

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST OF AUSTRALIA

Report by – KELLIE DICKERSON – 2013 Churchill Fellow

THE GILBERT SPOTTISWOOD CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP TO STUDY THE
ROLE OF MUSICAL DIRECTOR IN THE CREATION OF ORIGINAL MUSICAL
THEATRE WORKS – USA

I understand that the Churchill Trust may publish this Report, either in hard copy or on the internet or both, and consent to such publication.

I indemnify the Churchill Trust against any loss, costs or damages it may suffer arising out of any claim or proceedings made against the Trust in respect of or arising out of the publication of any Report submitted to the Trust and which the Trust places on a website for access over the internet.

I also warrant that my Final Report is original and does not infringe the copyright of any person, or contain anything which is, or the incorporation of which into the Final Report is, actionable for defamation, a breach of any privacy law or obligation, breach of confidence, contempt of court, passing-off or contravention of any other private right or of any law.

Signed Kellie Dickerson

Dated 27/3/15

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----|
| Introduction | 4 |
| Executive Summary | 5 |
| Programme | 6 |
| Main Body Introduction | 10 |
| Section 1. Production | 11 |
| <i>How does the process of creating an original work begin?</i> | 11 |
| <i>Once a producer has secured a work for development, how are the creative teams structured?</i> | 11 |
| <i>At what point is the musical director brought into this process?</i> | 12 |
| <i>Once the decision has been made to develop a work, is there a structure to the creative process that generally works best?</i> | 13 |
| <i>From a producer’s perspective, what role does the musical director play in the creative team?</i> | 14 |
| <i>Once the creative team are in place, are producers involved in the basic structuring of the piece with storyboards etc?</i> | 14 |
| Section 2. Direction | 15 |
| <i>How does the process of creating an original work begin?</i> | 15 |
| <i>Once a director has decided that an idea has merit for development, what is their part in building the creative team? At what point is the musical director brought in?</i> | 16 |
| <i>Working with the creative team, who is involved in the basic structuring of the piece?</i> ...17 | 17 |
| <i>Transitions in contemporary musical theatre</i> | 18 |
| <i>From a director’s perspective, what are the main steps that should generally be in place to get from a concept for a new work to opening night?</i> | 19 |
| <i>Once the work is in rehearsal, what is the collaborative process between director and the rest of the creative team?</i> | 21 |
| <i>From a director’s perspective, what are the most important attributes of a musical director when creating a new work?</i> | 21 |
| Section 3. Music | 22 |
| <i>What are the elements important to a composer in structuring a score and deciding where a story ‘sings’?</i> | 23 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| <i>At what point in the process is a musical director usually brought in?.....</i> | <i>24</i> |
| <i>How does the format of the score vary when a musical director receives material from a composer?.....</i> | <i>24</i> |
| <i>When taking traditional song forms or more contained structures from a composer, what part, if any, does the musical director play in extending that form to create a theatrical number?.....</i> | <i>25</i> |
| <i>Does the musical director have an influence on the musical continuity (underscoring) of a piece?.....</i> | <i>26</i> |
| <i>What is the role of the musical director in relation to the composer?.....</i> | <i>27</i> |
| <i>What is the role of the musical director in relationship to the choreographer?.....</i> | <i>28</i> |
| <i>What is the role of the musical director in relationship to the orchestrator?.....</i> | <i>29</i> |
| <i>What is the role of the musical director in relationship to the lyricist/s?.....</i> | <i>31</i> |
| <i>What skills should a musical director bring to this role?.....</i> | <i>31</i> |
| <i>What advice would be most helpful to musical directors wanting to be involved in the creation of new works?.....</i> | <i>34</i> |
| Conclusions and Recommendations..... | 36 |

INTRODUCTION

Australia has a vibrant musical theatre industry, enthusiastically supported by audiences and respected by colleagues the world over. Our creation of new work has always been a part of this industry and continues to grow, and though the opportunities and funding to follow this long and expensive process through to a major production onstage are relatively infrequent, there are wonderful companies tenaciously producing great work. Whilst working on the development of a new musical in Australia I was inspired by the Broadway creative team who spent their professional lives creating new work only, and realised that our passion for musical theatre in Australia could benefit enormously from their knowledge and experience.

After travelling a number of times to this centre for excellence in musical theatre, the idea for this study project started to take shape. To have the opportunity to spend time in the midst of this enormous creative energy would allow me to surround myself with many people whose experience and skills are defining musical theatre around the world, to spend time with many creative artists who don't often (if at all) travel to Australia, to sit within the process at different stages, and experience a large number of projects in development. This kind of experience is only possible in the environs of places such New York, which is quite unique in its richness and diversity of new works presented every season, and Boston, a centre for higher learning and where many new works are trialled 'out of town' each year before moving to Broadway.

In 2014 I travelled to Boston and New York to undertake studies on the role of musical director in the creation of new works by interviewing specialists from different areas of this field: production, direction and music. I also attended a large number of performances, workshops, rehearsals, readings and recordings to listen to and observe practically the process we were discussing, and finally workshopped a small section of a new work with artists to incorporate their viewpoints and learn from their experience as performers.

I would like to gratefully acknowledge the support of the Gilbert Spottiswood Estate in providing this opportunity through the Churchill Trust. It has been an extraordinary experience and one not possible without the enthusiastic support for sharing knowledge that this trust and its sponsors give their Fellows. I would also like to extend my heartfelt thanks to the management at the Churchill Trust who are always ready to assist, and kindly advise on the exciting challenges that co-ordinating such a fellowship brings.

My deep and humble thanks to the artists, creatives and management who were so generous with their knowledge, and introductions to so many colleagues and performance events. This project expanded exponentially because of this generosity and openness of creative spirit, and their passion for creating excellence in theatre is truly inspiring. Finally, and especially, my thanks to Eric Stern, Lucy Simon and Stephen Oremus for their extraordinary kindness, openness and support, and for spending so much of their precious time and resources with me.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kellie Dickerson

PO Box 220 Camperdown NSW 1450
Musical Director, Pianist, Conductor
+61 419 984 045

THE GILBERT SPOTTISWOOD CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP TO STUDY THE ROLE OF MUSICAL DIRECTOR IN THE CREATION OF ORIGINAL MUSICAL THEATRE WORKS – USA

Project Description:

I spent six weeks in Boston and New York interviewing and working with specialists from all areas of the musical theatre industry, attending performances, workshops, readings, rehearsals, and recordings to engage practically with the processes we were discussing in detail. I also spent some time with artists coaching material from a new work to discuss the process of interpreting and learning new compositions when there are no reference points from existing recordings.

Highlights:

- *A week of sessions in Boston with Eric Stern analysing sections of a new work and receiving detailed insight on the role of a musical director
- *Being an active part of a recording session for a new work with Lucy Simon
- *Attending musical and stage rehearsals for the 2014 Tony Awards
- *A week of sessions in New York with Stephen Oremus looking at the process of arranging a composer's work, using his own arrangements as examples, then attending those works in Broadway theatres as finished productions both as audience and guest in the orchestral pit
- *Attending rehearsals for new musicals in development

Major lessons and conclusions:

- *The role and responsibilities of the musical director changes with every new work, depending on the composer and creative team
- *Even though the role changes, there are skills which will be used to a lesser or greater extent when creating new works. These include expert musicianship (probably as a pianist), vocal coaching, conducting, arranging, orchestration, structuring music, communication and management.
- *Musical directors must engage with new works on all levels to become a master at this speciality – not just by working on them but listening to new works, attending workshops and readings, listening to as many composers as possible both classical and popular to develop an ear for structure and compositional styles
- *I will disseminate this knowledge through master-classes, and through the advisory panels for New Musicals Australia, and the Australia Council supporting new musical works.
- *I will continue to implement these lessons by working on new productions in Australia and collaborating with directors, composers, orchestrators and artists.

PROGRAMME

May 13 – May 18, 2014. Boston, Massachusetts.

Daily work sessions and interviews with Eric Stern, Associate Professor, Berklee College of Music. These work sessions were conducted as a combination interviews (see the main body of the Fellowship report under ‘Music’), musical work at the piano analysing the score for a new work I had taken with me as a study example, and a new work he was preparing for production.

May 19 – June 24, 2014. New York, New York.

Interviews with industry specialists, rehearsals, work sessions, recordings, performances, workshops, readings as detailed below.

