

“INTO THE WOODS”:  
THE EXPERIENCES AND PREPARATION OF TEACHERS  
WHO DIRECT SECONDARY SCHOOL MUSICAL THEATRE

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Bachelor of Music (Music Education) (Honours)  
Sydney Conservatorium of Music,  
University of Sydney

2011

## **Acknowledgments**

To my supervisor Dr Michael Webb for his support, understanding and guidance. It was a true privilege to work with someone so inspiring who was willing to take me seriously from the first day I came into his office evangelising about musicals.

To Dr James Renwick, Dr Peter Dunbar-Hall, Dr Kathy Marsh and Phil Nanlohy for their valuable lessons in research methodology and assistance in the preparation of ethics documentation.

To the participants of this study who so generously donated their time and shared their experiences and enthusiasm with me.

To the staff of the Sydney Conservatorium of Music, particularly those in the Music Education and Vocal & Opera Studies departments, for four wonderful years of learning.

To the Sydney University Musical Theatre Ensemble and the University of Sydney Union for the opportunity to gain a profound amount of my own experience in performing, directing and producing musical theatre, and for greatly enriching my degree.

To Dr Helen Mitchell, whose template was used in the preparation of this thesis.

To Hugh, Julie, Tanya and Katrina, my fellow Honours comrades, it's been quite the adventure! I'm so glad to have been able to take it with such exceptional colleagues.

To all of my family, work colleagues and friends, especially Stephanie Aguirre, for your unwavering support and for listening to me babble on about my research ad nauseum.

And finally to Mum and Dad for always being so supportive of everything I do, helping me on my journey into a life of music and theatre, and for coming along for the ride.

## **Abstract**

This study examines the personal investment of four NSW Independent secondary school music and drama teachers who direct musical theatre productions. It considers these teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding the social and educational value of such productions, and the manner in which these productions exist within the schools that produce them. Through semi-structured interviews with these four teachers, this study outlines their experiences in producing and directing these musical theatre productions and their preparation for such involvement. By examining the relationship between the preparation and experiences of these teachers in relation to their beliefs and opinions regarding available training, this study also considers the implications of this data in regard to music education degrees.

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# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

Musical theatre productions are very popular extra-curricular activities in many secondary schools in New South Wales (NSW). For many schools, the school ‘musical’ forms the pinnacle of the performing arts calendar, and is regarded as an excellent opportunity for both students and teachers alike to display their capabilities in performance, design and creativity to the broader school community and the broader community at large. In being a form of theatre that combines, and typically gives equal importance to, song, spoken dialogue, and dance, musical theatre productions allow for a broad range of students to participate, and are usually put together and rehearsed out of typical school hours. They tend to be produced, facilitated, directed and designed by teaching staff at the school. This study investigates the experiences the teachers who direct these productions have had in undertaking this endeavour in their school, as well as the differing types of preparation that have occurred in their backgrounds which have contributed towards their musical and/or theatrical preparedness in the area of musical theatre.

## **Musical Theatre in Independent NSW Secondary Schools**

The musical’s place within secondary schools is described by Gray (1988, p. 8) as “able to do what the school curriculum ... cannot, i.e., involve the students, interest them in the subject matter, lead them to see its relevance to the world around them, and motivate them to learn more.” Its appeal over other multi-faceted forms of performing art such as opera is founded in its greater relevance to secondary students through its use of popular styles of music, more approachable topics and situations and the ability to involve a significant number of students in the many different aspects of production required.

Musical theatre productions in Independent NSW secondary schools offer significant opportunities for a school to display its capabilities in the performing arts to the broader community and general public. Independent schools in particular take pride in their performing arts departments and programmes, dedicating extensive resources to these. This availability of resources allows these schools to produce shows of spectacular and often semi-professional standards. While many government secondary schools in NSW also produce school musicals, often funding and resources are not available to do this, and many turn instead to other similar initiatives that are government-funded. Examples of this

include The Schools Spectacular, an annual variety show of exceedingly large proportions, which brings together thousands of students and staff from government schools across the state, and also the Rock Eisteddfod Challenge, which sees both Independent and government schools compete in an annual performance competition which has more of a dance focus.

This study examines the personal investment of NSW Independent secondary school music and drama teachers who direct musical theatre productions. It considers these teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding the educational value of such productions, and explores their experiences and preparation for such involvement.

As these teachers generally have greater access to resources than teachers in government secondary schools, they are subsequently able to present productions that are often on a bigger scale and more experimental or adventurous. This is not to say that state schools are not able to produce musical theatre productions of exceptional quality. This is, in fact, quite possible if teachers are adequately prepared and are given appropriate support. Independent schools quite often attract teachers who are highly experienced in education and both the discipline and subject areas in which they teach, with many coming from professional backgrounds in the performing arts. It is for this, and other reasons that will be addressed below, that this study focuses on teachers in Independent NSW secondary schools.

Additional considerations must be taken into account when discussing Independent NSW schools. These include the ethos of the school, the school community and any communities associated with the school (for example, a school may have a strong religious ethos, which may pose limitations and create expectations in regard to the work of a teacher directing a school musical production), as well as potential high academic expectations of students (which may be a factor in limiting the time a student may have available to dedicate to extra-curricular activities).



## **The Teacher as Director**

In most cases of secondary school musical theatre productions the roles of the core production team generally consist of a producer, director, musical director, choreographer, designer and occasionally a vocal coach. These are usually filled by teachers on staff at the school. Generally, the teacher with the most appropriate level of preparation to conduct each role (whether formal or informal) is chosen, with most teachers involved having a background with a predominant focus of music (Williams, 2003).

This study focuses on teachers who direct musical theatre productions. The use of the word *direct* in context of this study refers to the overseeing of the artistic elements of production (as opposed to logistic), as well as overseeing both the theatrical direction (the role of the director) and the musical direction (the role of the musical director) of a musical theatre production. In this sense, the study investigates the experiences and preparation of teachers who only direct the theatrical aspect of a show or only the musical aspect of a show, but may also investigate those who direct both of these aspects of production. As well as detailing what tasks these teachers undertake in their role as director, this study investigates what pre-service and in-service training and informal learning experiences these teachers have had, contributing to their level of preparation to direct secondary school musical theatre productions, their attitudes towards training and preparation currently available and the place of musical theatre within the school community and its teaching environments.

### **Significance of Study**

This study is significant in that there has been very little research conducted into musical theatre productions within Australian secondary schools. A great deal of related studies originate in America, the birthplace and cultural home of the musical theatre tradition, where secondary school musical theatre productions are given much more weighting both culturally and academically, making the Australian perspective this study brings to this literature unique.

Some studies have been undertaken into which teachers are typically conducting different production roles in secondary school musical theatre productions, identifying confidence issues and a lack of experience and training (Williams, 2003). However, very few studies have investigated what training and experiences these teachers have had in establishing their preparedness to undertake the task of directing a show. This study, by investigating teachers who direct musicals in Independent NSW secondary schools, offers an insight into which training and experiences may be most effective in establishing an appropriate level of preparation to undertake this task, with the aim of providing data relevant to the development of pre-service music education programmes.

This study also has a personal significance, as I have been involved in the performance, direction, musical direction, design and production of musical theatre for the last fourteen years. I hope to specialise, through further training and experience, in secondary school musical theatre pedagogy. I seek to identify through this study, approaches to training and practical experiences that are beneficial towards the further development of theatrical and musical preparation for directing and teaching musical theatre.

## **Research Questions**

The focus of this study is on the experiences of the participants in conducting this work. It is also to establish what preparation was most effective in establishing their theatrical and musical preparedness in directing secondary school musical theatre, as well as their attitudes regarding the training available and any perceived needs in the field. The research is directed by the following three questions:

- What are the attitudes and beliefs of Independent school music and drama teachers regarding the broad educational value of school musical theatre productions?
- What are the characteristics of the experiences of Independent school teachers in directing school musical theatre?

- What preparation has been effective in assisting these teachers to direct secondary school musical theatre productions and what are their recommendations for pre-service music education?

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

Musical theatre and its place within the secondary school as both an extra-curricular activity and a pedagogical phenomenon is covered from many differing perspectives across a wide range of international literature. A significant portion of literature on this topic argues for the value and importance of the high school musical production against a number of publications that contend that musical theatre has no place within music departments in secondary schools. The majority of these latter publications are opinion articles from experienced (typically music) educators. This is sometimes also the case with the literature available on the importance of musical theatre within schools; however this literature typically comprises research articles and dissertations. While most of the literature identified while researching this topic contributes to this ongoing debate, a significant proportion of the publications advocating musical theatre in education also aim to provide inexperienced music educators with tools and information to assist their facilitation of school musicals.

Of note in the scope of the literature available on musical theatre in secondary schools is the overwhelming number of North American publications, most likely resulting from the fact that the stage musical originates and continues to thrive in the United States of America. It is pertinent to also note that to date no Australian study of musical theatre in high schools has been published and the literature available on musical theatre in Australia is minimal.

Literature available on this field generally deals with three aspects; the musical work itself and its performance context within high school communities and the broader community; the experience of a student within this setting; and the role of a teacher in facilitating this experience. Both sides of the continuing debate for and against musical theatre in secondary school culture and curriculum address all three of these aspects, as can be discerned from the extant literature.

### **Musical Theatre as a Beneficial Experience**

The majority of literature available in the field supports the idea that the musical is an asset to the cultural life of many schools. Skaggs (1966) provides an account of the development

of her own personal views on the place of ‘musical comedies’ within the school. After being inspired by a speaker at a meeting held to discuss this issue, she arrives at the conclusion that they provide a permissible educational experience and are a means to musical growth, provided they do not interfere with a “serious” music programme in a school (p. 149). She also notes that an administrator at the meeting raises the point of a musical creating school spirit and pride as well as discipline among students who participate. This opinion is also expressed by Loy, Cleaveland and Robertson (1966), whose letter in defence of the school musical lists many enduring benefits of involvement in such a production. The survey results detailed in the appendix of Gray’s (1988) case study of students and administrators’ perceptions of the benefits of experience in a production of *The King and I* also indicate this same notion. Gray also notes, however, that discipline and behavioural control issues were the biggest obstacle she faced as director of the aforementioned production.

A broader perspective on the matter of discipline issues in performance groups is offered by Pitts (2007b), who details a study conducted into participants in a Gilbert and Sullivan festival. She notes several interviewees often raise the concern of balancing the hard work of rehearsals with the fun of catching up with their friends in the performance society. This balance is often askew and results in more socialising than work. However, she iterates that the focus of many of these groups is on fun and participation, stating that “musical learning can be accidental as well as informal” (p. 771) in these circumstances.

