively beloved and iconic novel, film, and stage musical before this film adaptation of the musical was announced, giving it a lot of pressure to succeed. The movie musical managed to floor and exceed all expectations possible, with a perfect balance of powerful emotional moments, resonating performances, and beautiful renditions of classic songs to create a cinematic experience for the ages.

While it was largely snubbed at the Academy Awards aside from a single nomination for Best Supporting Actress for Danielle Brooks, it continues to have a diehard fanbase that will continue to praise the film from the rooftops.

The Color Purple

PG-13

Drama / Musical

Cast: Fantasia Barrino; Danielle Brooks, Halle Bailey, Taraji P Henson, Elizabeth Marvel, David Alan Grier, Colman Domingo, Louis Gossett Jr

3 *Encanto* (2021)

Directed by Byron Howard & Jared Bush



Image via Walt Disney Studios

Easily Disney's biggest and most acclaimed animated smash hit of the decade so far, *Encanto* has quickly and efficiently risen through the ranks to be one of Disney's greatest musical outings. The film follows the story of the Madrigals, an extraordinary family living hidden in the mountains of Colombia where each family member has their own special gift and magical power bestowed by their magical house. The lone exception is Mirabel, who didn't receive a gift, yet she finds herself at the centre of a terrifying mystery that has the potential to destroy everything their family has worked towards. With a powerful story of family bonds and generational trauma, as well as an instantly iconic soundtrack by Lin Manuel Miranda, *Encanto* felt like the first true Disney animated musical in a long time. Its soundtrack has made it endlessly rewatchable while at the same time finding a way to stay just as powerful and thematically resonate on any number of repeat viewings. Especially when the majority of Disney's animated outings in the decade have been largely forgotten or underwhelming, *Encanto* stands out to show that the studio still has that classic Disney magic.

Encanto

Animation

2 *tick, tick ... Boom!* (2021)

Directed by Lin-Manuel Miranda



Image via Netflix

Adapted from the original semi-autobiographical stage musical, *tick tick ... Boom!* follows legendary playwright Jonathan Larson (Andrew Garfield) in his struggles and attempts to write the perfect musical to enter the theatre industry. With Larson on the cusp of his 30th birthday and still working in the same tired old cafe, he is beginning to lose hope as he believes he has but one final shot to make it big and create a work of art that will outlive him. At the same time, Larson finds himself having to balance his artistry with tragedy, love, and a near-infinite amount of pressure placed upon him. While Larson's more iconic musical endeavour, *RENT*, is more commonly recognised and given attention, with its movie musical release in the 2000s, *tick, tick ... Boom!* is finally given its glorious chance to shine in the world of cinema. The film brilliantly recaptures Larson's signature artistic voice, thanks both to the brilliant lead performance from Garfield as well as the unexpectedly great directing chops of Lin-Manuel Miranda. It's as deeply emotional and painful as it is full of energy and charm, making for what is easily the quintessential movie musical of the streaming era.

tick, tick ... Boom!

Musical

Cast: Andrew Garfield, Vanessa Hudgens, Bradley Whitford, Alexandra Shipp, Judith Light, Joanna Adler

WEST SIDE STORY (2021)

Directed by Steven Spielberg



Image via 20th Century Studios

A modern remake of the Best Picture-winning movie musical classic, *WEST SIDE STORY* is a retelling of *Romeo and Juliet* set in 1950s New York and dealing with the struggles between rival gangs. The film follows Tony and Maria, who, despite living completely different lives and being a part of rival gangs who are at each other's throats constantly, find themselves miraculously falling in love. As tensions continue to rise between the two gangs, the love between Tony and Maria continues to grow more dangerous, eventually leading to the inevitable tragedy. Remaking a widely beloved Best Picture-winning film is no small task, yet if any filmmaker can pull it off, it's Steven Spielberg, a living masterpiece in his own right. Even though Spielberg had never directed a musical before this point, *WEST SIDE STORY* makes the case that this is the genre of film that he should have been creating from the beginning. The film has a masterful combination of beautiful production design, out-of-this-world choreography, and fast-paced editing to make the film somehow even rival the original film. While the film sadly bombed at the box office, having to compete against *Spider-Man: No Way Home*, it has since earned a considerable number of fans who have come to appreciate the masterful filmmaking on display.