May 21

Interview with Michael Levine (musical director, vocal coach, repertoire specialist)
Performance of *Sleep No More* The McKittrick Hotel, 530 W27th St

May 22

Interview with Marcia Goldberg (producer, 321 Theatrical Management)

May 23

Interview with Tony Sheldon (performing artist)
Performance of *Here Lies Love*, The Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St
Performance of *Book of Mormon*, Eugene O’Neill Theatre (Broadway), 230 W49th St

May 24

Work session on new score, Michiko Studios, 149 W46th St
Performance of *If/Then*, Richard Rogers Theatre (Broadway), 226 W46th St
Performance of *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, Belasco Theatre (Broadway) 111 W44th St

May 25

Performance of *A Gentleman’s Guide to Love and Murder*, Walter Kerr Theatre (Broadway), 219 W48th St

May 27

Work session on new score, Michiko Studios
Interview with Des McAnuff (director)
Attending rehearsals for *Once*, Bernard Jacobs Theatre (Broadway), 242 W45th St
Performance cabaret *Courtenay Act*, Laurie Beecham Theatre Cnr 42nd and 9th St

May 28

Work session on new score, Michiko Studios
Performance of *Act One*, Lincoln Center Theatre, 150 W65th St

May 29

Work session on new score, Michiko Studios
 Interview with Lisa Leguillou (director)
 Backstage working with instrument tech on *Once* (as before)

May 30

Interview with Lucy Simon (composer)

May 31

Preliminary meeting with Stephen Oremus (musical director, arranger, orchestrator)
 Performance of *Violet*, American Airlines Theatre (Broadway), 227 W42nd St
 Preliminary meeting with Carmel Dean (musical director, arranger)
 Sitting in the orchestral pit for *If/Then* (as before)

June 1

Recording session with Lucy Simon and Eric Stern on new material for a reading
 Work session on new work Michiko studios
 Interview with Penny Tooker and Elizabeth Stiles (performing artists)
 Interview with Michael Lavine (musical director, vocal coach, repertoire specialist)

June 2

Audited Tony rehearsals with Stephen Oremus, Avatar Studios
 Work session new work with Lucy Simon
 Audited Tony rehearsals with Stephen Oremus, Avatar Studios

June 3

Interview with David Lazar (producer, Ambassador Theatre Group)
 Sitting in the orchestral pit for *Kinky Boots*, Al Hirschfeld Theatre (Broadway), 302 W45th St

June 4

Interview with Anita Waxman (independent theatrical producer)
 Audited Tony rehearsals with Emily Grishman (copyist)
 Interview with Lawrence Yurman (musical director, arranger)
 Recording session with Lucy Simon and Eric Stern on new material for a reading
 Interview with Jerry Mitchell (director, choreographer)
 Performance of *After Midnight*, Brooks Atkinson Theatre (Broadway), 256 W47th St, with Lisa Leguillou and continue interview afterwards

June 5

Audited a reading for a new work with Michael Kerker (Assistant Vice President, Musical Theatre and Cabaret, ASCAP, The American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers)
 Attended stage rehearsals for Tony Awards, Radio City Music Hall
 Performance *Lady Day*, Circle in the Square Theatre (Broadway) W50th St

June 6

Interview with Jason DeBord (musical director, arranger)
 Attended rehearsals for *Once* (as before)
 Performance Blue Note Jazz Club

June 7

Interview with Kaye Tuckerman and Matt Trent (performing artists)
 Performance *Rocky*, Wintergarden Theatre (Broadway), 1634 Broadway

June 8

Attended stage rehearsals for Tony Awards, Radio City Music Hall
 Attended the 2014 Tony Awards, Radio City Music Hall

June 9

Interview with Emily Grishman (copyist)

June 10

Reading/performance of *The Marshall Barer Project*, The York Theatre 54th St
 Interview Mary-Mitchell Campbell (musical director, arranger)

June 11

Interview Alecia Parker (Executive Producer)
 Performance *Pippin*, Music Box Theatre (Broadway), 239 W45th St
 Walk through and discussion of Emily Grishman offices
 Meeting Tony Meola (sound designer), Marcia Goldberg (producer)

June 12

Work session on new work, Michiko studios
 Interview with Carmel Dean (musical director, arranger)
 Interview with Jim Carnahan (casting agent)
 Performance *Fly By Night*, Mainstage Theatre Playwrights Horizons, 416 W42nd St

June 13

Audited open auditions with Paul Gemignani (musical director, arranger, orchestrator),
 Ripley Greer studios
 Work session on new work, Michiko studios
 Recording session with Lucy Simon (composer)

June 14

Interview with Michael Kosarin (musical director, arranger, orchestrator)
 Performance *Aladdin*, The New Amsterdam Theatre (Broadway), 214 W42nd St
 Performance *Beautiful*, Stephen Sondheim Theatre (Broadway), 124 W43rd St

June 15

Interview with Amelia Cormack (performing artist)

Performance *Bullets over Broadway*, St. James Theatre (Broadway), 246 W44th St

Interview Kelly Devine (choreographer)

June 17

Audited a repertoire class with Craig Carnelia (vocal coach, repertoire specialist)

Work session with Stephen Oremus (musical director, arranger, orchestrator)

June 18

Work session with Stephen Oremus

Attended rehearsals for *Once*, Bernard Jacobs Theatre

Interview with Danny Troob (orchestrator)

Performance *Heathers the Musical*, New World Stage, 340 W50th St

June 19

Work session with Stephen Oremus

Interview with Stephen Schwartz (composer)

Performance *Holler If You Hear Me* (opening night), The Palace Theatre (Broadway), 1564 Broadway

June 20

Interview Theodore S. Chapin (President and Executive Director, Rogers and Hammerstein: An Imagem Company)

Work session with Stephen Oremus

Attended rehearsals for *Neverland*

Audited *Once* backstage with instrument technician (as before)

June 21

Interview with Justin Bohon (performing artist) and Stephen Oremus

Interview with Martin Lowe (musical director, arranger, orchestrator)

Interview with John Tiffany (director)

June 22

Performance *Cabaret*, Studio 54 (Broadway), 254 W54th St

Interview with Patrick Vaccariello (musical director, arranger, orchestrator)

Interview with Lisa Leguillou (director)

June 23

Work session on new work with Elizabeth Stiles and Amelia Cormack (performing artists)

Performance *Swan Lake*, American Ballet, Metropolitan Opera, 30 Lincoln Center Plaza

MAIN FELLOWSHIP REPORT

Through the time I spent travelling and working with mentors in Boston and New York, I felt the most effective way to learn from this spectrum of experts was to formulate a set of questions to ask all involved, and then discuss the answers in a general manner without referring to any individual or work. In this way I can respect the confidence of those generous enough to share their knowledge, and still discuss the lessons learnt so that others may benefit from this experience.

The fellowship study project is divided into three main sections, and the materials/experiences used for these discussions are:

1. Production. Interviews with producers and management. Attendance at event rehearsals with production staff.
2. Direction. Interviews with directors, casting agents and dramaturgs, attendance at readings and castings.
3. Music. Interviews with musical directors, arrangers, composers, orchestrators and copyists. Attendance at performances, as well as sitting in orchestral pits and observing performances with the creatives for many productions. Attending workshops, recordings and rehearsals of new and established works.
Workshopping new material with performing artists.

In each of these sections a set of questions were asked particular to the perspective of the interviewee. The third section, 'Music', will make up the majority of this report, but the first two are fundamental areas for structuring a team, and actually a work itself, sometimes before the musical director is involved, and so they have an enormous influence on the role of the musical director in the creation of new works.

Some terms used in this report may be unfamiliar, so in the interests of clarity some brief explanations:

'creatives' the team of writers, plus those directly involved in creating the work whether it be word, music or movement. It would usually include composer, book writer, lyricist, director, musical director and choreographer.

'underscore' a term used to refer to the musical scoring that supports a scene and is not sung, but like a film score reflects or comments on the emotional content of a scene. Also referred to as 'musical continuity' as it unifies a score.

'storyboard' a process and actual board where the main scenes, songs and transitions are individually written on cards and moved around a board when the structure of a work is being developed

1. PRODUCTION

How does the process of creating an original work begin? Is it a lead producer who brings an idea to a creative team, or a team of writers who take their ideas to production houses in order to find a match for their work?

It seems to go both ways in terms of submissions, producers spend quite a bit of time going to independent readings to consider works presented by writers who need investment, or reading and listening to materials sent in for consideration, as well as considering their own ideas for development. From that point there are a number of possibilities. Firstly, they could decide that it's not for their company, but the creative team (writer, composer, lyricist) are interesting and there might be another work the production company hold the rights to (a book, a play, a movie) for which they are well suited, so a new relationship will build from there. Or, the core of the existing idea could be strong, but the producers feel it needs different elements for it to succeed – maybe a change of lyricist to better match the composer, or a different composer to better match the writing style of the book. Still another possibility, the work could be strong fundamentally and then it's about structuring a bigger team to take it to the next stage of development. There may alternatively be a group of artists that the producers are waiting to match to the right project, whether it's an exciting young band, composer or playwright, kept in mind from other workshops and presentations but not yet matched to the right piece.

Essentially each production company has an individual way of looking for projects, a unique style. Some will want to develop young writers, and others will want to adapt the masters, some will watch movies, some will read books. There are many ways to find new works and all have benefits and risks. Producers are constantly looking for new possibilities.

Once a producer has secured a work for development, how are the creative teams structured, given that this has such a great influence on the outcome of the work? What are the most important factors in this structure?

This fundamental level of deciding on a piece, then choosing and structuring a creative team for the development is extremely important. It's the producer's role to surround the project with the highest calibre of artists possible and the 'eye' of a producer can create the best possible combination of elements that will work together to bring a piece to life.