### **The Teacher’s Role within Musical Theatre Productions**

A significant amount of literature in this field concerns the teacher facilitating the learning of musical theatre in a secondary school. Much of this is directed towards music teachers who, as Williams (2003) discovered in his study of the responsibilities of music teachers in high school musical theatre, are quite often not only involved in musical aspects of a production, but also non-musical and technical aspects. In his study, Williams investigated whether music teachers are prepared for such comprehensive roles and discovered through several quantitative surveys that more music teachers than drama teachers were in charge of theatrical direction of school musicals. This was seen as particularly pertinent in smaller schools with fewer staff.

The prime concern of Williams' research however, was whether or not music teachers felt prepared enough through their pre-service training to undertake roles such as director, producer and set designer. An overwhelming majority of music teachers felt exceptionally underprepared and were nervous about undertaking these roles. He also noted that teachers with preparation in voice performance and vocal pedagogy were most likely to be faced with directing some aspect of a school musical in their career. His study concluded that there is a strong need for basic training in theatrical production for pre-service music teachers to prepare them for seemingly inevitable roles in high school musical productions, particularly due to their popularity within the Ohio schools that participated in his study.

Other publications advise music teachers in their uncertain role as directors of a school musical. Bogar (1983) states that the job of a director is primarily to give a cast the confidence to perform a show on their own, and provides a list of suggestions from his own experience that he believes will be beneficial to a music teacher-director. A number of these have to do with monitoring cast relationships, ensuring that the experience is positive for all students involved, and imploring the teacher to understand that while at times it can be a very frustrating experience, nothing is worth loss of control. Gray (1988) reiterates this in her reflection on directing *The King and I*, admitting to losing control due to behavioural issues at times (p. 70).

Lee (1983) also offers advice for music teachers planning a musical, suggesting repertoire that is suited to adolescent performers, based on vocal pedagogical concerns. Such suggestions include *Oklahoma!*, *Brigadoon* and *My Fair Lady* for the appropriate nature of the classical vocal approach required. Lee argues that while rock musicals may be more relevant to students' interests, the manner in which the material is performed vocally (primarily through the technique of 'belt') is inadvisable for young voices. Skaggs makes similar suggestions; however her concern is in the need for more serious repertoire that enables students who would otherwise not associate with classical music to experience music semi-classical in nature. Much literature suggests that school musicals should also be inclusive of as many students as possible. Pitts (2007a) states that in choosing a musical and in its production, an emphasis must be made on making the music within the production appealing to all students. In doing this, students at a school who did not study

classroom music would also be able to benefit from the experience in a musically pedagogical way.

Jackson and Wildman (1971) put forward a different perspective, allowing their students to have a significant input into the selection of repertoire. They recount playing recordings of several musicals for students, who, as a result, identify closely with *West Side Story* due to its modern sound and plot involving teenage issues. Technically, this musical is exceptionally difficult, however, so Jackson and Wildman wrote their own work that was similar in feel and content, but that addressed their students' needs and expectations.

Lazarus (2005) discusses factors that need to be taken into consideration when choosing material. In addition to academic relevance, these include age-appropriate themes and language, and a balance of contemporary social issues that enable the material to be relevant to students without exposing them to 'mature' themes or situations. Lazarus differs from other writers by noting the need to acknowledge differences amongst students involved, as well as an acknowledgement of the adversities faced by students. He suggests approaching this material in ways to promote new perspectives instead of simply not acknowledging it. The radical difference in this approach is best explained by this particular article being much more contemporary, reflecting contemporary urban society.

Lazarus identifies school productions as providing one of the most exceptional opportunities for students to interact with their teachers informally, allowing the development of teacher-student relationships that are richer and a culture that is inclusive between the cast and teachers as a whole. This provides teachers with excellent opportunities for effective and informal learning, but the line between being a "caring and compassionate adult professional and friend" (p. 21); a confidante, a lay therapist, a buddy and a teacher can be easily crossed.

It is also important for teachers to consider the commitment of students to their academic schoolwork as well as the production. Lazarus (2005), Skaggs (1966) and Bogar (1983) all emphasise that as a facilitator of a school production, it is a teacher's job to ensure that the production is not used as an excuse for students to fall behind academically, nor is the production such an overwhelming commitment that students actually fall behind academically.

Several publications discuss issues related to boys and their involvement in school musicals. Jackson and Wildman (1971) took care to create several masculine roles in the musical they wrote for their students, to enable the boys to feel more comfortable vocally and socially in the roles they were playing. Freer (2009) offers multiple case studies of boys and their perceptions of their vocal work in ensembles. All case studies mention the boys' perceptions of the way their voice changes with the onset of puberty. The boys studied are experienced singers and felt no shame in this happening to them, but some discussed their peers being embarrassed by the process and discontinuing vocal involvement. Consideration of this vocal transition boys experience in puberty is key when choosing repertoire and casting a school musical.

### **The Musical Theatre Production as an Educational Context**

Literature suggesting that the school musical is valid as an educational context tends to focus on the benefits students, teachers and others will receive out of participation in such a school production. Burnau (1968) states that it is desirable for other students, teachers, administrators and the public to witness “the results of student-teacher activity that is directly concerned with the outcome of human endeavour of the magnitude of the production of a musical” (p. 60). He goes on to suggest that involvement in a school musical helps assist a student to develop conceptual and critical thinking abilities. This is mirrored by Levy (1997) who also identifies practice in problem solving and thinking critically about social issues in the manner of Brecht's theatre as potential cognitive benefits of involvement in a school musical. Perrine (1989) monitored creative thinking in students participating in a musical in her study. Using Torrance Tests of Creative Thinking to monitor the levels of creativity in a group of students before and after their involvement in a school musical, as well as a control group who did not participate in the musical, Perrine discovered that there were no significant differences between the creativity of students involved and students in the control group, but aspects of the musical attitudes and listening skills of the students involved in the production improved.

Research conducted into musical theatre as a pedagogical device has mainly centred on education concerned with history, culture, ethics and theatre itself, as is the case with



Gray's (1988) experience in directing a school musical and Pitts' (2004, 2007b) research into concepts of learning environments in the work of amateur musical theatre societies. Snider (1995), in her research, focused on existing ways that musical theatre is taught in classroom music as an art form which is an amalgamation of music, dance and drama and what resources music teachers have available to assist in their use of the school musical as a teaching device. She aimed to identify and evaluate instructional material available to teachers and also investigated musical theatre in relation to the state syllabi for music and drama. In doing this it was discovered that there were quite a few resources available commercially but there was an overwhelming lack of use of these by teachers. She criticised the material that was available, as it tended to be more audition based and used an almost scientific approach. Snider argues that in the hands of the right teacher, this kind of material can be used to teach alongside work which had more emotional depth to provide a more rounded educational experience. Through surveying teachers on how they taught musical theatre she discovered that there was no standard pedagogical practice, and that many teachers were unsure of how to go about this process. Snider offers a sample curriculum as part of her thesis, which covers areas of concern for the teachers surveyed as part of her research.

Mourik (2008) identifies another problem with the pedagogical methods currently existing to teach musical theatre. Through research and experience, he has gained insight into how many undergraduate courses in musical theatre are taught and identifies one of the problems being that from a student's inception into the world of musical theatre in high school, music, dance and drama are all taught as three separate entities and are then fused together merely in performance. He suggests that an amalgamation of these individually learned skills needs to take place, identifying a substantial gap between what is needed on stage and what is taught in class and rehearsals due to the three domains of music, dance and drama being co-ordinated by three people (musical director, choreographer, director) who often didn't work together as closely as they should. His suggestion is to teach these elements in pairs; a dance class with singing, a singing class with acting, an acting class with dancing, and so on. These can be added together layer by layer until a complete approach takes place, with all three disciplines participating in a creative dialogue of sorts. Mourik reasons that performing arts should be centred around bringing elements together, not taking them apart. Snider's (1995) identified need for acting teachers with very good musical understanding and music teachers with a sensitivity for the stage within high

school musical productions aligns very well with Mourik's argument, and establishes a significant position for Williams' (2003) research into the specifically theatrical preparation of secondary school music teachers.

### **The Student and Musical Theatre**

The most common aspect of school musicals discussed across all literature in favour of the musical was the positive individual gains students developed in their self-esteem and confidence through their experience. Skaggs (1966), Loy, Cleaveland and Robertson (1966), Jackson and Wildman (1971) and Pitts (2004, 2007a, 2007b) all provide evidence of students becoming more confident as performers on stage and as individuals in other aspects of their life as a result of being in a school musical. The effect of participation in a musical on the self-esteem of those involved was researched at length by Perrine (1989), who through the use of a control group and Piers-Harris Self-Concept Scale tests conducted before and after involvement (or non-involvement) in a school musical concluded that there was no marked change in students' estimation of their self-worth. However, she believed that were a comprehensive and longitudinal study to be conducted into this area, results indicating a growth in self-concept in students involved in school musicals would emerge, as development of this is ever changing and is a long-term process.

This development of self-confidence and self-worth is one of many motivations of students to become involved in musical theatre suggested by available literature. Pitts' (2007a) research into the motivations of students to become involved in musical theatre is extensive. To conduct this research, Pitts utilised a questionnaire investigating students' attitudes towards music, the production they were doing at the time, *Anything Goes*, and their motivations for becoming involved (or for not becoming involved). Pitts identifies many reasons discovered for why students did and did not become involved in the production, the most typical reason for becoming involved being that the process and final performance seemed like a lot of fun. The focus on the voices of pupils as a group and individually in this study provides a very detailed, but specific, qualitative case study.

As part of his study on boys' voices, Freer (2009) provides a case study of Danny, who gives reasons for his involvement in musical theatre productions as being that he enjoyed making people smile, laugh and feel good. Danny states he has obtained some good lead roles in musicals due to his prior experience in choral music, but made the transition from choral music to musical theatre because he thought it might be more fun. He states, "it's affected me in lots of ways" (p. 230).

Williams (2003) identifies musical theatre as being exceptionally popular in schools as an extra-curricular activity. This is due in part to the changing nature of music education to be more experiential and have more of a focus on musical traditions other than Western classical music. The beginnings of this transition can be seen in the interaction between Mathis (1966) and Loy, Cleaveland and Robertson (1966). Mathis composed a scathing article on musical theatre, referring to it in its opening as "a very contagious disease" (p. 513), offering an explanation for its gaining popularity as the fact that "not much thought is required for achievement or surface success" (p. 514). Loy, Cleaveland and Robertson respond to Mathis in their open letter, providing argument for all of his criticisms, and ultimately describing the school musical as an entity that greatly benefits the students involved, the staff and administrators of a school, the school community and the greater community at large. They also reason that students have the right to a varied musical experience in their education.