WEST SIDE STORY

PG-13

Musical

Cast: Ansel Elgort, Rachel Zegler, Rita Moreno, Luke Whoriskey, Ariana DeBose, David Alvarez

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Robert Lee III (184 articles published)

Writing from the Chicagoland area in Illinois, Robert is an avid movie watcher and will take just about any excuse to find time to go to his local movie theatres. Robert graduated from Bradley University with degrees in Journalism and Game Design with a minor in Film Studies. Robert tries his best to keep up with all the latest movie releases, from those released in theatres to those released on streaming. While he doesn't always keep up with the latest TV shows, he will watch upwards of 125 new movie releases over the course of a calendar year. He has been honing his craft and following any and all movie news all his life, leading up to now, where he has a vast knowledge of film and film history. He also logs every movie that he watches on his Letterboxd page, and has hosted a weekly online movie night with his closest friends for over five years. His favourite movies are *Fantastic Mr. Fox*, *Do the Right Thing*, *A Town Called Panic* and *Josie and the Pussycats*.



2024 Tony Award Nominations

Alexandra Appleton – 30 April 2024

The 2024 Tony Award nominations are out and while there are some dazzling star names leading the nominations, there were also several notable snubs on the Great White Way. So let's take a look into who's shining this year and who has been left out in the cold.

Let's get the big-hitters out of the way first! The Alicia Keys jukebox musical *Hell's Kitchen* leads the pack with 13 nominations, alongside new play *Stereophonic*, which set a Tony Award record for the most nominations for a play. Meanwhile Stephen Sondheim and George Furth's *Merrily We Roll Along* continues to prove that even a first-time flop can become a smash-hit revival with seven nominations at this year's awards. Three of those go to its leading actors and here is where we start to see the influx of big names leading the pack. *Harry Potter* and *FROZEN* are both represented with nominations for Daniel Radcliffe and Jonathan Groff, alongside their co-star, Lindsay Mendez.

There were several other big screen names who received nominations this morning, including Sarah Paulson for *Appropriate*, Rachel McAdams for *Mary Jane*, Jessica Lange and Jim Parsons for *Mother Play*, Amy Ryan and Liev Schreiber for *Doubt: A Parable*, and Eddie Redmayne for *CABARET*. However, the London transfer of Rebecca Frecknall's *CABARET* revival received a decidedly mixed "Willkommen" when it arrived on Broadway, despite being one of the hottest (and most expensive) tickets in town. And the response from the Tony Awards committee seems to take the same tack. While its stars Redmayne, Gayle Rankin, Bebe Neuwirth, and Steven Skybell have been nominated in all four acting categories, Frecknall's name is notably absent from the Best Director nominees.

And Frecknall is not the only notable snub on the list of nominees. The original 1975 production of *THE WIZ* may have earned seven Tony awards when it arrived on Broadway, but the much-anticipated revival didn't get a single nod this time around. Meanwhile, Broadway veterans Brian d'Arcy James and Kelli O'Hara picked up nominations for their performances in *Days of Wine and Roses*, as did Maryann Plunkett and Dorian Harewood for *The Notebook*, but neither show managed to wriggle its way into the Best Musical category. Steve Carrell also failed to make the grade with his performance in *Uncle Vanya*, while Barry Manilow is a notable absence from the Best Original Score category for *Harmony*.

But there's one other trend running through the awards this year that we simply can't ignore. Seven out of 10 Director nominees are female, with Anne Kauffman, Lila Neugebauer and Whitney White nominated for best direction of a play, and Maria Friedman, Leigh Silverman, Jessica Stone and Danya Taymor in contention for best direction of a musical. When we think that only 10 women, beginning in 1998, have ever won Tony Awards for directing, this is a bit of trivia we're happy to end on!

Fun fact! Danya Taymor is the niece of Julie Taymor, the first woman to win Best Director of a Musical for her work on THE LION KING.

Ariana DeBose will host the ceremony for the third time on 16 June at the Lincoln Center's David H. Koch Theater.

The list of nominees include ...

Best Musical

- *Hell's Kitchen*
- *Illinois*
- *The Outsiders*
- *Suffs*
- *Water for Elephants*

Best Play

- *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*
- *Mary Jane*
- *Mother Play*
- *Prayer for the French Republic*
- *Stereophonic*

Best Revival of a Play

- *Appropriate*
- *An Enemy of the People*
- *Purlie Victorious*

Best Revival of a Musical

- *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*
- *Gutenberg! The Musical!*
- *Merrily We Roll Along*
- *The Who's Tommy*

Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical

- Brody Grant – *The Outsiders*
- Jonathan Groff – *Merrily We Roll Along*
- Dorian Harewood – *The Notebook*
- Brian d’Arcy James – *Days of Wine and Roses*
- Eddie Redmayne – *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*

Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Musical

- Eden Espinosa – *Lempicka*
- Maleah Joi Moon – *Hell’s Kitchen*
- Kelli O’Hara – *Days of Wine and Roses*
- Maryann Plunkett – *The Notebook*
- Gayle Rankin – *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*

Best Performance by an Actor in a Leading Role in a Play

- William Jackson Harper – *Uncle Vanya*
- Leslie Odom Jr – *Purlie Victorious*
- Liev Schreiber – *Doubt*
- Jeremy Strong – *An Enemy of the People*
- Michael Stuhlbarg – *Patriots*

Best Performance by an Actress in a Leading Role in a Play

- Betsy Aidem – *Prayer for the French Republic*
- Jessica Lange – *Mother Play*
- Rachel McAdams – *Mary Jane*
- Sarah Paulson – *Appropriate*
- Amy Ryan – *Doubt*

Best Performance by an Actor in a Featured Role in a Musical

- Roger Bart – *Back to the Future: The Musical*
- Joshua Boone – *The Outsiders*
- Brandon Victor Dixon – *Hell’s Kitchen*
- Sky Lakota-Lynch – *The Outsiders*
- Daniel Radcliffe – *Merrily We Roll Along*
- Steven Skybell – *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*

Best Performance by an Actress in a Featured Role in a Musical

- Shoshana Bean – *Hell’s Kitchen*
- Amber Iman – *Lempicka*
- Nikki M James – *Suffs*
- Leslie Rodriguez Kritzer – *Monty Python’s Spamalot*
- Kecia Lewis – *Hell’s Kitchen*
- Lindsay Mendez – *Merrily We Roll Along*
- Bebe Neuwirth – *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*

Best Scenic Design of a Musical

- AMP featuring Tatiana Kahvegian – *The Outsiders*
- Robert Brill & Peter Nigrini – *Hell's Kitchen*
- Takeshi Kata – *Water for Elephants*
- David Korins – *Here Lies Love*
- Riccardo Hernández & Peter Nigrini – *Lempicka*
- Tim Hatley & Finn Ross – *Back To The Future: The Musical*
- Tom Scutt – *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*

Best Costume Design of a Musical

- Dede Ayite – *Hell's Kitchen*
- Linda Cho – *The Great Gatsby*
- David Israel Reynoso – *Water for Elephants*
- Tom Scutt – *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*
- Paul Tazewell – *Suffs*

Best Lighting Design of a Musical

- Brandon Stirling Baker – *Illinoise*
- Isabella Byrd – *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*
- Natasha Katz – *Hell's Kitchen*
- Bradley King & David Bengali – *Water for Elephants*
- Brian MacDevitt & Hana S Kim – *The Outsiders*

Best Sound Design of a Musical

- M L Dogg & Cody Spencer – *Here Lies Love*
- Kai Harada – *Merrily We Roll Along*
- Nick Lidster for Autograph – *Cabaret at the Kit Kat Club*
- Gareth Owen – *Hell's Kitchen*
- Cody Spencer – *The Outsiders*

Best Direction of a Musical

- Maria Friedman – *Merrily We Roll Along*
- Michael Greif – *Hell's Kitchen*
- Leigh Silverman – *Suffs*
- Jessica Stone – *Water for Elephants*
- Danya Taymor – *The Outsiders*

Best Direction of a Play

- Daniel Aukin – *Stereophonic*
- Anne Kauffman – *Mary Jane*
- Kenny Leon – *Purlie Victorious*
- Lila Neugebauer – *Appropriate*
- Whitney White – *Jaja's African Hair Braiding*

Best Book of a Musical

- Kristoffer Diaz – *Hell's Kitchen*
- Bekah Brunstetter – *The Notebook*
- Adam Rapp & Justin Levine – *The Outsiders*
- Shaina Taub – *Suffs*
- Rick Elice – *Water for Elephants*

Best Original Score (Music and/or Lyrics) Written for the Theatre

- Adam Guettel – *Days of Wine and Roses*
- David Byrne & Fatboy Slim – *Here Lies Love*
- Will Butler – *Stereophonic*
- Shaina Taub – *Suffs*
- Jamestown Revival (Jonathan Clay & Zach Chance) & Justin Levine – *The Outsiders*

Best Orchestrations

- Timo Andres – *Illinoise*
- Will Butler & Justin Craig – *Stereophonic*
- Justin Levine, Matt Hinkley & Jamestown Revival (Jonathan Clay & Zach Chance) – *The Outsiders*
- Tom Kitt & Adam Blackstone – *Hell's Kitchen*
- Jonathan Tunick – *Merrily We Roll Along*

Best Choreography

- Annie-B Parson – *Here Lies Love*
- Camille A Brown – *Hell's Kitchen*
- Rick Kuperman & Jeff Kuperman – *The Outsiders*
- Justin Peck – *Illinoise*
- Jesse Robb & Shana Carroll – *Water for Elephants*

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WICKED becomes tenth longest-running show in West End history

[Alex Wood](#) – 24 April 2024

Rejoicify – *WICKED* has made the Top 10!



