

Education Pack

to accompany The Watermill Theatre's 2008 production of

SUNSET BOULEVARD

Music by ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

Book & lyrics by DON BLACK and CHRISTOPHER HAMPTON

Based on the BILLY WILDER film

Produced by arrangement with The Really Useful Group Ltd

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INTRODUCTION

This education pack is designed to complement your trip to see our 2008 production of **SUNSET BOULEVARD** at The Watermill. The text is designed to be easily photocopied. You will find information and exercises for use in the classroom, feel free to use them as written or adapt them to suit your class and/or situation. If you have any comments on either the show or the education pack please get in touch.

ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER – the man and the music

1948

Andrew Lloyd Webber was born on 22nd March in South Kensington, London. Born into a musical family, his mother Jean played the violin and piano, while his father William Lloyd Webber was a successful composer.

1968

Aged just 20, his first hit musical *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, opened at a preparatory school in London. This was also the first collaboration with lyricist Tim Rice, with whom Andrew would work regularly for many years.

1971

In New York, his next venture, *Jesus Christ Superstar* has its first ever performance.

1972

Lloyd Webber marries Sarah Jane Tudor Hugill. They have two children together, Imogen and Nicholas.

1973

The film version of *Jesus Christ Superstar* is released in the USA and UK.

1974

Jesus Christ Superstar is nominated for an Oscar for 'Best Music' and wins the BAFTA (British Academy of Film and Television Arts) award for 'Best Soundtrack'.

1975

Jeeves opens at Her Majesty's Theatre in London. Based on the "Jeeves and Wooster" novels by PG Woodhouse, it was not a great success despite being co-written by one of England's most popular playwrights Alan Ayckbourn.

1976

Andrew establishes his company The Really Useful Group Ltd, which produces all of his productions.

1978

Julian Lloyd Webber, an acclaimed cellist, performs *Variations*, written for him by his brother Andrew. Also opening this year is one of Lloyd Webber's most famous musicals, *Evita*. Starring West End star Elaine Paige in the main role, *Evita* is based on the life of an Argentinean actress (Eva Perron) who becomes an icon and 'spiritual leader' of the nation.

1981

Cats, London's longest running musical, enjoys its first performance. It was inspired by a collection of poems by T S Eliot. "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats" was one of Lloyd Webber's childhood favourites. *Cats* continued to run in the West End for 21 years!

1983

Such is his success, Lloyd Webber buys and restores the Palace Theatre in London's West End. This is the first of 7 theatres owned and managed by the Really Useful Group.

1984

On the 22nd March he marries the dancer and singer Sarah Brightman. Also this year sees the opening of his train inspired musical – *Starlight Express*.

1986

To celebrate Queen Elizabeth's 60th birthday, Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice gave a short private performance entitled *Cricket* at Windsor Castle.

With his wife Sarah in the lead role, Andrew premiere's *Phantom of the Opera*, arguably the most famous of all his musicals.

1989

Aspects of Love (based on the 1955 novel by David Garnett) opens in London.

1991

Sees Lloyd Webber enter his third marriage to Madeleine Astrid Gurdon, over the next five years they have three children, Alastair, William and Isabella.

1992

He is knighted by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

In the same year he composes the official theme for the Olympic Games in Barcelona, entitled *Amigos Para Siempre* which means "friends for life" and sung by ex-wife Sarah Brightman and renowned Spanish Opera singer Jose Carreras.

1993

Lloyd Webber opens *Sunset Boulevard* in London.

1996

Alan Ayckbourn and Lloyd Webber create *By Jeeves*, a major re-working of their earlier musical *Jeeves*. It opens at The Stephen Joseph Theatre in Scarborough to much more success than its previous version.

Whistle Down the Wind opens at The National Theatre in Washington, USA.

Also this year the highly successful film version of *Evita* is released. It hosts a glittering cast including Madonna, Antonio Banderas and the English actor Jonathan Pryce. The film goes on to win the award for 'Best Original Song' at the Oscars.

1997

He becomes Lord Lloyd Webber, as he is invested into the House of Lords in Westminster. He is Lord of Sydmonton here in Berkshire!

2000

Lloyd Webber works with famous comedian and novelist Ben Elton and *The Beautiful Game* opens at the Cambridge Theatre in London - as its title suggests it's all about football.