The foundation lies with choosing the writers: librettist (writing the 'book' or play in contemporary musical theatre), composer (music) and lyricist (lyrics) if the composer or librettist is not also the lyricist. The book is particularly important, as the storytelling needs to be compelling for the work to succeed as a whole.

Depending on the creatives present at the foundation level, the producers or other writers may ask a number of composers to write some material for the piece so they can hear the sound and decide if it's what they're looking for. It's about finding the voice for the characters, the landscape of the story.

The director will most often be brought in next with a vision for the work that complements, challenges and inspires the creators. Typically the writers have approval over the director, and then with the director approval over the musical director and possibly the designer. The remainder of the creative team at large are brought in after this as a match for the piece and the director.

In structuring the creative team the producer will look at where there is inexperience, and balance that with a complementary strength so that the team as a whole is strong. For example, if there is a novelist with strong ideas and language, a great passion but not the experience, they might be paired with a playwright, a dramaturg, or a director with a strong background in dramaturgy. An experienced composer might be paired with a new musical director, or an experienced choreographer with a director new to musical theatre. There should always be a balance in the team of inexperience, which brings new perspective and a willingness to take chances, and experience, which is able to creatively solve problems quickly and responsibly. The team should challenge each other, ideally with that difficult balance of tension and getting along – if everyone agrees all the time, it's possible the dramatic decisions aren't being justified.

The producers want to create a space where the director and authors have room to come up with a unique vision for a new work. Understandably because the financial risks are high, the producers or partners need to be conservative – but it's important that the creative process is single minded, not necessarily a group process. Most successful projects have artists with a clear vision given the space to create it. A producer has a responsibility to their partners for financial structures and returns, which is why the original structuring of a team is so important: once that is in place, there is usually a trust in their process and vision whilst managing the responsibilities of a very difficult business.

At what point is the musical director brought into this process?

This is generally agreed to be prior to the first reading. The expertise of a musical director is needed in the early stages to put the reading together musically, or sometimes to transcribe the composer's work and prepare the score for a reading. From that point onwards the musical director is involved in most creative discussions on the development of the work.

Once the decision has been made to develop a work, is there a structure to the creative process that generally works best?

There is a general process, which of course is altered to suit the requirements or the development of the piece. This would be:

- Table read. There may be many of these: actors and creative team sit around a table and hear the work read aloud. Actors don't learn the songs necessarily, the composer or musical director will sing them in and explain who is singing what.
- 29 hour read. This equates to 29 hours per actor, so with rostering it's about a week of work. Actors sit on stools/chairs, get up to read the parts and sing the songs. At this point the cast learn the music, however, it's not physically staged.
- Lab. If it's a show that will probably have a lot of movement or dance, this will have some development at this stage. If there's a speciality in the show, this will need some concentration and experimentation to work out the physical 'language' of the show, and possibly stage a couple of numbers or part numbers to give an indication of that in the next stage. This step is not always present, especially if the show isn't a heavy dance production.
- Workshop. Up to 4 weeks of working towards an audition to gain 'backers' or investors, if that's required, or working towards a presentation for writers and producers/investors to see how the work has developed, if it's ready to go to the next stage. Some directors will try to put together the whole show for the workshop, others will pick and choose what will be done. The whole show is read for this stage, but it's possible that only some numbers will be staged. The numbers are still read and 'workshopped' every day, a lot of changes and experiments are made.
- Tryout. Usually a short performance season outside of a main centre (such as New York) so the production can 'try out' the physical production elements and test the show in front of an audience before it moves to the spotlight of a main stage, and the critics reviews. Producers will build up relationships with subsidised organisations or theatre managers in cities such as Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and many others, in order to get these seasons up and running.

It's important that there is enough time to work on the piece between each of these stages, and if the piece needs it, to do more than one reading. Casting different people at different stages will also help the creative team to see the work more objectively rather than one actor's interpretation of the work. In this way everyone learns more about the piece. Once a piece is in development for production 'out of town' there's less time to make major changes. And once the production goes into rehearsal for a Broadway opening the costs escalate and there is dramatically less time for development.

From a producer's perspective, what role does the musical director play in the creative team? Does a producer have a direct working relationship with the musical director?

On a fundamental level, the musical director is the main advocate for the composer in the room, making sure the music stays with the composer's vision, and meshing the worlds of play and music together. Facilitating how the components of sound and movement work together, how musically the audience is taken through the story. The musical director needs to have a strong voice and know that they're entitled to one as that representative of the composer. Good communication would be generally the trait mentioned most as highly regarded in a musical director from a producer's perspective.

A producer wants the musical director or supervisor to manage the process of musical rehearsal and co-ordinate all the musical elements so that it keeps in step with the other departments. This includes the arrangers, orchestrators, copyists as well as running the rehearsal rooms with any musicians required, coaching for the artists and working with the director and choreographer daily to incorporate any changes into the score. They may be working with the producers to facilitate all of these elements, but creatively they will always be working with the director.

As the composer and director will be working directly with the musical director, they will both have a strong influence on the choice of person for the role. In addition the producer may wish to be a part of a small group conversation on what the sound of the show will be, certainly with what size orchestra will make sense. Since the musical director will often be arranging the music of the composer they have a direct impact on the sound and style of the show, and would be a part of this conversation.

In original musical theatre there is often a musical director and a musical supervisor to handle the amount of work to be done on the score. The distinction between the two positions and their roles is discussed in more detail in "Section 3. Music". In so far as the producer is concerned, all things musical should be handled and solved by the musical director/supervisor so that the rest of the creative team have what they need, and the development process runs smoothly.

Once the creative team are in place, are producers involved in the basic structuring of the piece with storyboards etc? Are there any restrictions from a producer's perspective that affect the artistic choices of the creative team?

Regarding the structuring and shaping of a piece, this depends on the director who will generally want their vision to be clear in direction without too much influence from outside the creative team. However producers will need to be well informed of the process, including where songs and scenes are being placed, even for a revival. It may be a matter of putting together collective notes as an overview and talking with the director rather than being a part of a creative team discussion. It is important to remain objective and be able to see what the focus is, what is being achieved in the room and keep that information flowing out of the room to the people investing in and managing the

production. The director is the editor and the producers act in a way as the filter for the piece – they listen to the show in a way that the audience is going to hear it.

As this process is costly and difficult, it's also important to set the parameters very early in the process for the creative team and especially director, so that all involved are moving in the same direction. These are restrictions in a way, but so that they are not going to negatively impact the creative process these parameters for physical production, orchestra size, theatre size and such should be discussed at the start so that it becomes fundamentally a part of the work, and creative choices can be made freely within those.

2. DIRECTION

How does the process of creating an original work begin? Is it a lead producer who brings an idea to a creative team, or a team of writers who take their ideas to production houses in order to find a match for their work?

From a director's perspective also, this is different for every project. A composer may come to a director with a title and an idea from a book or film, then the director would talk to the rights holders and possibly producers. After this a book writer and lyricist would be brought in to develop the idea.

In other situations the producers will have approached a band or composer to match an idea, and having already made that match then come to a director to start developing a concept around what exists.

Another possibility is that producers may have secured rights to projects they'd like to explore and will engage a director to see what potential they have – in this case the director would already have a strong standing in the industry and their name on the project would help the producers secure investment.

And yet another possibility, as directors are always reading new scripts, books, plays and in contact with writers, they may have an idea of their own, and search out a creative team with whom they already have a strong relationship. Then, if the director has a relationship with a producer, the next step will be approaching them to develop the piece.

There are so many ways for an idea to start growing, but very early on in the process there will be a director to guide the vision, a composer matched to the writer and a producer to support the development. The relationships that a director builds through work are fundamental to the opportunities that come up in the future, the trust that a producer has to fund the development, or that the rights holders have in the creative team to take on their book or movie for development into a musical piece.

A notable opinion amongst directors was that they were remembered most strongly for their last work, however the most dangerous thing about success was getting addicted to it. This affects creative choices in the future, through the ideas chosen to develop or the direction in which they're taken. It's important to not be seduced by popularity, and to work true to the piece, not the fashion of the times.

Once a director has decided that an idea has merit for development, what is their part in building the creative team? At what point is the musical director brought in?

When putting together the creative team it's important to build this one person at a time, with the writers whose work will be represented. This group of people will be working together very closely for quite a long time so in a way they should be a combination of people that would make up a great dinner party! Generally, a director would choose a choreographer to complement the vision they have, the choreographer would have a strong opinion on the dance arranger (if it's a dance show), as would the composer. In some cases where the producers have a project and a director, the next person to come on board will be a composer. The composer and director together settle on a musical director and arranger, the composer and musical director work with the orchestrator. The writers and director would find a designer that can take the world they're creating and build a physical representation – or even take their vision further with their own ideas. And so on – each specialty overlaps with one or more other specialties, but the director will have a part in choosing the entire creative team so that the vision for the work is supported and the everyone involved is going in the same direction.

In some cases the director is also the choreographer, which reduces the creative team by one and also the conversations about intention, as the movement will match the direction in style and intention since it's coming from the same artist. Where this occurs generally the director will separate the work of choreographer and director so that they can keep an objective eye on each of the facets.