The negative mentality of Mathis (1966) still does exist in contemporary education occasionally. Wolf (2007) addresses this, suggesting that musical theatre is often seen as being of lesser value than other forms of performance of music due to it having a middlebrow status, its blatant commercialism (in its contemporary, blockbuster form) and its lack of stable evidence for study and analysis. She provides a framework under which academically sound critical analysis of musical theatre is able to take place, suggesting the libretto be read as if a play, the lyrics as if poetry, comparative studies between different productions, an emphasis on context and the use of conventions to frame this analysis.

## **Musical Theatre in Australian Secondary Schools**

In my own experience, I have found that many Australian secondary schools present an annual or biannual school musical, often as a joint venture with other local schools. As well as this, in NSW in particular there are opportunities to teach musical theatre in Music curriculum (Board of Studies NSW, 2003, p. 38). As stated above, however, no study of musical theatre in Australian educational contexts has yet been undertaken. Hunter and Milne (2005) provide a history of theatre for young people over the last 30 years in Australia and New Zealand and yet they make no mention of musical theatre at all. They detail the change over time of the student as a passive audience member and rote-actor to critic and dramaturge, with extensive views of performance. They do not, however, include an art form with which many young performers have come into contact, either as a performing participant, or audience member. Waldock's (1998) educational kit for the musical *Boojum!*, composed by Martin Wesley Smith for performance by secondary school students is a resource which, in part at least, aims to begin to remedy the lack of Australian studies into musical theatre in secondary schools.

## **Chapter 3: Methodology**

### **The Qualitative Paradigm**

This thesis, like much of the research discussed in the previous chapter, belongs within the qualitative paradigm. Through multiple case studies of teachers who direct secondary school musical theatre productions, the research seeks to understand the world through the interpretations and meanings people attribute to various phenomena (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). By using a research design incorporating multiple case studies, Burns (2000) asserts that the process can provoke discovery as the research is conducted. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) describe a multiple case study as being able to examine and interpret events through the viewpoints of the participants.

### **Participants and Sampling**

This project focuses on four teachers who musically or theatrically direct musical theatre productions in Independent NSW secondary schools. This small number of participants was decided upon so that a greater level of depth could be taken into individual cases, meaning data obtained could be more carefully analysed, in considering the time limitations of the study.

The participants for this study were selected through the process of purposive sampling. Described as, “the deliberate selection of specific individuals, events, or settings because of the crucial information they can provide that cannot be obtained so well through other channels”, Liamputtong (2009, p. 11) makes distinct that purposive sampling allows a researcher to discern which cases may be able to provide the most relevant and comprehensive information for the study.

In this particular study, participants were required to be on the teaching staff of the school of which they directed the musical theatre productions. Participants with a greater amount of experience were sought out for their wealth of knowledge and experience. In regard to the schools approached to take part in the study, there were several requirements needed. Schools were required to be Independent secondary schools located within New South

Wales, that have a reputation within local artistic and educational communities of producing musical theatre productions of an exceptional standard, and are regarded by these communities as giving high value to their musical theatre productions within the culture of the school. This, again, enhanced the reliability of the study through increasing the level of consistency between cases with regard to factors such as level of funding available to produce a musical theatre production and access to resources available for the same purpose. The schools approached to participate in this study were known to the researcher by reputation, as an active member of local community theatre and as a former participant within musical theatre productions in an Independent NSW secondary school.

## **Data Collection Methods**

### **Interviews**

This study utilised semi-structured interviews with a majority of questions open-ended in nature to allow a more “valid response from the informant’s perception of reality” (Burns, 2000, p. 424). This format of interview provides an opportunity for the researcher to develop a rapport with the participant, with a less rigid and pre-determined structure. While still structuring an interview to develop from information-based questions to analytical questions, this format allows the researcher to ask further questions and discuss responses that are unexpected and therefore provide a more comprehensive amount of data. As well as this, the semi-structured format allows for the researcher to find emerging links through questions asked. All interviews were conducted face-to-face within the participants’ schools, and were audio recorded with the consent of participants for later analysis.

All interviews were conducted in confidence, and the names of all participating schools and teachers have been given pseudonyms to conceal their identity. Pseudonyms given to schools indicate their general geographic location.

**Table 1: Participants, Schools and Interview Dates**

| Participant     | School          | Interview Date |
|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
| Graeme Fellows  | Inner Sydney    | 20 May, 2011   |
| Karen Parsons   | South of Sydney | 24 May, 2011   |
| Maria West      | South of Sydney | 24 May, 2011   |
| Samuel Stephens | North of Sydney | 27 May, 2011   |

### **Field Notes**

By having a logbook available in which to record field notes immediately after interviews and after fieldwork within the schools, I was able to record general impressions and contextualise the data collected through interviews. As well as this, it provided an opportunity for me to record the impressions and feelings I had of the school itself, the culture within this school and the way in which the musical theatre production was placed within this culture. By having this additional data, I was able to much better understand the data collected at later time periods when conducting analysis (Hammersley & Atkinson, 2007).

### **Data Analysis**

In a qualitative study, the data analysed and interpreted is quite descriptive in nature (Denscombe, 1998). The data collected was interpreted and conceptualised by myself during its collection, in accordance with the principals of grounded theory (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Audio recordings of interviews were transcribed in full, and were subjected to open coding to assist in identifying emerging themes and commonalities. Links were formed between these themes, creating sub-categories in a process of axial coding.

### **Ethics**

In the methodology of this study, the ethical principals of qualitative research have been given appropriate consideration. Participating schools were approached by means of a mailed letter to the principal or headmaster/mistress (Appendix B). When permission was

granted, in writing, for any research to take place at the school, a cover letter (Appendix C) with an attached Participant Information Statement (Appendix D) and Participant Consent Form (Appendix E) was forwarded on to teachers at the school who fitted the criteria for participation in the study. At the time of arranging interviews by telephone and also at the commencement of all face-to-face interviews, participants were reminded that their participation was voluntary and their understanding of the nature of the study was confirmed. All interviews were conducted in the school offices of participants, and were at a time that was most convenient for them. The findings of this study are presented in the following chapter.



## Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents a detailed discussion of the experiences and preparation of four teachers who either musically or theatrically direct musical theatre productions within the school in which they are employed. These teachers and the schools in which they are employed, Graeme Fellows of Inner Sydney, Karen Parsons and Maria West of South of Sydney, and Samuel Stephens of North of Sydney, are detailed in Table 1, and will be hereafter referred to by their first names. The three schools that employ these four teachers are all NSW Independent secondary schools, one located north of Sydney, one in the inner suburbs of Sydney, and another quite far south of Sydney, in a regional area (hence the pseudonyms given to these schools, based on their geographic location). In looking comprehensively at the roles and responsibilities these teachers assume in relation to musical theatre involvement, this chapter also examines the various types of formal training and non-formal learning they have undergone in preparing for their teaching careers. Additionally it explores how such experiences have prepared them for the work they currently undertake as directors of these musicals, as well as the beliefs and attitudes these teachers hold towards their own preparation and the preparation that is currently available to pre-service music and drama teachers.

The place of musical theatre productions within these secondary schools as a cultural, social and educational experience for students is also discussed, as are the implications of these teachers' and their students' musical theatre experiences for classroom learning and pedagogy. The musical is also discussed as a valued cultural asset to the participating schools and their wider community, as are the public relations and marketing benefits of musical productions for Independent schools in their appeal to parents considering sending their children to the school. Other motivations for schools to mount a musical theatre production, such as their social, educational and extra-curricular benefits are discussed as well.

## The School Musical

Musical theatre productions in Independent NSW secondary schools continue to be an exceptionally popular and widespread form of extra-curricular performance experience for students for a number of reasons. Most of these, of course, are concerned with the cultural and social growth of the students who participate in the show (as is the purpose of many extra-curricular activities) but there are also educational benefits in participating within a school musical production, as well as a range of reasons why teachers choose to dedicate a substantial allocation of voluntary time and energy into producing and directing such productions. Additional to these motivations are those of an Independent school for facilitating such productions through allocation of funding and resources. These range from fostering cultural growth within the school community and providing extra-curricular activities for up to one hundred students, to having an event which the school is able to invite the wider community to attend, which assists in marketing the school as an institution that provides rich opportunities for students.

When asked why teachers might choose to produce a musical theatre production as a major performance event over other forms of theatre such as plays and opera, all of the participants gave reasons relating to musical theatre being culturally inclusive and appealing for a majority of secondary students.

Maria: I personally think that they're more enjoyable, and ... we can sort of cater to the more general sort of taste, whereas if it was just plays, a lot of kids like to get up and dance. ... I think it's a good sort of middle-of-the-road avenue for kids to be involved.

Samuel: It's kind of a maturity thing as well. I mean, kids can listen to opera and understand opera in the classroom, but to actually produce it is kind of, you know, it's high art. Musicals are kind of light entertainment ... [they're] more accessible.

While Graeme shares these views, he also acknowledges that musicals are easier to market to a broader audience, and that he personally is able to have greater creative control over the production.

Graeme: Musical theatre ... brings so many people together and it's such a vibrant medium. ... It's a lot easier to get a crowd in to show off the subject [drama] than it is if I'm

doing a Gibson or a Chekov or something like that, which, they've all got their place and we do them as well, but the musicals are big and they're brassy and they're fun and I can be a lot more creative with a musical.

### **A Positive Social Experience**

When discussing the place of musical theatre productions within their schools, all four teachers continually returned to discussing the positive social experiences students had in participating within these productions. In particular, the South of Sydney school has implemented a programme wherein all Year 7 students participate in the school musical upon beginning their first year at the school, as a means of introducing them to the potential positive experiences of the school.

Karen: We decided to include Year 7 in the musicals, was so that they actually-, it was a really great 'jump in' to school, and involve them in something they have probably never have had the chance to be involved in, and made it compulsory for Year 7.

In participating, many of the new students made friends with older upper Year students who had elected to be involved and hence new friendships were often formed. Additionally, many of these students in upper years who elect to participate also had very positive social experiences with fellow students and teachers.