Lucy St. Louis and Alexia Khadime in *Wicked*, © Matt Crockett

On 24 April, *WICKED* became the tenth longest-running show in West End history. The show, which continues its open-ended run at the Apollo Victoria Theatre, played its 6,762nd performance – overtaking *No Sex Please, We're British*, which ran from June 1971 until September 1987, playing a total of 6,761 performances. The musical, which has received over 100 global awards, features music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz, with the book by Winnie Holzman.

Currently forming the West End Top 10 are therefore *The Mousetrap*, *Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *The Woman in Black*, *BLOOD Brothers*, *MAMMA MIA!*, *CATS*, *THE LION KING*, *STARLIGHT EXPRESS*, and now *WICKED*. Of those, *The Woman in Black*, *BLOOD Brothers*, *CATS* and *STARLIGHT EXPRESS* are no longer running in the West End. Michael McCabe, executive producer of *WICKED* in the UK said, "As we celebrate the historic milestone of becoming the West End's tenth longest ever running stage show, we offer our heartfelt thanks to the amazing audiences who have supported and championed *WICKED* since its very first performance in 2006. We also thank our exceptional creative and backstage teams, performers, and musicians who have worked so tirelessly and diligently to deliver every performance of the show."



New musicals ready to shake up the UK theatre landscape

[Alex Wood](#) – 25 April 2024

Speaking at the UK Musical Theatre Conference recently, producer and venue owner Nica Burns stated that British musical theatre is "in the best place it's ever been". Success stories certainly back up that claim – five-star homegrown hits like [Operation Mincemeat](#) and [Two Strangers \(Carry A Cake Across New York\)](#) prove there's exciting work being presented to the public in the West End and beyond. What's notable in these two cases is that they were not overnight sensations – both shows had creatives and producers willing to patiently fine-tune and re-tool the material until it is ready. These two are only the beginning – coming up over the next few months in London are the likes of Martha Geelan and Jack Godfrey's [Babies](#), which plays at the Other Palace, and West End transfers for [Kathy and Stella Solve a Murder!](#) And [The Curious Case of Benjamin Button](#), both at the intimate Ambassadors Theatre – all also developed gradually and amassing a devoted online following. The minds behind *Six* will also be reuniting for their second offering, [Why Am I So Single?](#), while sell-out hit [Cable Street](#) will be returning for a second run after wowing Southwark Playhouse audiences earlier this year. These will all be sitting side by side with big imports from abroad – including *Mean Girls*, *The Devil Wears Prada*, Dolly Parton hit *Here You Come Again*, and *Fangirls*. But new musical theatre shouldn't be reserved for the capital. It's exciting to see the chatter coming from Godfrey's [42 Balloons](#), which is currently in previews at the Lowry in Salford, while Manchester and Glasgow will be treated to the world premiere of [Burlesque the Musical](#) this summer. Equally intriguing is Pippa Evans (award-winning comedian and core member of the Showstoppers) tackling the "NOW" album collection with new show [NOW That's What I Call A Musical](#) on tour, while Birmingham will have the songs of Steps to enjoy with *Here and Now* this autumn. The Edinburgh Fringe already feels like it'll have a wealth of new musicals on offer this summer – with some corkers being revealed very soon.