If the musical director is not the first decision, then it's very close. This relationship between composer, director and musical director is fundamental. In some cases the director and musical director will actually sit together and come up with ideas for new works if there's already a strong working relationship.

This happens especially in the situation where a story is based on music more than dialogue using the discography of a well-known band. In the most sophisticated and successful of this genre the music and lyrics are a big part of generating a storyboard. As the music is not being composed, but arranged, the musical director will be a part of the story board process from the very beginning, bringing a knowledge of the whole musical heritage of the band ready to complement the director's vision of the story.

From a director's perspective, structuring a creative team is about knowing what their own strengths are and surrounding themselves with people who will complement those and challenge each other by being stronger in different fields. Strong discussions between

inspiring people are fundamental to the development of a piece - nothing is ever finished, so changes are being made constantly. It's important everyone can be flexible, remain objective and fight for, without being too attached to, their work.

Working with the creative team, who is involved in the basic structuring of the piece? Is the musical director involved in structuring song placement and development in the piece, or is that an earlier discussion with the writers only? How does a director with the creative team decide whether a story 'sings' and therefore is suitable for the structures of a musical?

It depends on the content and style of the material, but in general the book writer, the composer and the lyricist would work with the director to create the basic structure of a piece, to decide where songs will be placed and where scenes move. The musical director is often a part of this process to assist the composer and facilitate the team hearing the material flow, make suggestions and communicate ideas musically. As has been mentioned above, this happens especially in the cases of a musical using an existing discography, although the composers may wish to be a part of this process as well.

Often the term 'storyboarding' is used to refer to a process of writing down on a card where the characters are, where they need to go, each song, each transition and scene. These will be pinned to a board and moved around as the team discuss the best way to move the story forward and decide where the musical numbers are going to work emotionally. A generally held view is that the piece has around 30 minutes to set up the story, and then it has to roll forward. For example, there may be points in the story based around very few people, balanced with shifts in energy by bringing on more characters and transitioning from one place to another. For this process to be effective, the team needs to be together for long periods of time not just a couple of hours – more like a couple of weeks – to nut out the possibilities and stay focused on the overall theme statement of the piece.

The questions 'Does the story sing?', 'Am I going to be able to sing the story?' are the most important questions when deciding whether a piece can be musicalized or not. If the answer to these questions is no, then the project cannot progress further. Songs can fall short because there's not enough to support them – first the writers need to work out if it works to sing the story and then work out the relationship between the book and the songs. Most songs in musical theatre give the illusion of advancing the plot, but interestingly a number of directors noted that this isn't always the case – sometimes a song is picking up the emotion of the moment and expanding it, making the audience feel all the layers of communication simultaneously. Whereas in Shakespeare it's possible to extend the emotional peaks through poetry, through nuanced journey and the rhythm of the language, in musical theatre it's also about scale so it's a mistake to look at a song only to advance the plot as this can be done through the book, or visually. Within a song in a musical it's possible to journey through a few locations visually that might be working on a different level, not even accompanying the lyric perfectly. Songs provide a

way to move time forward, to change the location – creating a world and building an emotional journey.

In some ways all pieces of theatre are right for music, it's a matter of not being restricted by the traditional structures of musical theatre – music can be an element in contemporary theatre, and the boundaries of what is called 'musical theatre' have shifted to sometimes include plays with music. It's about the environment that the director decides to create and making it work theatrically.

The musical director will often work on musical continuity (underscoring) in the room - once these ideas have been formulated in pre-production the actual realising of them is often left to the rehearsal room. Using thematic material from songs, they will work out how to move from one place to another, one time to another, or even express the emotional state of a character as we move through a scene. The composer can also be involved, but this depends on the team and the time they have to be in the rehearsal room. Because of this the musical director's role is often to build these structures with the director in the rehearsal room using the composer's material.

Most successful musicals have a universal idea behind them that relates to everyone in the audience, whether it be 'being yourself', 'standing up for what you believe in', 'accept yourself and others' to name a few possibilities. These ideas are often reflected in popular song, and they're great foundations for musicalising the written word - musicals are loved, amongst other reasons, for their ability to communicate these universal ideas through word, music and movement.

Transitions in contemporary musical theatre are sophisticated and often filmic, flowing from one location to the next during a song, or with music especially written for the moment to move in time or space in front of the audience's eyes. Are these transitions created in the rehearsal room with the musical director, or are directors looking ahead and working with the composer on possibilities that are decided once the physical elements (including cast) are moving?

Transitions through time and/or place can often happen within a musical number, and are heavily influenced by the cinema. In contemporary musical theatre there is a tremendous capability to keep up with visual information and the pace of a musical is very much affected by how the smooth and effective these transitions are. Often in musical theatre pieces written prior to automated set changes, a front cloth came down to cover the transition, and the actor performed a song in front of this – incidentally creating a great canon of musical work that needed no physical production for the storytelling. However the audience now expects a sophisticated visual transition, and one of the most effective ways to do this is to have the character take you into the new scene, to follow them as the scene changes around them.

Transitions are very much a collaboration, but often the composer will have less involvement with underscoring and transitions between numbers as they are busy with

the larger structures of the work, so the musical director, director and choreographer have some artistic freedom to play around with ideas. It's the musical director who is serving the story and representing the composer's material, so they are best able to communicate what the director and choreographer need to move through a transition. Of course this work as with anything pertaining to the score is under the approval of the composer, but by stepping away from the transitions at some times other possibilities come up that the composer may not have immediately seen given their connection to their work.

Some directors prefer to work on transitions at the end of daily rehearsals with musical director and choreographer in the room, and work out what the next day will hold. This results in collaboration, inspiration, spontaneity – but also preparation for the next day so the rehearsal process isn't held up. By collaborating on ideas after rehearsal it gives the musical director time to put the ideas to paper, and think on possibilities before the next day's rehearsal. An amount of flexibility musically is so important with transitions and underscoring as the length of time, the emotional journey, the physical movement may adjust in the room and so the music needs to adjust with it. Being prepared, having a number of ideas fleshed out from a collaborative meeting is a successful method for combining spontaneity with quick solutions from a musical director's perspective.

From a director's perspective, what are the main steps that should generally be in place to get from a concept for a new work to opening night?

Preparation was generally agreed to be of utmost importance when developing a new work. Similar to the process outlined in "Section 1. Production", these elements are expressed slightly differently from the director's perspective;

- Readings. The work of the creative team is to rewrite and rewrite and rewrite until there's a story worth telling. Write and read each act, then read and sing the whole piece. Take two or three months to adjust the script and score, then read it again. The creative team can act as readers, or experienced actors can be brought in for perspective. It's not necessary that they are right type or age for the characters at this point, but rather to get experienced eyes and ears across the material. The first reaction to the reading will be the audience's reaction - no matter how much production is added in the end, it's always the heart of the story that makes or breaks a musical.
- 29 hour read. After taking another couple of months or so to rewrite after preliminary readings, get actors in for a week (29 hours in total) to develop further over a longer period of time, but very little staging involved here.
- Lab. Developing choreography as a world or style of movement for a few numbers to explore what might work for the direction of the work.
- Workshop. Rehearsing and exploring possibilities, rewriting each day but there is certainly a more solid framework to the piece from readings and so more time is spent preparing the material and movement for presentation.

- In addition to readings, lab, and workshop, the time before rehearsals was given special attention by most directors. It was acknowledged to be vital that the creative team gather together repeatedly to collaborate.

After each reading there'll be a list of things to do musically, underscoring moments to develop, songs to extend, dance arrangements to think about and develop in the 'lab' stage. In addition to this, it's now possible to do a virtual workshop and use computer graphics to storyboard the whole piece between readings to follow up on this creative 'to do list'. A lot of this is time commitment from the creative team, getting everyone around a table, as once rehearsals for a season begin it's difficult to get everyone together. This includes director, designers (set, sound, lighting, costume) and writers, musical director and choreographer. The time spent together around a table can focus the group and make sure everyone is working together – one last pass to work on the problems before rehearsals begin. With everyone in the room together there's more chance of inventing a process and not falling back on what is familiar. The atmosphere of the work and the world in which it lives are much clearer to the entire creative team, and this step can assist every creative make effective decisions that are true to the single vision of the work once the cast and all the physical elements of the theatre are incorporated into the process.

- Out of town 'try out' season. The opportunity to see how the show feels with an audience, to make adjustments and take notes for further work before a main season. Also an opportunity to change casting if needed and hone the actor's role in developing the work. During this process there's the chance to implement the technical and physical elements of the production, and to be reviewed by critics as a 'try out' season. These critics can be extremely useful as they see the piece with fresh eyes and notice flaws the team may have missed along the way.

By the time the piece reaches an out of town try out it has a solid form, however elements will still be changed in response to something not working, whether it's a song, a scene, or a transition. Often the director will direct the composer to 'write a better song' for a particular moment, which at first seemed to me a harsh and unhelpful criticism. It seems from my observation however that when required to come up with something different, better, to serve a story which is now much clearer to all involved, a composer will often come up with something extraordinary – even if it takes another two or three attempts. There may be a number of alternative songs written for a position in a show, and they may all be tried out in this out of town season. In the end sometimes the new number takes elements of several and combines them in a very powerful way as the heart of the story takes shape.