Karen: It's such a wonderful experience for kids! A lot of these kids, they connect so well in the musical that it's probably the best experience that some of them will have at school. They just get such a good feel from it and as I said, they make good friends. And, look, I still see kids from when I did different shows, - *Into the Woods* had some great lines in it - and I'll see kids in Sydney, and they'll call out one of the lines. You know, it makes such an impact and it makes such a good memory.

The teachers interviewed from the other two schools, Inner Sydney and North of Sydney had a similar experience.

Graeme: My passion for it and also the passion that I see in others that have inspired me ... and to see the girls at the end of a night, to see them at the end of a production and what it means to them, and everyone!

Samuel: Doing a musical at school is an experience that the kids never ever forget, and it's actually something the staff never ever forget. You know, I've got all the posters up there [above his desk, framed on his wall] just as a memento. You look at them and you can remember every single kid. And I tell you what, when we have our

end-of-show function in here, people are crying, you know? It's just, you think, "We've done all this work together!" It's an amazing journey.

At the school South of Sydney, both teachers who were interviewed described the school's musical theatre production as a place where students who, for whatever reason, were finding it difficult to 'fit in' at school, could find a place to make friends and feel as though they were valued members of the school community.

Karen: Sometimes it just really helps kids that struggle in other areas that find they just love that side of it. I know even this last [musical], the kids on stage, some of them were really-, perhaps had never fitted in or felt they've fitted in very well, and now all of a sudden the kids are coming up to them saying, "Oh my god, you were fantastic!" Just kids that came to see it and they're getting a little bit of acknowledgement, and that's a really good thing.

### **A Dialogue Between Classroom and Stage**

Typically, school musicals are seen as extra-curricular activities that are conducted outside the classroom and often out of typical school hours. However, in discussing how participation by both students and teachers themselves in these school productions affect student learning, content and pedagogy in their classroom practice, all four teachers interviewed identified many positive outcomes. Furthermore, evidence of a dialogue between what occurred in the classroom and what occurred in the musical production became evident.

For students in Year 7 at the South of Sydney school, participation in the school musical is compulsory when it takes place, in alternate years. In preparation, learning the music for the musical production becomes an integral part of the first half of the year's programming of the NSW Stage 4 music course, (commonly delivered in Years 7 and 8), which is a compulsory course in NSW secondary schools.

In terms of curriculum content, 'Theatre Music' is an elective topic in the NSW Stage 5 music course (commonly delivered in Years 9 and 10) (Board of Studies NSW, 2003) and this includes "musicals" as a focus area. Two of the four teachers interviewed in this study were classroom music teachers. Neither were involved in teaching the Stage 5 course, but as both were head of their respective departments, they oversaw the curriculum, and both schools included this "musicals" topic in their Year 10 elective music programmes. Maria,

of South of Sydney, noted how students who have participated in musical theatre productions will use their experiences to inform their work in this unit.

Maria: In Year 10 we've just introduced this, where they actually write their own little musical, over the last few years, and the kids just love it. We've put them in groups and they each have a theme that they have to do, so that sort of thing. And you know, if they've been involved in the musical, they'll use their experiences to stage that little performance, and the kids get a real buzz out of it.

Samuel, of North of Sydney, described the reverse situation taking place, where students studying the topic in classroom music are better informed in their performance of the school production.

Samuel: 'The musical' is a syllabus subject that we have in Year 10, music theatre, and it's really great to have the musical you're actually doing that year as part of that programme. ... When we did *West Side Story*, I wasn't teaching Year 10, but [another teacher], was doing a full *West Side Story* analysis and ... all those little leitmotifs that came through. She went into all this detail, and it made a huge difference to the way that kids sort of involve themselves, because they understand the music more. Instead of being, you know, "Sing it like this!" ... They had a deep understanding of what Bernstein was doing with all those intervals and all that clever stuff he did, and that makes a huge difference to the way they then present it ... You know, I really noticed a big difference and if you're actually studying the music in the curriculum, it pays off at the end production. So, it's a critical thing that we put in 'the musical' in that subject area in Year 10 each year.

As well as mirroring and expanding on the content of classroom teaching in music, the two teacher-participants who were classroom drama teachers noted that being involved in school musical productions assisted students in becoming aware of the process of creating theatre; it also allowed students to implement practical skills they had learnt in the classroom, such as lighting and technical operation and makeup.

Graeme: While I get a professional sound engineer and a professional lighting company in, those people are really happy to have our girls alongside them, and to teach them the trade. I've got a girl in Year 11 at the moment who's just-, she loves the backstage crew. ... One of the girls' parents is, she's the head wig and makeup person at the Opera House for Opera Australia. She comes in and she'll do a workshop with some of our girls and so we have girls down there doing makeup being trained by [her], which is fantastic!

Karen: We tend to teach a lot of the production elements right from scratch, and so all my kids right when they're going through Year 9 and 10, by the end of Year 9 they can all use the lighting board and they can all... sound, all sorts of things. We actually

give them skills on all that side of it, because not all of them will want to be on stage all the time.

Graeme of Inner Sydney, a former professional actor, also notes that in taking a very disciplined and professional approach to his process of directing, his students will understand what he expects from them in their work in classroom Drama.

Graeme: The girls I work with, they understand the way I work in that environment, but they also see that end product. So they think, “Well, if that’s the way he’s going to work and my end product is going to be my HSC [Higher School Certificate], and that’s going to be like the production that we’ve put on, which is at such a high standard, that I’m going to work to that.” So, it all feeds into itself.

Similarly, Karen and Maria also note that in working with students on these productions, they are able to establish a rapport and respect that is far deeper than can commonly be developed in the classroom alone, and this creates a more positive dynamic within the actual classroom.

Karen: I think that the kids, they approach classes with a totally different attitude when you do a musical. I think that, just going on-, you feel closer to the students for starters, because a lot of them are involved in it, and for that, I think they work better for you. They have a connection.

Researcher: So, you build quite a rapport?

Karen: Absolutely, and it’s really nice!

Maria: I think you get a different relationship with the kids, they see you differently than in the classroom. I like that sort of thing; they see you as more of a human being. You know, you might lose your temper or you can get close, if people have a problem when you’re on the camps, or even in the afternoons, there’s a closeness there that you don’t get when you’re standing in front of a classroom teaching. There’s more of a familiarity, and it’s respect, too. I think, you sort of go down to the level of the kids rather than, ‘You’re a teacher and that’s it.’ I really like it.

### **An Asset to the School**

Samuel: It is *the* most popular musical event on the calendar. And it is, probably, the most popular event school-wide.

In the three participating schools, musical theatre productions are exceptionally highly regarded. Samuel led me to his office at North of Sydney past a wall of very large, framed posters from the school’s previous productions, and described these productions as “Our pride and joy”. In the foyer of the Performing Arts Centre the South of Sydney school hang

the cast photos of previous productions – groups of hundreds of beaming children. Adjacent to these is a wall of plaques – awards from a large and prestigious regional theatre awards organisation - including for Best Secondary School Musical, Best Actor, and Best Musical Director. Graeme spoke about going back to the first school at which he taught, many years ago, and seeing the banner for the first musical theatre production the school ever put on under his direction, still proudly displayed in the front office. His own office is situated within the school’s \$10.5m theatre, the foyer of which displays numerous posters from past productions, hung proudly beside autographed Broadway posters from school drama tours to New York.

Independent NSW secondary school communities have many reasons to value the musical theatre productions created by their staff and students. With the involvement of so many students (up to 250 in every production in the South of Sydney school), they offer an opportunity for significant student participation in an extra-curricular activity. While the production values of some Independent NSW school musicals are high and may cost a large sum of money, Graeme reasons,

If you’re going to spend a \$100,000 on a show here, we might pull \$80,000 through the door, so you’re actually only spending \$20,000 on co-curricular for eighty kids which is going over two-and-a-half terms, three terms, and is going to give them the best experience of their life. You can’t pay for that experience, or those memories.

In discussing competitiveness in musical theatre productions between Independent NSW secondary schools, which three of four participants acknowledged existed, all participants explained that “the boss” expected their school’s musical theatre productions to stand out and attract students to attend their school.

Karen: It’s a really good PR [public relations] thing for the school.

Researcher: I’m sure the school probably puts photos up on the website?

Karen: Yeah, and that’s right, exactly. And it’s good for the community to see that we do all this sort of thing. And I think that it encourages people to look at the school and think, “Ooh, they do all these things! That’s a good school for my kids to come to!”

Graeme, who believes that “parents want their kids to do something creative these days”, gives an example of how a school musical can serve as a marketing tool for an Independent NSW school, while discussing a recent production he had directed at the school.

Graeme: I got an email after *Beauty and the Beast* from a mother who said, “I was thinking of putting my child in [another school], she’s going into Year 5, I’m now going to put her into [your school], as I love what you guys are doing.” And I look at that, and that’s eight years of fees that I’ve brought to the school for one kid. That’s two hundred grand plus! So, they understand that our shows bring people here.

Musical theatre productions also contribute substantially to the cultural development of a school. Maria, the Director of Performing Arts at the South of Sydney school explained this, using an example of students who were introduced to different disciplines in the performing arts by means of their participation within a school musical.

Researcher: So, performing arts has grown recent years at this school, do you feel the musicals have any influence on that? Or, is that a culture shift? Why do you feel this is happening?

Maria: I think they go hand in hand. [A few years ago, we introduced] Drama and we had musicals before that, but I think that they complement each other because the musicals have attracted more kids to take Drama, but then Drama has brought in more kids that have surfaced that have the courage to get up on stage now, whereas they probably were a bit hesitant. So I think they complement each other, both of them. And now Dance is in, it’s even better.

When participants were asked why they believe Independent schools in NSW produced more musical theatre productions than government schools, all stated that the biggest difference was in funding, facilities and support from “the boss”. However, Graeme suggested there might be additional reasons.

Graeme: I think there’s a culture about art. I think there’s a culture. And as snobby as it might seem to say it, I think that there is a higher standard of appreciation of arts, probably, in an Independent school. Now, that’s not taking every school into account, because I went to some amazing state schools as an HSC marker where the high level of music, art and drama and everything would knock the socks off just about every Independent school. But, I think we’re lucky to be in this environment.

Musical theatre productions serve multiple purposes and create a range of opportunities for many individuals, as well as entire communities. Their social and educational function makes them intrinsically valuable to students and teachers in a school, and their value as a cultural asset to a school makes them fiscally sustainable and a unique part of a school’s extra-curricular programme which is something that all members of a school community can be proud of.