2004

Based on the novel by Wilkie Collins of 1859, *The Woman in White* premieres in the West End starring Michael Crawford (who was famed for his performance as the Phantom of the Opera).

The film version of *Phantom of the Opera* is released. It is directed by Hollywood director Joel Schumacher, and is nominated for three Oscars.

2006

Phantom of the Opera breaks the record for being the longest running show on New York's Broadway and also celebrates 20 years in the West End.

Lloyd Webber searches for his next star through the TV programme "How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria" on the BBC. The winner, Connie Fisher, took the lead role in a new production of *The Sound Of Music*.

Lloyd Webber is ranked the 87th richest Briton, by the Sunday Times "Rich List" with his estimated wealth of £700 million.

2007

After the success of "How Do You Solve A Problem Like Maria", Lloyd Webber searched again, this time for an actor to play Joseph in *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*.

2008

And for a third time the BBC aired another search for a star. "I'd Do Anything" was the title and Lloyd Webber was looking for actors to play the roles Nancy and Oliver in a new production of Lionel Bart's *Oliver!*

**For more info on Andrew Lloyd Webber and his work see the websites:
www.andrewlloydwebber.com or www.reallyuseful.com**

10 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT *SUNSET BOULEVARD*

1. Andrew Lloyd Webber took his inspiration from the classic film of the same name. The original movie was co-written and directed by the legendary Billy Wilder in 1950. Lloyd Webber had the idea of creating a musical based on the film in the early 1970's, but for various reasons did not begin composing until the late 80's.
2. 'Sunset Boulevard' is the name of a famous street in Los Angeles, California. It is over 20 miles in length and often used as a reference to the glamour of Hollywood.
3. Kathryn Evans (our very own Norma Desmond) is the 12th actress to take on the leading part. Others include movie star Glenn Close, famous singer Petula Clark and West End icon Elaine Page.
4. Andrew Lloyd Webber was not the only one who wanted to make a musical out of the film. Another famous composer Stephen Sondheim (whose work has also been seen at *The Watermill - Sweeney Todd* and *Merrily We Roll Along*) tried to get permission in the early 60's, but Billy Wilder said "it has to be an opera. After all it's about a dethroned queen", after that Sondheim gave up.
5. The show has won over 25 awards, including 5 for Glenn Close who played Norma in the first American production.
6. One of the most famous tunes in *Sunset Boulevard* is "A Perfect Year", a version of which was recorded by pop-star Dina Carroll in 1993 and reached Number 5 in the UK Singles Chart.
7. A new film version of *Sunset Boulevard* is due to be released in 2010 by Paramount Pictures, the studio behind the original. The official cast list has not yet been announced.
8. There have been several major productions of *Sunset Boulevard* in the UK and USA, as well as productions in Germany, Canada and Australia.
9. Despite receiving mixed reviews from the papers, the premiere production in London's West End was a success, selling-out for 1,529 performances.
10. For the first American production in Los Angeles, Andrew Lloyd Webber re-worked the music and added a new song "Every Movie's A Circus", which is not in the English version. It was again a success, this time receiving much better reviews. It played 369 performances before moving to Broadway in New York.

SYNOPSIS

Set in the busy and cut-throat world of Hollywood in 1949. We are introduced to Joe Gillis a writer, trying to pitch his idea to one of the studio bosses. Joe has fallen on hard times and is being closely followed by repossession agents who are threatening to take away his car. Joe tries to lose his pursuers and drives through the streets of Hollywood and into Sunset Boulevard. Unsure of where he is he ends up in the gardens of a mansion owed by Norma Desmond a former film star. In the late 1920's films began to use sound and very quickly 'talkies' overtook silent movies in popularity, until they finally died away. Joe recognizes Norma and we learn that she was the greatest silent movie star, but as the genre died so did Norma's career. Now she lives rich but alone with the exception of Max, her butler and refuses to accept that her career and fame has faded.

JOE: You used to be in pictures, you used to be big.

NORMA: I *am* big...it's the pictures that got small!

Norma plans to make a comeback after 20 years out of the business and she sees an opportunity in the young writer stranded in her house. She has written a screenplay based on the biblical story of "Salome" and Norma asks Joe if he will work for her and edit the script. She plans to give it to the famous director Cecil B. DeMille and is sure he'll want to give her the job. Joe is unsure at first, but then agrees to help her.