This entire process is quite long and involved, often taking two or three years before a production makes it to a Broadway theatre. At the core it is a true collaboration, but guided by a director who will need to understand every element in order to keep the themes clear and truthful in the storytelling.

Once the work is in rehearsal, what is the collaborative process between director and the rest of the creative team?

From a director's perspective spending a lot of time with the team as a whole is important. Having everyone from writers to designers to technical directors in a room together regularly during rehearsals ensures that everyone understands what is needed or expected. Generally this process would happen after rehearsals in a large room where each department talks about the progress being made, ideas that have come up. There's a certain level of pressure in this kind of presentation that keeps the whole team focused.

It's also a matter of maintaining an open forum for the writers and producers as the pace of rehearsals accelerates, listening to their reactions and ideas. The producers are representatives of the audience and as such their responses are an important part of the rehearsal process.

From a director's perspective, what are the most important attributes of a musical director when creating a new work?

The needs are very different depending on the project, it's important to get a sense for what a person's strengths are, the certain styles of music they do very well, and then not to expect them to do everything. A classical musician is not going to necessarily be the best person for a rock score, and visa versa, though there are people whose range is flexible and so it's important to really know what they can do before starting work on a new project. Certainly the director needs to feel supported, to welcome the strengths of the musical director and trust in their musical ideas.

In a more general sense there are attributes that will be important no matter what the project is, such as; the ability to organise the music department, to interpret the score and teach it to the actors and musicians and create a spectacular sound, to help communicate the direction from the rehearsal room to the composer and orchestrator. It's very important that the musical director is in the room, with the baton, and making the changes, arranging the transitions and underscoring as the process develops with the director so that the direction of the piece stays focused. If the show is a heavy dance show they will need also to work with the choreographer and dance arranger to incorporate the movement into the larger composition.

Having an ear for detail and being able to maintain the quality of a production is also an important attribute to consider for the season of a show after opening. Some musical directors will leave after a period of time and then supervise the production, auditing it often to ensure the quality is maintained.

3. MUSIC

The interview questions below were given to a number of experts involved directly in the music department for new works. The group included composers, musical directors, arrangers, orchestrators and performing artists so the answers are sometimes given from a number of perspectives rather than dividing out each of these specialties.

Before outlining these interviews the title of musical supervisor and/or musical director is worth discussing briefly. This is a relatively new distinction, as traditionally the musical director was one position only.

As a very general statement, if the composer is highly involved in arranging, vocal and/or dance arranging and underscoring the position will often be combined, with musical director only to liase between the composer and the rest of the creative team and help guide that process. In this instance the composer will be in close contact with the development and rehearsal process and able to work with the director to compose new material (sometimes including underscoring though this is often still worked with the musical director), and with the musical director to incorporate any changes into the score.

If the composer is one step further away from the process, being primarily concerned with melodic invention and the main songs or larger structures, there will often be both a musical director and musical supervisor. The supervisor will often be the main arranger of the piece working closely with the composer and director, responsible for a lot of musical development and invention in the piece.

The composer's role in a new musical is then fundamental to whether there is a supervisor/arranger or not. A further possibility is that a musical director moves on from the production at a point and continues an association with it by supervising the music department and appointing a musical director to take their place as conductor.

Whether it is the musical supervisor or musical director as head of department, they will be expected to manage the orchestrator, other arrangers (such as dance or vocal if the supervisor isn't handling those him/herself), copyists, to liase with the composer and director, and make sure that the daily changes are going through the departments. If there is a separate supervisor, the musical director then runs the rehearsal room, notes all the changes, will often be involved with developing underscoring with the director and musical supervisor in the room, may be one of the arrangers in the team (vocal and/or dance), coaches the artists and musicians through the score, and conducts the performances.

The lines are slightly blurred and the sharing of responsibilities will be slightly different for each team, but as the answers below indicate every production is individual and all of these elements will be present in a music department for a new work to succeed. In general the conversations assumed that the role of musical director and musical supervisor were combined for the purposes of ascertaining the most important skills and

attributes to fulfil the position of ‘head of music department’ in the development of a new work. The term ‘musical director’ will be used to refer to this position from this point.

What are the elements important to a composer in structuring a score and deciding where a story ‘sings’?

This is an individual choice for each composer, and songs can be placed for different purposes, however there are some respected ideas that are generally effective. Songs are often spoken about as an extension of the emotional journey of a character, and this is certainly often the case, taking the audience through a fundamental realisation, change of feeling, time or place in a character’s life. They can also be placed to establish the ‘world’ of the musical, to introduce characters and the main theme of the story, and what the main protagonist wants. Sometimes it’s to comment on a scene prior to the song, or to carry the emotion one step further when speech is longer enough to express what the characters are feeling. Essentially, if you can take the songs out of a musical and it still makes sense then it isn’t really a musical. The scene and the song need to add something in order for the story to move forward, if it’s just repeating then something needs to go.

It was generally agreed that the exposition or first 20 - 30 minutes of a show are the most difficult. The second act will move forward based on the first, which will have set everything up and into motion. Through the exposition the audience has to understand the world, the tone, who it is about, who they are supporting and what challenges they face. All this must be clear and the audience invested in the story in order for the rest of the show to succeed dramatically. The exposition also needs to be concise, to get into the story and help the audience understand and engage with the world: often the opening number is a big part of the exposition as music can accelerate the audience through time and place very effectively. Contemporary musical theatre rarely has a full-length traditional overture, and so the score launches into the world and it’s characters after only a brief musical fanfare to set the musical language, style and tone.

New songs are often placed late in the rehearsal process, at times a director will ask the composer to write another song for a particular position, even if the existing song has been there since the readings. It might be to serve the same purpose dramatically, and have a stronger melodic line – or actually be a slightly different purpose than the original now that the piece as a whole has grown. This can quite often happen when an audience joins the process, and there are many examples of well-known songs added quite late in the process when the director felt a moment could be stronger musically.

When the director comes onto the creative team, it can be helpful for a composer to work with them on the structure, getting a really detailed outline with the songs ‘spotted’ (where they might best work) as a starting point. Experienced directors can be of great help to a composer structuring where the songs will be placed in a score, responding to how they work, and to the songs themselves. The more articulate a director is with their response to the songs, whether it be the ‘feel’ or tempo, the intention or the lyric, the more helpful it is to the composer building a score. Sometimes a lyric will be the

inspiration for a melody, either a whole lyric or just a defining phrase. At other times the emotional state of the character will inspire a melodic line and a song will grow from there. As has been mentioned in other sections, often a composer will write numerous versions for a song to go in a particular place, and the director will keep responding until the right song has been written.

At what point in the process is a musical director usually brought in?

There are many different possibilities, the most common being;

- quite early on in the process to facilitate scoring the music for readings.
- for the first reading if the composer has already provided a detailed piano score, to play so that the composer can listen objectively.
- for the workshop after a few readings, if the composer is acting as pianist/musical director for first stages, and then needs to hand over to a musical director to coach the cast and take over conducting. The composer would then be able to step back and be more objective about the work, plus be available to write changes quickly.

This would be the latest point at which a musical director is brought in, and in general the earlier the better so that the whole team is working together from the same concept. At times however there are changes in personnel due to availabilities or creative changes, and so it's possible to take over from another musical director at a workshop stage.

How does the format of the score vary when a musical director receives material from a composer? Is it common in contemporary musical theatre to assist a composer in writing the ideas down and developing those ideas? If a musical director is developing material from the composer, how would you best prepare in order to stay true to their intentions but still have creative freedom to work with the director in the rehearsal process?

This depends on the composer, and covers a full spectrum from transcribing sung/performed material, to detailing a lead sheet, perhaps building it out harmonically, to fleshing out a song's form, to having a detailed and complete score provided. The musical director is under the direction of the composer, and so may be required to use all, some or none of the following skills depending on the involvement of the composer.

Starting at one end of the spectrum, the composer will provide audio material, or musical sketches with melodic material and a framework for harmony. The musical director will most probably have leeway to build it out harmonically, and the composer will listen to this and provide feedback as to whether it matches what they want to hear. This is high level arranging, and becomes a fundamental part of the sound of the show – in this case the musical director is working very closely and creatively with the composer and director to create the score.

At the other end of the spectrum, the composer will provide a fully detailed piano score with indications for orchestration colours, ideas for underscoring or transitions. There are many elements that will be changed in rehearsals, but the composer is writing in those changes and usually at the piano to compose the transition and underscoring, or at least assist with those.

There are many possibilities in between these two, and so the musical director's role is to assist the composer in any way needed whether it be transcription, arranging, harmonisation, or interpreting a realised score and developing that in rehearsals under the guidance of the composer.

When developing a composer's music it's important to have a very strong understanding of their harmonic language and style so you are staying true to their original voice. In addition to this for rehearsals a musical director will need to be able to recall or refer to motifs (melodic, rhythmic and harmonic) used by the composer in their score to use for transitions, underscoring and extending songs if needed. In this way they remain an advocate for the composer, but able to respond and collaborate with the director and choreographer in the rehearsal room. This work is discussed in more detail within answers following.