## **Putting it Together**

Individual teachers' investment of time and energy (beyond that normally expected of an Independent school employee) in a school musical theatre production varies. However, all participants in the study noted that in taking on any facilitating role in creating a school musical involves an exceptional amount of work, and much of this occurs outside of normal school hours.

Most theatre productions require someone to take on the role of Producer, that is, someone who is responsible for oversight of all production logistics, including rehearsal and performance scheduling, fiscal management and arrangements, management of resources, venue, cast, crew, creative production team, and legal/contractual agreements. None of the participating schools had a designated Producer to oversee their productions. This role is either shared, in different proportions, or is taken on by a person who is also fulfilling another integral production role, such as Director or Musical Director.

Teachers who direct musical theatre productions face many challenges - time management, logistical considerations, resource and other limitations within the school, and in the limitations of the students with whom they work. All of these limitations factor into the roles that such teachers perform, as they juggle the logistical and creative dimensions of performance.

### **The Individual and the Team**

All participants within this study stressed the particular importance of being able to work effectively within a team in order to successfully produce a musical theatre production within their schools. To begin, this requires knowledge of what needs to be done in order to produce a musical from an idea to a complete performance. A teacher must be able to identify which roles and tasks they are capable of performing to achieve the successful production of a musical. They must also be able to discuss these with other people available to assist them and determine whether they can assemble a viable team. By understanding the strengths and weaknesses of the production team personnel, roles can be assigned and people are assist and support each other in these roles. The ways teachers

work together in this way and undertake various roles differed across the three schools that participated in the study.

Graeme, the head of Drama at Inner West, takes on the roles of both Director and Producer on his own, making him the sole person in charge of the administration of the school's annual musical, as well as the creative authority. He takes on this role in consultation with other staff, explaining: "I do the musical and they do the smaller productions". As well as having administrative control of the productions, Graeme manages the school's \$10.5m Performing Arts Centre, making him responsible for the administration of the venue, which is often hired out to external companies and organisations.

Graeme works closely with both the Music Director of his shows, who is a music teacher at the school, and a fellow drama teacher who works as the Choreographer and Vocal Coach. The rest of the creative team Graeme assembles consists mainly of professionals from outside the school, who are contracted to undertake specific roles. A set designer "who's a NIDA [National Institute of Dramatic Art] grad, [who] now works at a lot of Independent schools doing their sets" is called upon for meetings and consultations over the course of his planning, as is "one of Australia's top lighting designers" and a team from a sound technology company. Graeme has worked with this team for eight shows and describes the process of collaboration that occurs through his facilitation as "fantastic",

Graeme: I work a lot on it. I believe if I've got a really good team around me, I can trust them with what they're doing. ... I also can delegate jobs very well and I'm pretty good at making sure that the people that I choose to work with are doing those jobs and they're doing them properly. I'm not one of those that have to have their hand in every single thing.

Graeme also contracts his lighting and audio operators and wig and makeup artists from professional companies external to the school. In describing his work in directing at another school he worked at prior to coming to Inner Sydney - a small state school in the Western suburbs that had only just opened - he describes how a team of thirty-six teachers was involved in the production of their first show, and this became a very positive community experience. He contrasts this with the situation at a school like Inner Sydney.

Graeme: No one [teachers in other departments] wants to know about you. ... That's not a problem; they're all busy with what they're doing. So I just put it into my budget.

You know, I pay my lighting designer ten grand and I pay my set designer ten grand, that's all built into it.

In contrast is the very close-knit team of Maria and Karen at South of Sydney. In their interviews both frequently refer to the importance of working as a team, and what this involves. Maria, a music teacher, Musical Director and Repetiteur of the school's productions, and Karen, a drama and music teacher and the Director of the school's productions, share the role of Producer for their school's bi-annual musical theatre production.

Maria: I just sort of let [Karen] do that, because she produces it so well, and we often work together, but I leave [acquiring performance rights] up to her. We sort of have roles and I leave that to her because she does it so well, and that way I don't have to worry about it.

Karen: Maria and I work as a team, and if she's got time, she'll do something. If I've got time, I'll do something. And we're lucky; we've got a secretary who can write letters and stuff like that. ... We both realise our strengths, and Maria knows that my strength is in the directing, and her strength is in musical directing. ... And we'll work together. If I've got an issue, a problem with whatever we're doing, she'll help me with that, and that sort of thing.

The vocal coach is a member of the Performing Arts department - a music teacher, as is the Choreographer, the newly appointed dance teacher (South of Sydney are in their first year of running Dance as a subject in 2011). Previously they worked with a professional Choreographer from a local Performing Arts organisation. In addition to this core team, Maria and Karen have developed a larger unit including staff from various departments within the school, who assist with various aspects of production.

The school's resident audio-visual technician undertakes all the technical design and direction. A teacher from the TAS [Technical and Applied Skills] department designs costumes, and coordinates a team of fellow TAS staff members and parents of students to assemble these in the school's textiles 'lab'. Teachers from the Visual Arts department design the show's graphics, and work in tandem with teachers from the TAS department in designing, constructing and decorating the sets for the productions. Staff members from the English and History department also assist with backstage tasks and management. Maria in particular emphasised the importance of developing a team that is able to work together well and that this is an ongoing strength of South of Sydney's productions.

Maria: Yeah, no, we've got a good team. But that's taken a few years, though, and we've sort of grown, Karen and I, and I mean, even when [another teacher] was here, we were a team with Karen. So, I think when you've got teachers that have been there for a while and they've worked as a team, and they've developed as a team, that's the strength that you've got behind it.

Contrasting with both these two schools, is the well-established team (and clearly defined roles) of North of Sydney, which utilise a three-year rotation system with a different team each year for its annual musical. Samuel, the Director of Music at the school, heads one of these teams as the Musical Director, and effectively, also the Producer. Within these teams there are five distinct roles; Musical Director (which incorporates the role of the Producer), the Director, who "would normally come from the Drama department, sometimes from the English department", a Repetiteur, an Assistant to the Musical Director, who shares the role of Producer, and finally a person who is in charge of wardrobe and stage properties.

At North of Sydney, the Music department is entirely responsible for the administration of the school musical. The role of administrator is taken on mainly by the Musical Director, but is also shared in part by the Assistant to the Musical Director.

Samuel: The role of what a Producer would normally be is sort of shared. So, for instance, I sign all the cheques for the royalties ... and I look after the programme and the posters. ... The assistant to the Music Director, might be making sure the hall's booked for all the rehearsals, making sure the kids are there, marking the role, organising meals ... and overseeing [these meal breaks in the school's dining hall] that so the Musical Director can just kick back and have a bit of a break.

As well as this, the other music staff (the school has twelve full-time music staff) are involved on a roster-based system in helping with "crowd control" and supervision of rehearsals. Additionally, the school has a resident theatre technician who designs and installs all lighting and sound, and also manages set construction and manages technical aspects of all theatrical endeavours within the school.

Samuel himself has an established partnership with a Director from the Drama department within the school, who also choreographs. The two have come to understand each other's disciplines through their work together, with the Director being able to read music, and having an innate understanding of its construction through her background in dance, and

Samuel coming to understand more about theatrical and dramatic aspects. As the two have worked together for a while, they have come to understand how each other works.

Samuel: She's got it all in her head, and ... it just comes together. The two of us ... seem to understand the way each other works and that's really, if you've got someone you can work with like that, gee, it makes it so much easier! I've seen productions here where that kind of 'clicking together' hasn't worked and you just end up running your own little, separate thing.

An emphasis of the importance of individual specialism being able to be freely exercised within a team context became apparent as the participants discussed their experiences. It became clear in the interviews that in a school or educational context, it is integral to the success of a musical that teachers are able to cooperate in all aspects of production, particularly in a situation where the administrative process and the role of Producer are shared between teachers within a team, or rotated from year to year.

### **The Process: Producing, Directing and Problems Faced**

While a general kind of procedure is adhered to, the precise processes and tasks undertaken differ from school to school. Discussed here are some of the many tasks undertaken that are common to all the study's participants.

Overall, the teachers stated that they spend anywhere from 500 to 700 hours working on each school production. Much of this work is undertaken outside of school hours, and much of it involves tasks they work on individually, usually at home, such as score or scene preparation. The entire process was described as taking approximately fifteen months in Inner Sydney, and six to seven months in both North of Sydney and South of Sydney.

The early days of planning a show involve undertaking a range of administrative tasks once a creative team has been formed. First is the booking of dates on the school calendar. This requires careful planning in schools, as it needs to be at a time when the performance venue is available. Consideration is also given to time constraints involved in working with students; a run of four or five shows is the typical performance season. All participants

registered disappointment that shows involved so much work for so few performances to result.

Once dates have been settled, a team decides on a musical work to perform. Often this requires research. For example, last year Maria and Karen flew to Brisbane to see a production of *Jesus Christ Superstar* before deciding to produce this show. In choosing a show, most participants discussed their consideration of particular students who they knew would be capable of specific roles in musicals.

Karen: When we're looking at different productions, we also look at who we've got in the school. As probably unfair as this sounds, I probably, in my head, have cast it before we go to auditions. That's not to say that people don't come out of the woodwork and, just, you go, "Wow!" But you know, for this one, for example, I knew I had someone who could sing Judas' part, coz it's a particularly difficult role, ... he still auditioned and he didn't know that, but I knew that he could do it.

Samuel: Usually the person who's musical director, they could have a Year 11 or a Year 10 class, so they've got a little idea of the talent, and what might be suitable for the talents of the kids. ... The musical is only open to Year 10 and Year 11. ... So, you might look at the Year 11s and go, "Oh, that kid was really good in the role of Nathan Detroit in Year 10, he might be good for something in 'so-and-so'." You don't sort of make your sole decision on the kids, but you certainly start thinking about it then.

Other factors considered in the repertoire selection include the technical challenges particular shows present. For example, several of the participants mentioned *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Grease* as presenting technical and stylistic challenges associated with rock music performance. South of Sydney referred to *Into the Woods* as being a particularly difficult musical to stage orchestrally, vocally and dramatically, but that it was a calculated risk when the abilities of the students who were at the school were considered.

Karen: With a show like *Into the Woods*, Sondheim is incredibly difficult. We won an award with that one as well, I think mainly because not a lot of schools would attempt it. But that year, we knew we had an incredibly good orchestra, it was very strong and we also had really good actors. We didn't have such strong singers that year, say, in comparison to this year, but in that particular production, if we don't have the actors and we don't have the orchestra, it wouldn't have worked, but it worked beautifully because of that.