Back at the studio Joe meets Betty Schaefer, she turns out to be in a relationship with Joe's friend Artie Green. Betty convinces Joe to work with her on a script, which she thinks it's certain to get produced.

In the meantime Norma has had all of Joe's belongings brought to her house and although Joe is unwilling to move in at first, he realises that as he is so poor he has no choice. Soon the eccentric Norma Desmond develops feelings for Joe and although she doesn't pay him, she lavishes him with new clothes and gifts. On New Year's Eve Joe turns down Norma's invitation to her party, instead he goes to see his friends Betty and Artie. Max informs Joe that because of his rejection Norma has attempted to kill herself.

Joe finishes editing "Salome" and the script is sent to DeMille. An impatient Norma waits for a response and meanwhile Joe continues to work with Betty on their new script. While Artie is away working, Betty and Joe get closer and begin to fall in love.

Days pass and finally Norma receives a call from the studio, but it's Norma's classic car that they are interested in and not her. Max hasn't the heart to tell her the news. Norma marches off, triumphantly she thinks, to meet DeMille who humours her, but remains vague about her film.

It's not long before Norma finds out about Joe's relationship with Betty. She phones Betty to warn her off, but Joe catches her and takes the phone off

her. Sick of Norma's control over him he asks Betty to come to the mansion. When Betty arrives, Joe tells Norma that he and Betty are leaving. Norma is outraged and as they leave she pulls out a gun and shoots Joe, killing him.

Norma swiftly descends into madness and in the final moments of the show, Norma believes she is on the set, making her comeback film and the curtain falls with her most famous line:

"...And now, Mr. De Mille, I am ready for my close-up."



Kathryn Evans as Norma Desmond

GLOSSARY

Studio – The studios in Hollywood were the companies who employed everyone needed (actors, director, etc) and paid for movies to be made. As the studio bosses had all the money, they had all the power and decided which films got made and which didn't. Some of the original studios (inc. Paramount Pictures and Universal Studios) still exist and make movies today although the system of producing films has changed significantly since the 1950's.

Talkies – The nickname given to films where you could hear the actors talking. The first 'talkie' was "The Jazz Singer" made in 1929.

Screenplay – A play script written for the screen.

Salome – A biblical figure who in modern times, has come to represent danger and seduction (there are of course links between her and Norma Desmond). The bible story has it that Salome danced for King Herod and when he promises to give her anything, she asks for the death of John the Baptist.

Picture – An American word for a film.

MAIN CHARACTERS

Norma Desmond – Kathryn Evans

Former star of silent movies, eccentric and jaded.

Joe Gillis – Ben Goddard

A young writer, struggling to make his name in Hollywood.

Max von Mayerling – Edward York

Norma's butler, her biggest fan and also her ex-husband.

Artie Green – Tomm Coles

A young assistant director, friend of Joe.

Betty Schaefer – Laura Pitt-Pulford

Artie's girlfriend, young and pretty she is an aspiring writer.

Cecil B. DeMille – Nick Lashbrook

Based on the real-life legendary film director of the same name – DeMille even played himself in the original film version of *Sunset Boulevard*.

Sheldrake – Alexander Evans

Boss of the studio

Manfred – Jon Trenchard

Tailor to the stars.

There is a full cast list at the back of this pack.



The company

INTERVIEW with Diego Pitarch

Diego Pitarch is a professional Theatre Designer. He is responsible for designing and oversees the making of the set and costumes for *SUNSET BOULEVARD*. I caught up with him and asked him a few questions about his work.

How would you best describe what you do?

My job is trying to create a world to help telling a story. The starting point is usually the script (if there is one...) and from there I work with the director discussing concepts and ideas and the best way to transcribe them on the stage.

My job also often involves creating a bridge between the artistic and technical requirements of the show.

What first inspired you to become a Theatre Designer?

From early age I have always been drawing and imagining creatures and characters. It was clear for me that I would be pursuing some kind of creative career.

I first trained as an Interior Designer in Paris, but I found the nature of the job too restrictive. What I love about designing for Theatre is the ephemeral nature of the work. It allows you to explore ideas and different ways, to express them without being tied back by common sense and practicalities.

What sort of training do you need and how long does it take?

My training wasn't very straight forward as I trained as an Interior Designer first (4 years!). Then I moved to London where I completed a two year M.A. in Theatre Design at the Slade School.

What's the most difficult aspect of your job?