When taking traditional song forms or more contained structures from a composer, what part, if any, does the musical director play in extending that form to create a theatrical number?

Again as with many aspects of the role, this depends entirely on the composer. If the composer has already arranged the music in a detailed way, and is an active part of composition in the rehearsal process then the musical director would teach and interpret their composition, with suggestions as appropriate in the rehearsal process for transition music.

If however the position clearly included arrangement as a part of the role of musical director this would be an important aspect. In this case the musical director would be working with a composer and director to develop the original song form and extend it dramatically through transition music, scene work interpolated into the song, contrasting musical ideas, dance sections or ensemble vocal arrangements as appropriate for that point in the work. As physical scene changes are now able to occur as smooth visual transitions, the development of musical material needs to be equally sophisticated, and within a song we are able to move from one place or time to another seamlessly. This is reflected in many extended song structures in contemporary musical theatre.

It would be helpful for a musical director to be able to work with different song structures, which would usually include all or some of these elements:

Intro – often the same chords as the verse or chorus, setting up the verse

Verse – text more detailed for storytelling

Chorus – the emotional heart of the song, repeated each time it appears in text as well as harmony. Hopefully has a memorably musical ‘hook’ that the listener will remember
 Bridge or ‘Middle 8’ – used to venture further away harmonically and then connect with the verse or chorus of the song

Outro – like the intro, can use the progressions from verse or chorus and creates an ending to a song

A musical director as arranger may take a song and pull it apart, take any of these sections and listen to where an ensemble might comment, to where the spoken word might move the story forward, or develop the characters, to where an echo of a musical ‘hook’ or motif might help, to where movement might carry the emotional journey of the story forward and a dance section could be used. If there isn’t already a bridge, new musical material might lift the song using existing material, and take it to a different place dramatically. The work of a musical director, if they’re taking pop songs and developing them for the stage, will often be building bridges and endings, ways to extend a song and give it contrast, a lift and a build to a dramatic conclusion. All of this is creatively possible where the musical director is arranging the work of a composer for the stage – taking a popular song structure and expanding it so that the dramatic intensity of the story is built through the number and the audience knows more about the characters and the world they live in, and as such is more invested in their emotional journey and what they are searching for.

Not all songs will need or should have this development, at times the contrast of a simple and truthful song will be exactly what the character needs. It’s another example of creativity balanced by musicianship and taste, which is why the match-making of composer/director/musical director/orchestrator is so important in the very foundation of setting up the creative team. Both the structure of the whole work, and the structure of an individual song have to match the dramatic flow of the book, and the musical voice of the composer.

Does the musical director have an influence on the musical continuity (underscoring) of a piece? Would this be created in the rehearsal room with the director, or developed with the composer? If it is created organically in the rehearsal room, in what ways can a musical director be prepared for this?

Musical continuity refers to the musical material written to support a scene, to underscore the dialogue, transition to another part of a scene, or come in and out of sung material but maintain a forward motion. The director will usually ask the musical director at the piano to come up with this material, to get the right material with the right cue, for the right direction and moment where music would be introduced. A musical director involved in the creation of new works will need to master this, to be able to sit down and figure out what’s going to work best. It requires a strong sense of the book, of the dialogue and timing of a scene and how music can provide the right tone and material to support the scene.

Some composers as pianists will want to be very much involved with musical continuity, however in general it's more often the musical director's place to throw out ideas from the piano for the director to work with. At times the underscoring won't be finished until the technical rehearsals, when the team can see how long a transition or a scene will actually be. And it's important to remember that not all scenes need to be underscored, if silence is the best way to focus the energy of the piece and the audience, then silence is the best choice.

To prepare for this the musical director should have a detailed knowledge of the sound of the composer, the world they live in as a person and musician. It might be gospel music, or folk music, rock or pop of a particular era, classical – their harmonic language will be a result of who they love to listen to as a musician and what they've written before. The musical director should also have detailed knowledge of the melodic motifs associated with the characters or with major themes in the piece. With this material in mind, thematic material can be used to make a statement about the emotional state of a character, or to refer to a character or theme not physically present, main melodic 'hooks' can be broken apart into elements, developed through inversion or repetition, rhythmic reinvention (changing the note values, slowing down a theme rhythmically etc) re-harmonised, or used in a myriad of other ways. A musical director should have an 'inspiration sheet' of the musical themes from the composer's score, and have these derivations jotted down as a starting point so if something is needed immediately there are ideas there to start with, rather than a blank page.

Ultimately, the underscore should feel like it doesn't have a pulse, so it can tread water or turn around without the audience being distracted by the changes. The music can also change 'colour' as needed in orchestration, with different instrumentation on the melodic motifs changing the tone of a melody. Melodic motifs can be adapted it for different characters, making a comment on relationships by using one characters theme underneath another characters scene.

It's important to note that the musical continuity also takes into consideration the key structure of the whole work, and usually underscoring will rise into the song so that the music is taking the audience somewhere else. Getting to and from different keys so there is a build into and through the song is important, always moving the flow forward even on this subliminal level.

The possibilities are almost endless and it's often a very creative part of a musical director's role, using the full extent of their musicianship and knowledge of the composer's language.

What is the role of the musical director in relationship to the composer?

The relationship between composer and musical director is probably the closest of the creative team, as the musical director will be representing the composer in the rehearsal room, and be the strongest advocate for the score in the process. This relationship can be

different on every new work as it is dependent on the involvement of the composer – the practical details of this are discussed in detail in almost every other facet of this study project.

If the composer is highly involved and writes all the arrangements and piano score the musical director has much more of an interpretive role as conductor and teacher. However, they may propose ideas for song structure, or come up with creative solutions to add to the team's perspective. It's important even if the role of the musical director is not arranger that they trust their instincts and find the right time to have a musical opinion whilst judging how open the team is to hearing them. From there the spectrum extends across many possibilities to a composer with less hands on involvement in the scoring, and the musical director will need to have the tools to colour the melodic invention of the composer with chords, progressions, transitions.

As the composer will also have clear ideas of the voices they would like to hear sing their score, the casting process and coaching of the singers will be another facet to this musical relationship.

In general the choice of musical director will be the composer's, and that choice will be made to suit the musical style of the piece. The composer is the fundamental layer of the music department, setting the melodies and tonality, the rhythm and the harmonic language of the score and then the musical director builds on that for musical continuity and possibly arrangements.

What is the role of the musical director in relationship to the choreographer?

This depends on the movement within a piece. If there's not a lot of specialised movement the musical director will arrange the composer's work for the dance sections, working creatively in a similar way to musical continuity (underscoring). However in this instance the music is not just supporting the scene, rather actively leading the scene with the orchestra as soloist so the sense of pulse and the overall dynamic level will most likely be much bigger.

If there's a lot of dance within a work, there will be a separate person working exclusively with the choreographer. Often the choreographer will bring someone into the team that they know well, and work with effectively. This dance arranger will usually be a musical director in their own right, but working only on specialised arrangements for that particular piece. They will then have the skills to work with the composer's musical language and extend that to create a vibrant and detailed musical world for the choreographer to work with. The musical 'colour' and detail are particularly important in this field, and it's a partnership with the choreographer who might ask for a musical gesture to reflect a movement, or alternatively listen to music and respond creatively with ideas for movement. If there is a separate dance arranger, at some point the rehearsal pianist would sit with them to work out how best to play the material, as the dance arranger is usually only hired for the rehearsal period and for as long as the dance

sections are being worked on. Once the material has been orchestrated and the piece has transferred to orchestral rehearsals the dance arranger is usually out of the process.

What is the role of the musical director in relationship to the orchestrator? Is the musical director able to make suggestions to the orchestrator?

The composer, musical director and orchestrator have a close relationship as the orchestrator is representing the composer's style and sound and the arrangements of the musical director, whilst being a creative musician and having their own voice in not just the colours of the orchestrations, but the harmonic details and counter melodies (if the composer is open to that). Even if the musical director isn't an arranger, they will be in the rehearsal room and aware of every dramatic detail that may assist the orchestrator to express those intentions with instrumental colour. They can be extremely helpful in keeping the orchestrator aware of details that might not be immediately obvious, such as an actor needing some melody reinforcement, or phrasing more freely in which case the orchestration would need to leave space for that. The musical director will be keeping a really close eye on the process and keeping the orchestrator informed of all the dramatic shifts in the piece when they're not in the room, being their eyes and ears. The relationship between musical director and orchestrator should be close, both ultimately answering to the composer. There should be a flow of information managed by the musical director so that the orchestrator feels in constant contact with the room, addressing the big numbers first once they're settled, then the incidental music.

With an orchestrator in place there are some practical elements to the relationship between musical director and orchestrator, which will assist in the creation of a new score. One of the musical director's roles is to pin down the arrangements, including the length of transitions, the keys to suit the leading singers, and make the decision as to when material is ready to be released to the orchestrator. It's important this isn't too early as once orchestrations are done they're costly and time consuming to change - the rehearsal process needs to settle before an orchestrator is given an arrangement to work on.