Once a show has been decided upon, performance rights are secured, auditions held, a cast is formed, and a detailed rehearsal schedule is drawn up which sets out every rehearsal over the coming months.

The study participants described the many different processes of artistic preparation that they undertake in their own time.

Karen: I put more work into it outside before I even start a process, whatever it is... a particular scene or, a lot of it's... I don't go into a scene blind. I sort of have to know it backwards and have to decide; and sometimes things change when you start to work on it in rehearsal, for sure, but basically you have to have a big idea before. And that process has gone on, as I said, it sort of takes over your life a bit, especially the few months preceding the performance.

Maria: All the preparation I do is at home, so if I know that we've got to rehearse some numbers, I prepare more at home and I prepare all the orchestral arrangements and that at home. I do a lot of work at home.

Once rehearsals begin, team cooperation and coordination becomes very important. Samuel in particular went into great detail about what a typical week of rehearsals might require of him as Musical Director, including five four hour rehearsals weekly. Some of these include choral and vocal preparation, working in conjunction with the Repetiteur, others rehearsing the orchestra. All mean working in conjunction with the Director and Repetiteur, conducting musical numbers as they occur in the process of blocking the drama on stage. During this process in particular, Samuel notes occasions of a good rapport with his Director leading to complementary and coordinated input from both theatrical and musical members of the team.

Samuel: I'd just make sure they were singing it right, and I'd say, "Oh, you've to move that kid because he's a bass and he should really be over there." ... If [the director]'s just doing dialogue I'm kind of sitting back and just watching and sometimes say things like, "Oh, it might be funny if he kind of did that," and she goes, "Oh, great idea!" So, we get along really well.

All participant-teachers noted that as the performance dates are approached, the amount of work increases considerably. Around the performance seasons, most struggled to maintain focus on both the musical theatre production and their classroom teaching.

Karen: I really try hard with my [Year] 12s, I know in advance and I try to over-prepare, that's something I've learnt over the years. If you've got a musical on, the two, three weeks before the musical I have things that are really easy to do because I'm helping with lighting and sound set up, and we have to go through scenes, ... I make sure that I have things there that the kids will get some value out of.

Graeme's production week schedule is so busy that it affects his home life considerably.

Graeme: It's also that production week when my wife actually moves away. She goes away for a week, a whole week, with the kids. Because I'll be here from seven in the morning till twelve, one o'clock at night, pretty much seven, eight nights.

At the advanced stages of rehearsal, the workload begins to affect the students involved in the production. The participant-teachers mentioned reasoning with staff members from other departments who feel that their students are being monopolised by the school musical.

Karen: The criticism we get, unfortunately, is that we do attempt to monopolise the kids, and their focus. ... They have no idea of the work involved in putting it on.

Samuel: If you're teaching a Year 11 or a Year 10 class, a lot of those kids will be in the show, so you can sort of work with them for them to understand, "Well we all understand the pressures at the moment". You know, some of them get a hard time from their maths teachers, or whatever, because they're like, "He's in my class, he was very tired". Well, you know, that's showbiz, and those kids should be encouraged to understand how to work through that.

The process of putting together a school musical theatre production can be taxing for all involved and requires a significant amount of personal sacrifice, but all participants emphasise the far more positive aspects of being involved in these productions, which appear to far outweigh some of the difficulties and hardships. One teacher-participant appeared to convey the attitude that working under pressure was part of the educational value of involvement in "showbiz" type activities.



## **Teacher Preparation**

Participants in this study come from different educational backgrounds, and experienced various types of preparation for teaching their subject. The experiences that have best prepared them for directing school musical theatre productions include tertiary degree training; however the experiences the participating teachers found most valuable came from actual participation within musical theatre performance in a range of ways both during their pre-service training and while teaching in schools.

While all four teachers consider that such experiences are the way to learn how to begin to direct musical theatre productions in secondary schools, they also have suggestions for ways in which formal preparations might incorporate some of these experiences, in order to better prepare pre-service teachers for musical theatre involvement once they begin teaching in a school. The participants' key concern is the lack of experience and knowledge in the administrative aspects of production - in the taking on of the role of Producer.

### **Varied and Valued Experiences**

All four participants in this study come from markedly different backgrounds, and came to involvement in musicals in their school from differing directions. All participants could be considered very experienced in school musical directing, having directed between five to twelve secondary musical productions at the time of the interviews.

Graeme, upon completing secondary school, took a year off and became involved in amateur theatre to determine whether this was what he really wanted to pursue. He then completed a three-year degree in acting, and moved to Sydney to take up a career as a professional actor. After several unsatisfying years, he went on to study a Diploma of Education and subsequently found teaching drama appealing.

Graeme: My training comes from very much a practical base. Before I was a teacher, before I thought I was going to be a teacher, I was an actor. I was making a career out of it. I was a director, I was doing a lot of stuff, whereas I know a lot of old-style drama teachers have learnt from a book.

While teaching, he has been extensively involved in directing community theatre, and is currently President of a Sydney community theatre company.

Karen spent many years as a private music teacher, having studied music after finishing school. In her thirties, with four children, she began a university distance education course, a three-year theatre studies degree. While studying this degree, she became involved in community theatre.

Karen: I learnt a lot from that too, a lot of good things. And what I didn't like about doing local productions and things like that. So, I did several plays and performed in, and any sort of community work, especially small community companies, you do actually do everything, you know, it's 'woe to go', you'll have a director, and you *may* be lucky enough to have a producer, and somebody that throws together a few costumes and a set, but it's very basic usually, and so everyone usually pitches in and does things.

Karen went on to complete Education Diplomas; one in music, and another in drama, which qualified her to teach both subjects in secondary schools.

Karen: When I was at university and I decided to put those two subjects together, I thought at the time, "Mm, that's not a bad thing," because that's got to be helpful in this situation with musicals, to have that experience.

These two participants, the theatrical directors of their school's musicals, both have considerably different kinds of preparation for careers in secondary school teaching. Graeme's background is in professional theatre, television acting and commercials, which is evident in the approach he takes to musical productions in his school.

Graeme: [In creating productions of exceptional quality], that comes with me being enthusiastic but also me being fairly disciplined with the process. ... I don't get a whip out, everyone loves my, you know, being in the shows, but, I guess what I've learnt from being a professional director and, also ... being a professional actor is that professionalism isn't about being paid money, it's about getting to a certain standard. And that's where I'll push my kids to get to every time.

With his background and a disciplined approach and aiming for a "certain standard", Graeme is pragmatic in his approach to directing musical theatre in his school.

Graeme: If you can't dance, you're not doing a dance number; I don't care how talented you are as an actor. If you can't sing, you'll sit in the chorus up the back row.

The other two participants, Maria and Samuel, are both classroom music teachers, and currently both head their department; Performing Arts at South of Sydney and Music at North of Sydney, respectively. Both Maria and Samuel completed a Bachelor of Music in Music Education, and went directly into teaching music in secondary schools. Their preparation differs however, especially when it comes to musical theatre specifically. Both, as part of their Music Education degrees, performed in musical theatre performances that were a compulsory requirement of their degree. Samuel, however, also had a background in stage and musical performance, as well as training as a singer, whereas Maria was primarily a pianist. Samuel also completed a theatre unit as part of his degree.

Samuel: When I was in fourth year we did, I think it was called Stagecraft, but it was a drama lecturer ... who came in and did this. ... When you get to fourth year, you're sort of like, "What's this all about? And what's this drama guy trying to tell us?" and he's like, "You'll need this when you go to do your musicals," and we're sort of like, we didn't take it very seriously.

Maria and Samuel had also participated substantially in community theatre before and during their Music Education degrees, and had also been involved in community theatre after becoming teachers. Maria has always participated in community theatre as a Repetiteur, however Samuel has participated as a cast member/singer, an orchestral musician (playing trumpet), and as a Musical Director.

When discussing which of these experiences best prepared them for directing secondary school musicals, all participants indicated that practical experience was the best form of preparation they had.

Maria: I think it's just developed over the years, and I think, musically, taking ensembles is always going to help because you've got the experience of the ensembles and study the music, and the training that you do get, you're going to study the music, you're able to analyse and listen. ... I think I've gained more from being in the middle of it. It's like teaching; you can be trained, but until you get into the classroom...

Samuel: The experience of actually doing, of being a musical director for a show. That's the most [beneficial], but second to that would be just involvement in it. And keenness. ... There's a lot of interpretation in conducting a show, like how long we're-, what am I going to do for that scene change? How long do we have to play it for? What can we do to tailor, or cut, or edit? So it's a bit of a creative process as well.

## **Beliefs, Attitudes, Perceived Needs and Suggestions**

Most participants identified that secondary school teachers, whether in their own school, other schools or generally, had not been suitably prepared to direct musical theatre productions.

Graeme: I've got a staff member here that I hired three years ago, straight out of university. One of the best classroom teachers I've ever seen, but she came up to direct her first show a couple of years ago and she came into my office and she said, "Look, I've always been a theorist, I've never," you know, she did drama as a student but she'd never directed anything. ... I'm sure there are people out there, well I know there are there are people in here, that have got absolutely no concept about what goes into putting on a production. If I was to say, "Five hundred hours," to people out there, they literally wouldn't believe me. They've got no understanding of the discipline and just the particulars of putting a production on, such as this.

Samuel: It would be really hard for anyone, I think, who had not been involved in a show in one way or another to actually just step in and say, "Alright, here I go." I think it would be really hard. ... And I would say that if you'd never been involved in a musical at school or outside of school as a uni student, or whatever, and you just came in to try and do it, I reckon you'd struggle. I reckon you'd face pretty steep challenges. I still reckon it'd be doable, but yeah you'd really have your work cut out if you hadn't grown up in a culture where you'd been involved in them.

The teacher-participants also mentioned that the coursework in performing arts teaching degrees never adequately addresses to the reality of the profession. While this is a more general observation, Maria and Graeme linked this to the fact that teachers can walk into a school and be expected to undertake a musical theatre production without having participated in a production themselves.

Maria suggested that the best way to learn how to produce and direct secondary school musical theatre productions was by drawing on the skills of the people around you, and simply having a go.

Maria: As long as they've got experienced teachers, I think they learn from the teachers around them. If you come across a school that had no one, and they were putting on a musical, then... they do it! I don't know, if you've got a person in drama, a person in music and someone who's a good costume designer and all that, I think the experience... it's more the enthusiasm, I think. If you've got the enthusiasm, you can do anything. That's what I believe, anyway.

Graeme extends this to suggest that a more formal programme of mentorship would be valuable.