I think one of the most difficult aspects of my job is to balance the creative and the technical sides. It is hard to generate some inventive and novel designs keeping an eye on the parameters imposed by budgets, practical and technical restrictions.

What is your favourite part of being a designer?

My favourite aspect is working as part of a team. I love sharing ideas and being challenged by other people's creativity. I also love helping to transform something as abstract as a concept or a drawing into a real three dimensional space or object.

Of all the shows that you have designed, what has been your favourite?

The one I am working on.

What advice would you give young people who want a career designing for the theatre?

My advice would be to be perseverant and to try and develop a personal style and vision.

What have you enjoyed most about working on Sunset Boulevard?

Working with a fantastic team; all the people at The Watermill, Craig (Director), Sarah (Musical Supervisor) and Richard (Lighting Designer). I think we make a very good team.

Do you have a favourite costume?

It is very hard to make a choice. I love all of Norma's costumes in Sunset Boulevard.

The relationship between the Designer and the Director is a crucial one, how has it been working with Craig Revel-Horwood?

Working with Craig is very easy. He is very open-minded and playful. He has very clear ideas about what he wants, but he also gives me a lot of freedom. I think the key to our collaboration is that we trust each other.

What was the most challenging thing about the production and how did you solve it?

Like for most shows at the mill. Having a very small space where you need to somehow create a house, a swimming pool, a cinema studio, a car chase... The way we approach it is in trying to devise a space where we can suggest all this without limiting ourselves to a particular location.

Can describe the process of working at The Watermill in 5 words?

Resourceful, Inventive, Courageous, Fun, Collaborative.

I'M READY FOR MY CLOSE UP!

Designer Diego Pitarch, had the challenge of designing the costumes for the fallen star Norma Desmond. He and the director, Craig Revel Horwood, had to meet before rehearsals began to discuss their ideas. Diego then drew his designs, taking into consideration all the aspects of her character including:

- her wealth and status
- her age
- the fashions of Hollywood in the 1950's
- the fact she was a celebrity and used to being looked at would make her very conscious about the way she looked

During the rehearsal period Diego then worked with actress Kathryn Evans and The Watermill's wardrobe department to create the final costumes and make sure they fit properly and that Kathryn was comfortable in them.



Costume illustrations by Diego Pitarch

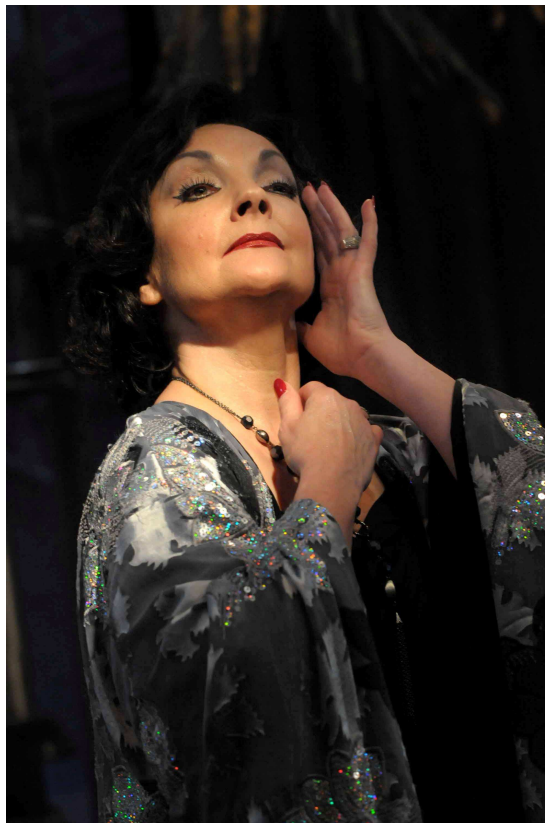
TASK

Using your imagination and all of the information you have or can find about Norma Desmond, can you draw some ideas for what she might wear?

WITH ONE LOOK

In 1929 the first 'talkie' was released and this changed movies forever. Before this, due to the lack of technology, images and sound could not be synchronised together, but only recorded separately.

Acting without words is called **mime** and requires a greater use of an actor's body and facial expressions in order to communicate to the audience what he or she is thinking. However instead of focussing on what they couldn't do, certain types (or genres) of film really thrived with no talking, in particular **comedy**. Famous comedians of the silent screen included Charlie Chaplin, Buster Keaton and of course Laurel and Hardy. Drama also worked in silence, but often the acting needed to be flamboyant and over the top, demonstrating the big emotions. This larger than life style of acting is referred to as **melodrama** and we can assume it was in this style that Norma Desmond made her name - "No words can tell, the stories my eyes tell".