A helpful way to do this is to settle the scene and/or song arrangement, then invite the orchestrator into rehearsal where the cast will perform a 'radio play' version of the piece with no movement, which the orchestrator will record. The cast will then again perform the piece with all movement and the orchestrator will make note of the intention of the staging in order to reflect that musically. If the material is given to the orchestrator too soon before the movement or scene is set, there will be many changes and altering an orchestration takes up valuable time. Instead, it is advisable for the musical director to make note of changes and keep them until the larger structures are completed, then go back and make the changes, which will have settled to an even greater extent.

An orchestrator and musical director should hold in mind that keys may settle up or down a little by the time a production reaches opening night, so the orchestration should be flexible enough to move if needed by small amounts. Another way to maintain flexibility

is to hold the work from copyists (who take the orchestrations and create separate orchestral parts for the players) until more changes are settled, and then the work of extracting individual parts won't have to be redone too many times.

Often with the time pressures of creating a new work numbers won't be orchestrated for the first previews – it's more advisable to leave these 'blank' by being played on piano only as a rehearsal version, rather than mocking up an orchestration and limiting the audience (or cast) to a half version of what might be. Additionally, the musical director should make sure that anything that has been orchestrated is not cut until much later in the process; even if the stage timing has changed the players should mark the sections to leave out rather than have a copyist print out new parts with the cuts, as it may change in another direction and that orchestration will be needed once again.

Regarding suggestions to the orchestrator: orchestration is a specialty and the orchestrator will be in all later rehearsals once the orchestra is a part of the process, making changes as they hear their work in context. So, often the suggestions that a musical director would make are already obvious to the orchestrator and will come back through the daily changes as a score is being finished. If there are copying errors or misunderstandings the musical director will check these small details respectfully with the orchestrator during orchestral rehearsals to make sure they're not reading errors. A musical director can certainly have an opinion and be a part of the conversation, even more so if they have arranged the music, but at this point the orchestrator will most likely work closely with the composer and what they decide together will be the final decision.

As with every facet of the role, there are of course exceptions to this. Just as arranging is often the responsibility of the musical director in contemporary musical theatre, orchestrating may at times also be a partnership between musical director and orchestrator – especially with a smaller orchestration or those based around a rhythm section. The musical director as pianist will often develop a score in a workshop by playing with a small rhythm section (drums, bass and possibly guitar), and this 'core' to a contemporary score often carries through to be a part of the full orchestration. Again, the lines are blurred, but in this situation the musical director will have a great influence on the orchestrations of a contemporary piece.

Where the finished work is a smaller scale piece heavily based around a rhythm section, some musical directors will actually orchestrate the project completely, especially if they have a background in orchestration.

There are also instances where composers prefer to do their own orchestrations, and though certainly larger scale works are usually handled by a separate and specialised orchestrators (often because the composer's time is taken up with song writing and re-writing), this area is one of many where it's a spectrum of working practise, rather than a definitive set of rules.

What is the role of the musical director in relationship to the lyricist/s?

Lyricists will usually solve problems with the text in a song between themselves and the composer, at times the director. Sometimes a word will change for dramatic reasons, and even though the musical director working with the singers might feel that it's as difficult choice, it's more the responsibility of the musical director to find a way to make it work for the singer. In general, the composer and lyricists will change words to alter the tone of a lyric, to give more impact – they are more concerned with the general picture than the technical detail.

What skills should a musical director bring to this role?

This is highly dependent on the composer and how they require you to complement their work. Starting from the most basic requirements and building up to high level arranging of a score, there are skills or facets to the role generally considered necessary:

- 1) Advocate. At foundation level the musical director will be an advocate for the music without alienating the creative team, they will assist the composer by interpreting what they need. The composer will be highly involved in all facets of composition and arranging, and will know exactly how they want it to sound and can execute it in rehearsal, so the musical director should match them with a high level of musicianship on a technical level to understand their score and harmonic palette. The practical skills required involve teaching music to the singers, notes and harmonies, both soloists and ensembles, and being able to find technical solutions to interpret the composer's melodies, and the text of the lyrics. Being able to communicate the intentions of the composer and director musically is just as fundamental. A musical director must be able to create a great choral sound from the cast, and maintain strong direction of the ensemble. At this most basic level, musical directors are specialised teachers and interpreters, able to communicate clearly and effectively with artists of different levels, using a high level musicianship to assist the composer in the expression of their score.
- 2) Pianist. It is possible to have a team of pianists surrounding the musical director if they are not responsible for arrangements, however this rarely happens. Most musical directors involved in the creation of new works will be pianists to facilitate readings, workshops and be involved practically from an early stage. As a pianist, the ability to improvise is extremely helpful in creating the musical continuity and arranging music on demand in the rehearsal room. Transcribing work from recordings to piano score, plus being able to sight-read and sight-transpose would be important complementary skills as a pianist.
- 3) Vocal coach. The ability to work with the cast and find technical solutions is valuable. To have a detailed knowledge of the voice types that match characters best – for example when casting a new work the older characters are most likely to be baritones and contraltos, and so the ensemble will need to be balanced to complement that. To be aware of the registers of vocalists so that the

arrangements and orchestrations (see sections below) make room for the voice to be heard.

- 4) **Conductor.** A musical director must be able to communicate through gesture with professional musicians and singers, both technically to facilitate clarity and precision in the playing, and expressively to draw out the dramatic intentions of composer, orchestrator, director and choreographer. In some cases the conductor will lead the orchestra from a keyboard, which requires them to be a professional pianist as well as conductor.
- 5) **Communicator.** Assuming a high level of professional musicianship and the previous skills are in place, probably the most commonly mentioned attribute through all specialists interviewed was that of communicator. The ability to calmly and clearly express the intentions of the composer and represent them in the rehearsal room; to be a positive force in that room and make people feel comfortable and able to express themselves in a fast paced and sometimes stressful environment; to communicate with a director and understand their requests, be able to act upon them as teacher and/or arranger (if required), and conductor; to liaise between orchestrator, copyist, arrangers, music staff and ensure that the department is running smoothly and effectively; to liaise with producers and technical departments on the sound and interpretation of the score as a conductor (for example following staging or lighting cues from stage management); to always keep the lines of communication open and respectful without imposing an ego onto the creative process in such a way that it causes conflict – at the same time as ensuring important musical thoughts are being heard in a clear and authoritative voice.
- 6) **Adaptability and creativity.** A musical director needs to be fast on their feet musically, able to change ideas and pick up on someone else's thoughts immediately and run with it as well as add suggestions to fill it out. They must be able to shift keys, styles, and structures quickly and creatively.
- 7) **Composition - Musical continuity (underscoring).** This is the beginning of arranging as a part of a musical director's role; taking the thematic material of the composer and writing small amounts of transition music, or underscoring to support a scene. A musical director is often required to create this connective tissue between scenes or songs, based on the composer's own work but developed in the rehearsal room with director and choreographer to cover a particular dramatic purpose in a particular amount of time. As with all composition, it is subject to comment and approval by the composer.
- 8) **Composition - Arranging.** This refers to a re-conceptualisation or development of a composer's work, which may diverge from the original in many ways. Some examples include re-harmonisation, development of the melody by inversion, reduction, rhythmic changes, or adding a counter-melody to the song. It could be

more contained such as vocal arranging which is focused on the vocal part writing for the choral or group singing – creating a sound to complement the composer’s score but also work with the sound of the cast. Also more contained would be the dance arrangements, which are compositions with the composer’s thematic material as a starting point, but highly inventive and expressive to reflect the movement of the choreography. Continuing on from there if the composer needs more support the structure of some songs may be extended or developed to suit a dramatic purpose. The term covers a lot of possibilities, from simply developing a musical motif or discussing a song’s structure with the composer, to completely re-working a song with a simpler structure into an extensive dramatic piece introducing storylines, characters and place. This development and combination of scene, song, movement and musical transitions is characteristic of contemporary Broadway musicals. As has been mentioned previously, songs are often expected to cover many dramatic situations and be quite extensive, taking the place of a traditional overture by setting the world of the musical, it’s characters and elements of the main storyline for the first 20 minutes or so of a musical. Any training as a composer will be of great benefit in this situation as high level arranging is very creative and requires great skills of musical communication with the composer.

Another facet to this skill would be managing the arrangers, vocal and dance, and making sure that all creative agree on what numbers are going to accomplish, the section lengths of dance numbers so they don’t go into territory that doesn’t belong in the show. This kind of overview and communication between all the musical specialities is fundamental to being a musical director of a new work, whether or not they’re involved in arranging the music.

- 9) Structuring. As discussed previously (p. 25), a musical director should have knowledge of song forms, of dramatic structures and musical structures. They may be involved in discussions about structuring a whole piece, and as part of their role should be listening out for elements that might be getting out of balance whether it’s the length of a number, or a transition, or even a dance break. As a communicator across many areas, even if not directly involved with structuring a work or song in it’s earliest stages, the perspective of the musical director is important, and when brought into a conversation with a composer is usually appreciated.