Graeme: I think it'd be great to seek people ... to train or mentor younger teachers in 'what it takes'. ... There could be some training, there could be some mentoring, or there could be, you know even just outlining to some people what you need to do in terms of getting the process up.

He continues contending Maria's assertion that having a go might be an effective method of preparation.

Graeme: Musical theatre, because it's such a massive thing, I honestly believe you're either in it or you're not. And if you're not in it, it's too daunting, and I think that's part of the reason, the other problem is it's too scary for people.

Karen agrees with Maria, but suggests a different approach based on beginning in community theatre. Where Maria and Graeme consider school productions the place to begin, Karen suggests working with a community theatre organisation.

Karen: I think they need to offer their services too, like I did with a local primary school, at a small level, so that no one expects a huge amount, and they can sort of build up skills. Basically, you just get better at it, and sometimes you don't get things right either, but if you're willing to put in the time and go and offer your services, that's the best way. Even if it's community theatre and you can't direct something, work as an assistant, offer your services to them and watch. Try and make it someone that's competent, someone that knows what they're doing.

This participatory learning approach could be utilised by both pre- and in-service teachers alike. As well as providing an opportunity to observe this work first hand, it also allows a person to see what can occur in a setting similar to that of a school, a setting sometimes characterised by a small expertise pool and where it is often necessary to operate in hybrid production roles.

Samuel's suggestion based on his own experiences as a student is quite prescriptive for pre-service Music Education.

Samuel: I reckon a Con elective sort of thing, I mean; I don't know how the Con structure works, coz it's been so long. ... A music theatre kind of course-, not just, like, how to sing the songs well, but looking at the admin and looking at the challenges of, you know, you could have kids presenting a tutorial on, 'How do you do a Gilbert and Sullivan?' You know? Where would you get your costumes, where would you get your, well, there's no royalties, but, who's got the parts? ... How do you liaise with Hal Leonard to get something? ... I mean, it'd be a great course, I reckon. ... I

think if you structured it correctly, ... I reckon it would be invaluable. Seriously. We did conducting, we did Choral Pedagogy, and Instrumental Pedagogy which was like how to conduct and all that, and that was *invaluable*, and I really loved it. But, you know, imagine marrying that up in next semester, whatever, with a music theatre or musical production elective... It'd be great!

Here Samuel suggests linking experiences in university Units of Study with practical application of expected knowledge outcomes. In addition to the introduction of administrative requirements of school musicals, such a Unit of Study could be beneficial in ensuring pre-service music teachers were better equipped to take up Maria and Karen's proposed ideas of participatory learning.

## **Conclusion**

Due to the positive contribution that musical theatre productions make to these schools' social and educational offerings, it is understandable that they are well supported by the school community and its stakeholders for a range of reasons relating to education and public relations of various sorts. The participants paint a picture of the school musical theatre production as valuable undertaking for all participants - it creates a vibrant social experience, particularly for students who feel they do not 'fit in' elsewhere. Furthermore, a mutually symbiotic educational dialogue takes place between the musical, as an extra-curricular project, and classroom learning. The roles that the study's participants fulfil in musical theatre productions in secondary schools are varied and comprehensive. Due to their extensive experience, all participants are today highly qualified to undertake these roles. They propose that the best preparation for directing secondary school musical theatre is participatory learning in productions, and developing enthusiasm for the range of tasks that are required involved. They also note that improved preparation of pre-service teachers in what to expect when directing musical theatre productions, particularly from an administrative perspective, would be beneficial in complementing such participatory learning.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

This study examined the experiences and preparation of teachers who direct secondary school musical theatre productions in Independent NSW schools. It also considered the place of such productions within the cultural and pedagogical life of the participating schools. Four teachers from three geographically separated schools were interviewed. Of these, two were music teachers, one taught drama and one taught both music and drama. Involving teachers from the disciplines of music and drama has allowed the study to present a more detailed understanding of the various experiences involved in directing school musical theatre, as well as a range of preparations and training to undertake such involvement. As the key organisers of such productions in their schools, these teachers provide a detailed account of what is required in staging a school musical and what place the musical has within the school, as well as an overview of the training and experiences they had to prepare them for such an undertaking.

### **An Alternative Model for Learning**

The study's participants consider the musical to be a valuable social experience for students – a way of making new friends – as well as a positive mixed-age group and mixed-ability learning context. The musical is also a context in which teachers are able to interact with their students in a much more informal way. All participants stated that the close relationship developed with students throughout such productions flowed on to the classroom, with many students taking up either music or drama at elective, senior levels as a result of their experience in the musical. Subsequent to their musical experience, students displayed an increased level of respect for their teacher and a greater understanding of what work standard was expected of them.

Several participating teachers described a meaningful interface between the classroom curriculum and learning from involvement in the actual musical production, in the music learning experiences of composition, performance and musicology. In the school subject, Drama, Karen discussed how her elective students were able to use the school musical as means of gaining experience in the technical side of production including lighting design and operation. Likewise, Graeme discussed how students were able to observe and work

with professionals in lighting and sound operation, as well as makeup application, which carried over to their Drama elective work.

Through such examples it is evident that musical theatre productions in schools provide a multi-faceted social and educational opportunity for participating students. Further, the teachers saw significant classroom learning gains among students who participated in the musical production.

### **Considerations for Pre-Service Training**

The study participants, particularly the two music teachers, noted that they had minimal formal training in technical and administrative aspects of musical theatre production. The two participating drama teachers were better equipped for the task, given their background and experience, yet they also characterised their preparation as less than adequate. The participants were unanimous in stating that practical experience was the best possible preparation for the work of directing and producing school musical theatre productions. When questioned regarding what they believed was the best way for preparation for such a task for pre-service teachers, all participants recommended various practical-based ideas. These included a mentorship programme, volunteering work in community theatre, and a practical-oriented Unit of Study in a pre-service music education degree.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This thesis presents an account of the experiences and preparation of four teachers in three NSW Independent secondary schools. Due to the constraints of this study, many aspects of musical theatre productions in secondary schools were not fully investigated. For example, teacher ideologies of ‘culture’ or attitudes regarding ‘showbiz work ethic’ and other such beliefs could be fruitfully explored for their implications for educational theorists and planners.

Through a larger sample of teachers and more diverse participant schools, a more comprehensive picture of musical theatre productions in NSW secondary schools could be gained, which could subsequently lead to specific aspects being investigated in greater



detail. Importantly, for example, the differences in experiences of teachers who direct musical theatre in government and Independent schools could be explored through such research. Such research could also lead to a clearer understanding of the potential of school musical theatre as an alternative kind of ‘classroom’ pedagogy, where the ‘classroom’ is the extra- or co-curricular ‘learning space’.

In many secondary schools, musical theatre involvement is highly valued among students, teachers, parents, and community members. Further research into the potential of these enjoyable educational experiences as participatory learning opportunities could lead to a greater attention to teacher preparation, which could result in even more secondary students having the opportunity to undertake what for many students is the most worthwhile experience of their school years.

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## Appendix A: Ethics Approval Letter



### RESEARCH INTEGRITY Human Research Ethics Committee

Web: <http://sydney.edu.au/ethics/>  
Email: [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au)

**Address for all correspondence:**  
Level 6, Jane Foss Russell Building - G02  
The University of Sydney  
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Ref: PB/PE

17 December 2010

Dr James Renwick  
Sydney Conservatorium of Music – C41  
The University of Sydney  
Email: [jrenwick@sydney.edu.au](mailto:jrenwick@sydney.edu.au)

Dear Dr Renwick

I am pleased to inform you that the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) approved your protocol entitled “**The Dramatic and Musical Preparedness and Experiences of Teachers Who Direct Musical Theatre Productions in Independent NSW Secondary Schools**” at its meeting held on **14 December 2010**.

Details of the approval are as follows:

**Protocol No.:** 13347  
**Approval Period:** December 2010 to December 2011  
**Authorised Personnel:** Dr James Renwick  
Mr Patrick Howard

#### Approved Documents

Letter of invitation  
Participant Information Statement Version 1 29/11/2010  
Participant Consent Form Version 1 29/11/2010  
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

The HREC is a fully constituted Ethics Committee in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans-March 2007 under Section 5.1.29.

The approval of this project is conditional upon your continuing compliance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. A report on this research must be submitted every 12 months from the date of the approval or on completion of the project, whichever occurs first. Failure to submit reports will result in withdrawal of consent for the project to proceed. Your report is due by **31 December 2011**.

#### Chief Investigator / Supervisor's responsibilities to ensure that:

1. All serious and unexpected adverse events should be reported to the HREC within 72 hours for clinical trials/interventional research.
2. All unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should be reported to the HREC as soon as possible.
3. Any changes to the protocol must be approved by the HREC before the research project can proceed.

#### Human Ethics Secretariat:

Ms Patricia Engelmann T: +61 2 8627 8172 E: [patricia.engelmann@sydney.edu.au](mailto:patricia.engelmann@sydney.edu.au)  
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CRICOS 00026A

4. All research participants are to be provided with a Participant Information Statement and Consent Form, unless otherwise agreed by the Committee. The following statement must appear on the bottom of the Participant Information Statement: *Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact the Deputy Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); + 61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or [ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au](mailto:ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au) (Email).*
5. You must retain copies of all signed Consent Forms and provide these to the HREC on request.
6. It is your responsibility to provide a copy of this letter to any internal/external granting agencies if requested.
7. The HREC approval is valid for four (4) years from the Approval Period stated in this letter. Investigators are requested to submit a progress report annually.
8. A report and a copy of any published material should be provided at the completion of the Project.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Ethics Office should you require further information or clarification.

Yours sincerely



**Associate Professor Philip Beale**  
**Chair**  
**Human Research Ethics Committee**

Copy: Patrick Howard    [phow6213@uni.sydney.edu.au](mailto:phow6213@uni.sydney.edu.au)

## Appendix B: Letter to the Principal



Sydney Conservatorium of Music

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**DR JAMES RENWICK**  
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### LETTER TO THE PRINCIPAL

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **The Dramatic and Musical Preparedness and Experiences of Teachers Who Direct Musical Theatre Productions in Independent NSW Secondary Schools**

I am writing regarding a research project examining the pre-service and in-service training and experiences of secondary school music and drama teachers who dramatically and/or musically direct musical theatre productions. This study, titled above, will focus on teachers who work in independent NSW secondary schools that have a reputation for putting a great deal of resources into these musical theatre productions. I am writing you to request your approval to contact the teacher within your school who undertakes this task and, pending their consent to participate in the study, your approval for this teacher to participate within the study.