Kathryn Evans

Have a look in your local library for video/DVD copies of silent films. Also look on the internet and in books to find some pictures of the famous actors.

TASK 1

Best to do this task in the largest space you can, a school hall is ideal. Get the group or class to spread out and find a space. Explain to them that you will call out an emotion and then count from 1 to 5. Over the five beats (you may wish to clap or beat a drum) each person slowly moves their body in a statue of someone feeling that emotion. Make sure that they use all 5 beats and only freeze in the final position on '5'. Remind them to use their whole body and make the emotion as clear as possible – if someone new were to walk in, would they be able to tell what emotion was on display?

Here are some suggestions to get you started:

HAPPINESS

SADNESS

ANGER

FEAR

TASK 2

In small groups (3/4) create a short scene to be performed in silence; it only needs to be 30 seconds to 1 minute. Below are some examples:

- a. someone walks into a room and it's a surprise party
- b. washing the car and it begins to rain
- c. walking along the street and someone steps in something really sticky or smelly

Can you think of your own little scenes? Remember, keep the story simple and the emotions big!



Laura Pitt-Pulford as Betty & Tomm Coles as Artie

STAR QUALITY?

The movie industry, like the theatre, relies somewhat upon the critics for its successes and failures. If a movie (or a play) receives a good review in the papers then more people will want to come and see it, if not then it might put people off!

Have a look at some of the reviews from the original production of *SUNSET BOULEVARD*:

"Scored with some of Lloyd Webber's loveliest melodies and designed with an extravagance of mind. The lyrics are witty, funny and genuinely poetic. In adapting the Wilder work, they have created something original, as moving as it is grotesque. There shouldn't be a dry eye even in the lobby."
(The New York Times)

"The show's a hit. Lloyd Webber's most shamelessly and artfully constructed score. It offers two of Lloyd Webber's best songs in 'With One Look' and 'As If We Never Said Goodbye.' Director Trevor Nunn and designer John Napier, the 'Cats' team, have fashioned one coup de theatre after another. Radiant."
(Time Magazine)

And here are some from the current production here at The Watermill:

"This is Sunset Boulevard stripped down...The twist here is that the cast is also the orchestra; seated on the edge of the stage, they play their instruments when they're not singing, a feat of co-ordination from Horwood and the musical supervisor, Sarah Travis" **** (Sunday Times)

"Watching this humdinger of a revival in the tiny Watermill, however, it becomes absolutely clear that this show belongs among Lloyd Webber's hits rather than his flops...Kathryn Evans in particular delivers a knock-'em-dead performance"
(The Telegraph)

"Aided by Sarah Travis's terrific musical arrangements and Diego Pitarch's spiral staircase design – which makes it feel as if music and mist are always swilling around the crumbling Hollywood mansion...Revel Horwood tries valiantly to squeeze Lloyd Webber's fleshy, florid vision on to the tiny stage"
** (The Guardian)

TASK

Using the box below, write your own review of *SUNSET BOULEVARD*. Imagine you are giving someone who hasn't seen the play an idea of what it's like. You must include a **brief** outline or introduction to the story as well as your opinions on the main elements of the production (set, costumes, music) and performances.



Remember – there is no right or wrong, everyone's opinion is equally valid. Why not send a copy of your review into us at The Watermill; we'd really like to know what you thought of the show!

CREDITS & CONTACT

Cast (in alphabetical order)

Heather – Elisa Boyd

Artie Green – Tomm Coles

Sheldrake – Alexander Evans

Norma Desmond – Kathryn Evans

Mary – Kate Fieldschreiber

Joe Gillis – Ben Goddard

Cecil B. DeMille – Nick Lashbrook

Hog-Eye/Show MD – Tarek Merchant

Betty Schaefer – Laura Pitt-Pulford

Joanna – Helen Power

Manfred – Jon Trenchard

Max von Mayerling – Edward York

Creative Team

Director – Craig Revel Horwood

Musical Supervisor and Musical Arrangements – Sarah Travis

Designer – Diego Pitarch

Lighting Designer – Richard G. Jones

Sound Designer – Gary Dixon

Photographs

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