***Two Strangers (Carry A Cake Across New York)* review – sweet, sugary and a sure-fire West End success**

Alex Wood – 24 April 2024



Dujonna Gift and Sam Tutty, © Tristram Kenton

Not every hit musical has to be about something seismic or historic, like winning the Second World War, or the Founding Fathers, or the six wives of Henry VIII. Some can be heartfelt, intimate, messy and utterly endearing – as proven by *Two Strangers (Carry A Cake Across New York)*. First seen as [The Season in Northampton](#) before being rechristened when it was reinvented at London's Kiln Theatre, the show now settles into a lengthy stay within the cosy confines of the chocolate box Criterion Theatre. Arriving as part of the wave of new, homegrown musicals that seem to be washing into the West End ([Kathy and Stella Solve A Murder!](#), [The Curious Case of Benjamin Button](#), [Operation Mincemeat](#) and more are comrades-in-arms), Jim Barne and Kit Buchan's *Two Strangers* does exactly what it says on the tin – spending 36 hours in the company of two lost souls who rock their way around the Big Apple, with the occasional baked-good-related hijink. The souls in question are Dougal (Sam Tutty) – a cherubic, chipper mid-20s Brit flying over for his dad's wedding, and Robin (Dujonna Gift) – the 20-something sister of the bride tasked with meeting him at the airport. Dysfunctional, disastrous and downright hilariously paired, the duo embark on a two-act rollercoaster ride through fraught familial drama, earnest musical confession and comedic caper. And when I say comedic, Barne and Buchan's book is up there with the funniest in the West End right now – both Tutty and Gift have the audiences in the palms of their hands with every wisecrack, wordplay and whimsy. Tutty revels in Dougal's oddball energy (worlds away from his star-making turn in *Dear Evan Hansen*), while Gift peels away the layers of the curmudgeonly Robin with masterly precision. The pair can sing, obviously, but here they succeed first and foremost as comedic performers – embellishing their two characters with enough nuance and charisma to carry an audience's attention through two acts. Anyone pining for lashings of feel-good rom-com energy will leave belly-full – the audience on opening night were in stitches throughout. Cast out into a city full of dreams, drama and contradiction, Dougal and Robin perfectly sum up the late-millennial paradox – constantly striving for a sense of self in an overwhelming environment that never offers easy answers. The tunes themselves are for the most part big, catchy and chipper. There's also verve – a fantastic patter number kicks off act two, pulled from the sheet music of comic opera and delivered with incredible diction from Gift. Which means that *Two Strangers* is as good a night out in the West End as you can get. Director Tim Jackson keeps the pace fleet – sentimentality is alighted upon, but never overindulged.

He essentially captures the experience of a whistle-stop trip to New York – chaotic, bright, bold and relentless. It's helped no-end by Soutra Gilmour's unimposing yet versatile snow-globe set. The rom-com format can go one of two ways – bold or banal. What Barne and Buchan's book displays, through its conclusion, is a sense of ardent maturity and poise, fine-tuned by years of development – never resorting to easy-win tropes but taking harder-fought routes to keenly-felt catharsis. This is a show that both has its cake and eats it. With gusto.

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The Broadway revival of *The Wiz* welcomes a new generation to Oz on opening night

Hayley Levitt – 23 April 2024



Kyle Ramar Freeman, Nichelle Lewis, Wayne Brady, Phillip Johnson Richardson and Avery Wilson in *The Wiz* (Photo: Jeremy Daniel)

[The Wiz](#) – the beloved, Black retelling of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* – celebrated its official Broadway opening at the Marquis Theatre on 17 April. Settling into their Broadway home on the heels of a whirlwind national tour, the show stars [Nichelle Lewis](#) as Dorothy, [Deborah Cox](#) as Glinda, [Melody A. Betts](#) as Aunt Em/Evillene, [Kyle Ramar Freeman](#) as the Lion, [Phillip Johnson Richardson](#) as the Tinman, [Avery Wilson](#) as the Scarecrow and [Wayne Brady](#) as The Wiz. The production is directed in its new iteration by Schele Williams, who brings *The Wiz* home for the first time in 40 years, drawing on plenty of nostalgia while also adapting the musical for a new century. "It is so cool to share *The Wiz* with a new generation of kids," Amber Ruffin told The Broadway Show on the red carpet, reflecting on her new contributions to the musical's original book by William F. Brown. "When I was a kid and I saw *The Wiz*, it really changed the way I saw my place in the world. I'm hoping this will do [that] for a new set of cute little brown babies." "This is a production that means the world to our culture," added Cox, a Broadway veteran whose opening-night ensemble paid homage to her glittering gold Glinda costume. "It's everything that I've aspired to be as a Broadway performer, and this is the show that you want to be in when you want to reflect that." "*The Wiz* changed my life," affirmed Williams, who makes her Broadway debut as a solo director with *The Wiz* (she also co-directs this season's [The Notebook](#)). "To be able to be here on opening night on the rebirth of this incredible musical is exhilarating."