It is helpful to keep a work sheet with a list of songs, scenes and characters for the piece, making sure the main characters maintain the balance of music in the work. The music in a show is really shorthand, making a moment in an instant that may take much longer to express through dialogue. For example the reprise of a number is very powerful, and can be used to give so much information; by changing a chord the music can express bitterness, irony, or even indicate that a character hasn’t in fact changed if that’s the story development at that point. Keeping a summarised work sheet of the main musical moments may help to highlight imbalances of songs, reprises and scene-work.

A musical director should be aware of situations where a rhythm becomes predictable, for example the pattern of a scene, then a comment on the scene, then a song – it would be stronger dramatically to change where the songs are placed in relation to a scene. Just as reprises are powerful, two songs together can be powerful. Traditionally the main protagonist will need to make their wants or goals known to the audience early enough in the piece so that their journey is a shared one, and two thirds of the way through the score there is often a high emotional point expressed through song. Structuring uses many reasons to sing, but the musical pacing should flow forward and take the audience on a journey through the emotions of a character, and through time and/or place.

A musical director needs to be in all rooms, involved with underscoring/musical continuity, into coaching rooms, dance rehearsals, circulating to keep the elements of the score going in the same direction and aware of the overall musical structures.

- 10) Orchestration. As previously mentioned, at times a musical director will be involved with orchestration especially the rhythm section, or possibly the whole orchestra for a small piece. Training in orchestration is extremely valuable, and though this is a specialised skill and usually handled by a separate orchestrator for large works, many orchestrators were musical directors at some point in their career. The ability to transcribe is also valuable and extremely good training for a musician's aural perception skills.

As an aside to orchestration and transcription, the ability to create a piano conductor or piano vocal score is also valuable and appreciated by everyone who joins a production or remounts it in another centre with a different cast, and needs a reflection of the orchestration in a practical format for rehearsing with cast members.

Much of the work of musical director is management of time and specialised resources – orchestration takes much of both and as such facilitating its progress (whether as an orchestrator or communicating with one) is an extremely important part of a musical director's role.

What advice would be most helpful to musical directors wanting to be involved in the creation of new works?

A musical director needs to listen actively to scores, especially the musical continuity; the way a song grows from a scene, the way the music moves in and out of main sections of the songs from instrumental passages, the way practical elements such as safety repeat bars are used without becoming stifling or repetitive. Think actively about the problems and solutions that are present in every musical theatre score.

They need to listen and look at larger structures for big numbers within a show (openings are actually an anomaly, but finale of both acts and sometimes openings are larger scale) and analyse how a song is expanded and contrasting material is developed, how the storytelling affects the musical journey of a longer number. Also listen to songs, analyse song structure and writing, both popular and traditional. Look at simple songs, and complicated songs both lyrically and harmonically – the larger the aural palette of a musical director the more creative they will be in the rehearsal room.

A musical director needs to listen to the music of different composers and really find the individuality of their sound so that when working with a composer on a new score the musical director can hear the elements of that sound and arrange within it. They need to be a great musician technically so that the creative process is not stifled by an inability to express ideas musically.

Along with all these skills they need to be a part of as many developments of new works as possible, play as many shows as possible to learn a score from the inside out and analyse what makes them work. Attend as many festivals and presentations of new works as possible so that the process of creating a score becomes familiar, and ideas flow more easily.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

What major conclusions have I come to as a result of the Fellowship?

Whilst musical theatre is well supported in Australia and there are new works in development, the number of works is extremely limited and so we have to take the opportunity to learn from an industry as large and experienced as that of Broadway. Even though each production is different, there are elements to the process of development and the role of musical director that were discussed with all the specialists I interviewed, and generally agreed upon:

- 1) It's fundamentally important to put together a successful creative team that balances experience and inexperience. Writers, composers, lyricists, directors, musical directors and choreographers who will challenge each other's opinions and work towards the director's vision, but also inspire and respect each other's strengths. A team who communicates well and is able to adapt quickly, and use their resources wisely.
- 2) The early developmental process needs to be structured to give enough time for development between stages. Generally speaking there will be table readings, longer '29 hour' readings, possibly a 'lab' to develop movement, workshops, and out of town tryouts before a Broadway season opens. This can take two or three years, but rushing it will jeopardise the strength of the work.
- 3) The musical director is an advocate and support for the composer, brought on early in the process and certainly a part of developing the score. It is important to have a strong voice in representing the composer, and equally important to be a positive communicator between many departments. The composer is the founding creative musically, and the musical director is working within the parameters that they set.
- 4) The musical director must be able to manage the music department effectively, including music staff, musicians, orchestrator, arrangers, copyists so that it keeps pace with the other departments. Also, to communicate with the producers to make sure they're aware of the progress in all these areas, and to be aware of any restrictions.
- 5) In the end the musical director will have to figure out the role they will play and how it's going to work – the director will set the tone on whether your opinion is required for structure, the composer will decide whether you're an arranger or a teacher. You're essentially a very specialised manager and communicator, possibly transcribing, getting files and editing, structuring songs, arranging transition music and underscoring, or arranging the composer's work in a larger sense, orchestrating, being vocal or dance arranger, pianist, vocal coach, conductor, orchestrator, as well as highly adaptive and creative in the process. It's a palette of tools that you need to build, and then what you use depends on the production.

How can I best disseminate the information I have learned?

There are a number of ways I am able to disseminate this information. Firstly, through the advisory panels for New Musicals Australia and the Australia Council for the Arts Musical Theatre panel, where I have the opportunity to analyse and comment on new works submitted for funding and development, and in the further stages where works are presented for direct comment and advice in a reading and workshop environment.

Secondly, through master-classes with young musical theatre performers, musicians and composers that I'm participating in regularly for many tertiary institutions, and for independent musical theatre workshops run as a part of festivals around Australia.

Thirdly, through my work on a number of new musicals in development in Australia, currently I am a part of the music team for two new works going into production this year, one for an 'out of town tryout' and another in workshop being redeveloped after a tryout season. I am also involved in the very early stages of development with a director and writer for an original work. All of these productions are Australian, and I will be able to have a direct influence on the role of the musical director, work with the composers and assist with the structuring of the process as a result of the Fellowship.

Fourthly, I am invited to speak publically at institutions at times as a guest and will continue to use these opportunities as a representative of the Churchill Trust and a 2013 Fellow to disseminate everything I have learned, both in plain English to encourage investment in new Australian works, and in more specialised environments where I can speak to young musicians and composers.

Finally, through fund-raising for our musical theatre industry I encourage and work with young artists to find, prepare and perform original works by Australian composers. In my role as musical director I work with young composers to talk through their vocal writing to assist as much as possible in their development.

What can I do to bring about improvements in Australia, and what other improvements should be made?

There are many wonderful artists, writers and creative in Australia working on new musicals, and I believe all the knowledge that myself and any colleagues can gain and bring back to our industry will continue to strengthen and encourage these productions on a practical level. To share that knowledge is imperative, and this experience has clearly shown me that an openness of creative spirit and generosity in sharing knowledge is fundamental to the success of original musical theatre. For an industry so large and competitive as the one in New York, the artists and creators were without exception encouraging, supportive of their colleagues and genuinely excited by the possibilities inspired by so much creative energy – and especially excited to encourage a younger industry such as ours. Open communication and sharing of resources is I believe one

way we can improve the way in which we develop original musical theatre, and I will continue to work towards improving this communication and sharing of knowledge.

I believe I can also have a positive impact by working with producers on new productions to assist with structuring the development process and using small resources effectively. I will assist with this wherever possible through the workshop environment of New Musicals Australia and similar organisations.

The major improvement to be made in Australia is the time and financial investment in new musicals, which is certainly increasing but still difficult due to our relatively small audience numbers and their reluctance to take a chance on new works. Often the process for the early stages is not given enough time for re-working and detailed creative improvements due to small investment, and correspondingly the particular skill set for musical directors and all creatives working on those pieces is also under-developed.

Probably the greatest improvement would be to increase the number of new musicals developed each year so that the industry as a whole can learn from those experiences. More new musicals equals more creative teams with more skills as they have the chance to learn from one experience and then apply it to the next, and continuing on to the next, and so on. Without that flow on effect we are often trying to create a new work by using a process from a show two years ago, losing the momentum of our experience. There are exceptions of course and much to be proud of in the creation of new Australian works, but we need to increase the number of new productions in order to truly have a creative industry.

The opportunity to spend time in an extraordinarily vibrant and creative musical theatre industry as a result of the Churchill Trust's support has been life changing, and I will continue to share this knowledge with colleagues, students, and all those interested in musical theatre. It has inspired me to work practically on ways to be a part of the development of new musicals, support colleagues who are creating new work and be a part of the team bringing those works to life. It is a relatively young industry with much to be proud of, and much to work on. A musical director is only one part of this large and complex, beautifully challenging art form, but a part with substantial impact as it facilitates so much communication between specialties. By studying the role of musical director in the creation of new works I have had the opportunity to expand my knowledge exponentially and am dedicated to contributing to this industry in Australia.