The study is being conducted by Patrick Anthony Howard as part of a Bachelor of Music (Music Education) (Honours), and is being supervised by Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, Sydney Conservatorium of Music. Your school has been approached to participate in this study as it has a reputation of producing musical theatre productions of exceptional quality within local education and artistic communities.

This study will look at:

- the training and experience in the fields of both drama and music of teachers who direct musical theatre productions, with specific relation to musical theatre pedagogies,
- the work these teachers undertake in directing secondary school musical theatre productions,
- how the preparedness to undertake this task is shaped by the training and experience of these teachers, and
- what attitudes, values and beliefs these teachers have regarding the current state of training available (both pre-service and in-service).

The focus of this research comes out of the experiences of the researcher, Patrick, as a musical theatre performer, director, musical director, designer and secondary school music teacher in training, with a hope to specialise in musical theatre and vocal pedagogy.

Information will be collected through a semi-structured interview, which will be audio recorded with a digital audio recorder and will take approximately an hour. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. The participant may withdraw at anytime. Any decision not to participate will in no way prejudice your school's educational relationship with the researcher. All aspects of the study, including results, names of participants and any information that identifies your school, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information contributed by participants. It is anticipated that the results

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of this study will further promote awareness of teacher preparation for directing secondary school musical theatre productions.

If you agree to your school's participation in this study it would be most appreciated if you could please forward on the appropriate contact details of the teacher(s) within your school who direct and/or musically direct the musical theatre productions you produce to the researcher, Patrick. If this is the case, could you please forward your approval for the teacher(s) to participate *in writing*, pending their consent to participate in the study.

If you wish to obtain further information about this study or have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the researcher, Patrick Anthony Howard (Mob: 0422 922 388) or myself (Tel: 9351 1235).

Yours sincerely,

Dr James Renwick.

## Appendix C: Cover Letter for Participant Information Statement



Sydney Conservatorium of Music

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### COVER LETTER FOR PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

Dear Sir/Madam,

#### **The Dramatic and Musical Preparedness and Experiences of Teachers Who Direct Musical Theatre Productions in Independent NSW Secondary Schools**

The principal of your school has forwarded your name as a teacher who musically and/or dramatically directs musical theatre productions at your school, and has indicated you might be interested in participating in the study titled above.

Please find attached to this letter a Participant Information Statement, outlining the nature of this study, as well as a Participant Consent Form for you to fill in should you wish to participate in the study. Any decision not to participate will in no way prejudice your school's educational relationship with the researcher. If you choose to participate, you may withdraw at anytime.

Should you wish to participate in this study, obtain further information or have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the researcher, Patrick Howard (Mob: 0422 922 388) or myself (Tel: 9351 1235).

Yours sincerely,

Dr James Renwick.



## Appendix D: Participant Information Statement



Sydney Conservatorium of Music

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### The Dramatic and Musical Preparedness and Experiences of Teachers Who Direct Musical Theatre Productions in Independent NSW Secondary Schools

#### PARTICIPANT INFORMATION STATEMENT

**(1) What is the study about?**

This is a quantitative study of secondary school teachers who direct musical theatre productions within independent NSW secondary schools, outlining their experiences and training (both pre-service and in-service) in drama and music, their attitudes towards dramatic training of music teachers and how their dramatic and musical preparedness is applied in their work directing school musical theatre productions. It aims to outline the most common and effective training and/or experiences that assist a teacher in their dramatic and musical preparedness, in context of musical theatre.

**(2) Who is carrying out the study?**

The study is being conducted by Patrick Howard, undergraduate student, and will form the basis for the degree of Bachelor of Music (Music Education) (Honours) at The University of Sydney under the supervision of Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education, Sydney Conservatorium of Music.

**(3) What does the study involve?**

The study involves conducting interviews with participants to gain an insight into their dramatic and musical training and experiences, their capacity as a director of school musical theatre productions and an overview of their attitudes towards training programmes and opportunities for experience available in the field. These interviews will involve digital audio recording for later analysis, and will be recorded at a mutually agreeable location, such as your school, office, or another appropriate location.

**(4) How much time will the study take?**

The interview will run for approximately one hour.

**(5) Can I withdraw from the study?**

Being in this study is completely voluntary - you are not under any obligation to consent and - if you do consent - you can withdraw at any time without affecting your relationship with The University of Sydney. You may stop the interview at any time if you do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

**(6) Will anyone else know the results?**

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. A report of the study may be submitted for publication, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report.

**(7) Will the study benefit me?**

Participation in this study will be of no direct benefit to you.

**(8) Can I tell other people about the study?**

Yes, you may.

**(9) What if I require further information?**

When you have read this information, Patrick Howard will discuss it with you further and answer any questions you may have. If you would like to know more at any stage, please feel free to contact Patrick (Mob: 0422 922 388) or Dr James Renwick, Lecturer in Music Education (Tel: 9351 1235).

**(10) What if I have a complaint or concerns?**

**Any person with concerns or complaints about the conduct of a research study can contact The Manager, Human Ethics Administration, University of Sydney on +61 2 8627 8176 (Telephone); +61 2 8627 8177 (Facsimile) or ro.humanethics@sydney.edu.au (Email).**

*This information sheet is for you to keep*

## Appendix E: Participant Consent Form



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
SYDNEY

Sydney Conservatorium of Music

ABN 15 211 513 464

**DR JAMES RENWICK**  
Lecturer in Music Education

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### PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

I, .....[PRINT NAME], give consent to my participation in the research project

TITLE: The Dramatic and Musical Preparedness and Experiences of Teachers Who Direct Musical Theatre Productions in Independent NSW Secondary Schools

In giving my consent I acknowledge that:

1. The procedures required for the project and the time involved have been explained to me, and any questions I have about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.
2. I have read the Participant Information Statement and have been given the opportunity to discuss the information and my involvement in the project with the researcher/s.
3. I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time, without affecting my relationship with the researcher(s) or the University of Sydney now or in the future.
4. I understand that my involvement is strictly confidential and no information about me will be used in any way that reveals my identity.
5. I understand that being in this study is completely voluntary – I am not under any obligation to consent.
6. I understand that I can stop the interview at any time if I do not wish to continue, the audio recording will be erased and the information provided will not be included in the study.

7. I consent to: –

- |     |                    |     |                          |    |                          |
|-----|--------------------|-----|--------------------------|----|--------------------------|
| i)  | Audio-taping       | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| ii) | Receiving Feedback | YES | <input type="checkbox"/> | NO | <input type="checkbox"/> |

If you answered YES to the “Receiving Feedback Question”, please provide your details i.e. mailing address, email address.

**Feedback Option**

**Address:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Signed:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Date:** .....

## Appendix F: Semi-Structured Interview Protocol



Sydney Conservatorium of Music

ABN 15 211 513 464

**DR JAMES RENWICK**  
Lecturer in Music Education

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### SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

#### INTRODUCTION

1. Introduction of interviewee, date, time and location of interview are stated for the record.

#### DESCRIPTION OF ROLE

2. What position or positions of employment do you hold within the school you teach in?
3. Are you a classroom teacher? If yes, what subjects do you teach, and what grades?
4. How many school musical theatre productions have you directed in your career? How many community productions?
5. How often does your school stage a musical theatre production?
6. What do the musical theatre productions in this school typically consist of logistically, in regards to number people involved, time spent in development, length of performance season?
7. What sort of planning does a musical theatre production in this school require? So, how do you go about acquiring performance rights (if necessary), budgeting, etc?
8. What roles have you played in this planning? Other staff? Developing a team?
9. How much of this has taken place in your own time, outside of school hours?
10. What roles have you officially taken on in producing school musical theatre productions?
11. What has taking on this role entailed? What sort of tasks and requirements?
12. Which of these tasks requires you to work in an independent manner?
13. Which of these tasks requires working in partnership with other members of staff?
14. Which of these tasks requires working in partnership with students?

#### DISCUSSION OF TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

##### PRODUCING/PLANNING

15. In the previously discussed tasks which you undertake in planning musical theatre productions, what experience have you had in doing this outside of the school you teach in/work for?
16. Have you undertaken any formal training in these tasks at any time?
17. Was there any training in your tertiary education which prepared you for these tasks?
18. Did any experiences you had prior to the commencement of your career inform the work you do now in planning for musical theatre productions?

## DIRECTING

19. In the previously discussed tasks which you undertake in directing/musically directing musical theatre productions, what experience have you had in doing this outside of the school you teach in/work for?
20. Have you conducted any formal training in these tasks at any time?
21. Was there any training in your tertiary education which prepared you for these tasks?
22. Did any experiences you had prior to the commencement of your career inform the work you do now in directing/musically directing musical theatre productions?

## ANALYSIS OF TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE

23. Which of these experiences and trainings have had the most bearing and influence on the work that you now conduct in secondary school musical theatre productions?
24. What is it about these experiences and trainings that you feel made them so valuable to your work?
25. Are there any tasks you conduct or are expected to conduct in your work that you feel underprepared to do?
26. What sort of training would you like to see available to in-service teachers who are involved in creating secondary school musical theatre productions?
27. What sort of training would you like to see available to pre-service teachers who are involved in creating secondary school musical theatre productions?
28. How do you feel this proposed pre-service training would best be implemented, through coursework for tertiary studies in music/drama education or through a separate programme?

## DISCUSSION OF MUSICAL THEATRE IN CONTEXT OF SCHOOL

29. Do you feel that the school and the wider community value the musical theatre productions that are staged in this school?
30. Why might these productions be valued so greatly/so little?
31. In your experience, do you feel appreciated enough for the work you conduct?
32. Does this work have an impact on your other duties in your employment, for example, teaching classroom music/drama? How much so?
33. Does the work you conduct have any bearing or influence on your classroom pedagogy or content? (If relevant)
34. Do you feel there is a sense of competitiveness between independent NSW secondary schools in their musical theatre productions? How do you feel your productions compare to those performed at other independent NSW secondary schools?
35. What sense do you have, as a teacher at an independent school, of how your productions compare to those at public secondary schools?
36. Were the resources you had available to you adequate, would you find it more appropriate to have a music or drama teacher directing a school musical theatre production?
37. Why do you believe musical theatre is an appropriate form of performance experience for secondary school children?
38. Generally speaking, in context of the entirety of NSW, would you say that musical theatre productions are given an appropriate valuation within secondary schools?

## CONCLUSION

39. The interviewee is thanked sincerely for their time, and wished the very best with any further productions they are involved in.