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***Hell's Kitchen* celebrates its Broadway opening with a spirit of possibility and belonging**

Hayley Levitt – 22 April 2024



Maleah Joi Moon and the cast of *Hell's Kitchen* (Photo: Marc J. Franklin)

Hell's Kitchen, the new Broadway musical inspired by multi-Grammy Award-winning singer-songwriter Alicia Keys' New York upbringing and set to her R&B hits, opened at the Shubert Theatre on 20 April. Directed by Michael Greif with a book by Kristoffer Diaz, the show stars [Maleah Joi Moon](#) as Ali, Tony nominee [Shoshana Bean](#) as Jersey, Tony nominee [Brandon Victor Dixon](#) as Davis, [Chris Lee](#) as Knuck and [Kecia Lewis](#) as Miss Liza Jane. "Magic like this does not happen often," Bean said to *The Broadway Show* on the red carpet. "You're seeing a mother on Broadway like you've never seen before. You're seeing an interracial couple on Broadway. You're seeing a mixed-race child on Broadway. We're doing a lot of exciting thing." "It's so corny", added Moon, who makes her Broadway debut with this production. "But the marquee says, 'remember where dreams begin.' And I just keep thinking about how little me would be so proud to know that we made it here." "Growing up in Hell's Kitchen, there was a lot of darkness," Keys said, celebrating the night alongside her cast and creative team. "But there was also this possibility that I think Broadway represented." Now opening the door to audiences like her younger self who saw Broadway as a far-off place, Keys hopes to spread the word, "You belong here and you're going to love it."

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Huey Lewis and the stars of *The Heart of Rock and Roll* celebrate their Broadway opening

Darryn King – 22 April 2024

The Heart of Rock and Roll, the upbeat new romcom musical set to the songs of '80s hitmakers Huey Lewis and the News, celebrated its arrival on Broadway ahead of an official opening night at the James Earl Jones Theatre on 22 April. Broadway.com hit the hot pink carpet – yes, hot pink – to speak with the stars and Lewis himself. "I wish I could bottle it and save it for tomorrow morning," Lewis, who was accompanied on the pink carpet by Cyndi Lauper and Jimmy Kimmel, said of the opening-night vibes. "I love Broadway."

I knew nothing of Broadway 'til I saw *MAMMA MIA!* A neighbor asked me to go see *MAMMA MIA!* with him, and I thought, 'Ugh, I'm not gonna like this. I'm a rock and roller. Broadway?' And I loved it." "What Huey does is he writes from his soul," said [Corey Cott](#), who plays Bobby, the frontman of a struggling rock band in the show. "That's what makes it so effortless to bring into a musical and so easy to act." [McKenzie Kurtz](#), who plays Bobby's love interest, Cassandra, singled out the orchestrations of Brian Usifer for praise. "A lot of them sound completely different than the original material, so it's been really cool to sing all of this music," she said. "Oh man, it's everything," said [Tamika Lawrence](#), who plays the character of Roz in the show. "I grew up listening to Huey's music, so to have the honor to sing it every night—I don't take it lightly."



Eddie Redmayne, Gayle Rankin and more toast *CABARET*'s return to Broadway

Hayley Levitt – 23 April 2024



Gayle Rankin, Eddie Redmayne and the cast of *CABARET* (Photo: Marc Brenner)

[CABARET](#) is back on Broadway in the fifth mounting of John Kander, Fred Ebb and Joe Masteroff's classic musical since its 1966 premiere. This production – Rebecca Frecknall's Olivier Award-winning revival that crossed the ocean with its Olivier Award-winning Emcee, [Eddie Redmayne](#) – opened at the August Wilson Theatre on 21 April, also starring [Gayle Rankin](#) as Sally Bowles, with [Ato Blankson-Wood](#) as Cliff, [Bebe Neuwirth](#) as Fraulein Schneider and [Steven Skybell](#) as Herr Schultz. Chatting with *The Broadway Show* on the opening-night red carpet, Redmayne credited *CABARET* as the piece that made him fall in love with theater. "The fact that I get to do it here in New York on Broadway – for a British actor, that's the stuff that dreams are made of." "I love playing Sally," said Rankin, whose last Broadway turn was in the 2014 revival of *CABARET* as Fraulein Kost. "I hope that [audiences] fall in love with her. I hope that they see her. I hope they listen to her, and reexamine the relationship with her prior, and just meet her in the present." "I understand the magnitude of this particular piece," noted Blankson-Wood amid the opening-night hubbub. "The fact that we get to introduce this to a new generation of people who will probably fall in love with this musical, and musicals at large, makes me feel like I'm really paying it forward."

