



Gothic House, High Road, Great Finborough, Suffolk, IP14 3AQ
01449 771007 (m) 07713 643971 email: chris@chrisgrady.org

Update 22nd May 2008

This sheet is designed to give an instant summary of some of the places a writer could go to learn more about writing musical theatre, or having their new work considered mainly in the UK, and a bit in the US.

Mercury Musical Development (MMD) is a charitable organisation based in London, specifically for writers working in the UK. It is a mix of an association of writers, an information source, a contact route to/from producers, and an active organisation championing the craft of musical theatre writing. For more information go to their excellent website www.mercurymusicals.com. There is a membership charge for "Associate" writers.

Books on writing musicals are an essential source of good wisdom and insurance against injury in this dangerous sport. The most direct is Richard Andrew's *Writing A Musical* – available at major bookshops. It is worth trying to get a copy of *Musicals Inside Out* by Mark Carroll. This is an excellent US publication. Read *Musical Stages*, *the Stage*, and *Variety* for a range of other articles and publications. The MMD website offers an extensive reading list for members.

Training in the art of writing musical theatre is really available in one place only – the Tisch School of Arts in New York. They run a Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Programme which has worldwide appeal. It is a serious way to spend two years and a goodly selection of dollars. In the last few years a number of UK writers have been on the course. Worth finding out more. There is at present no such programme in the UK although MMD often run seminars and programmes, and there is a one year programme for producers & writers at Goldsmiths College.

A Month of Sundays (AMOS) is a course which ran in the 90s and is about to be re-established by CGO, supported by Arts Council England – London. This will offer emerging writers 4 weekends to explore the art of collaboration, mentored self assessment and the "tools not rules" of Musical Theatre writing. Full details will be available to MMD members and through www.chrisgrady.org in September 08.

OD Musical Month of Sundays is a planned parallel course which will explore, with more senior writers the chance to explore the opportunities for writing in Korea and in collaboration with Korean Musical Theatre practitioners. It will explore cross-cultural issues, audience expectations, source material, and the challenge of writing new work for massive theatre stages. For more information on this planned early 09 course visit www.chrisgrady.org or check in the MMD.

Perfect Pitch Musicals Ltd (PP) is an Arts Council England supported development path programme developed by Andy Barnes to lead potentially commercial Musical Theatre through a process of small/medium scale workshop, review, showcase and initial production. Each work is selected along with a bespoke programme for development and writers enter into an agreement with PP where investment in development could be recovered from a small portion of future royalty earnings. PP does not take the rights in the work, but rather acts as a quasi agent/manager in the development of the potential of the work. At any point a commercial producer could secure the rights to the work and the development process would cease – so writers selected for this process have, in effect, nothing to lose. This is an exciting new venture in its first series of trials – only a very few British works will be selected. For more information go to www.perfectpitchmusicals.org.uk

Perfect Pitch Season at Trafalgar Studios (PPS) is a linked programme to PP operated by Andy Barnes which seeks to showcase works which are deemed ready for "exploitation". Some will have come through the PP development process, some may be selected and move into a programme of development, and some may be picked up (or not) following the Season. Originally created in 2006 in association with Ovation Theatre at Upstairs at the Gatehouse, supported by MTM:UK, it is now moving to the heart of the West End for a week in November 08 in association with Ambassadors Theatre Group. Once again any work chosen is supposed to be available for production (unencumbered) at the time of the showcase to ensure producers come on a "feeding" trip. The showcases will be in the style of the NAMT Showcases in New York.

Musical Theatre at George Square (MT@GS) is a festival of musicals within the major Edinburgh Festival Fringe starting in August 08. The initiative is managed by the University of Edinburgh, programmed by Chris Grady.org, and technically powered by Pleasance Theatres. This year 29 new musicals form part of a 40 event programme across 3 theatre spaces with an average 8 shows a day for 3 weeks. A programme of masterclasses, cabaret and late night singers café also seeks to give opportunities to writers and those emerging into the Musical Theatre industry. Subject to the success of this summer, programming for August 09 will start with preliminary discussions in November with the main assessment process in Jan/Feb 09. The programme is finalised in March 09. Anyone involved in the development of Musical Theatre is encouraged to pick up a brochure/visit www.festivals.ed.ac.uk

Greenwich Theatre has run an annual 10 day season of new musical work as part of a Festival called **Musical Futures** from 2000 to 2006. Under the new Executive Director James Haddrell, and in association with Felix Cross of Nitro, they are re-evaluating this programme and more details will be announced in the Autumn. Keep a look on www.greenwichtheatres.org.uk

In the United States there is the annual Festival of First Stage Musicals run by the **National Alliance for Musical Theatre** www.namt.net in New York, the **Lehman Engels Programme** of new work in Los Angeles and the **New Tuners Programme** at the Theatre Building in Chicago, all of which have in the past presented work by British writers – usually selected after submission by MMD – which is another reason to join this organisation.

Members of NAMT include, in the UK, Greenwich Theatre, BBC Wales, MMD, and Musical Theatre Matters (MTM:UK) and each organisation is empowered to make submissions for the annual NAMT showcases. More information will be issued by these members IF they are seeking submissions.

There is also the annual **New York Musicals Festival (NYMF)** which seeks submissions each year and champions the presentation of around 30 new musicals across many theatres in the heart of New York each October. Some works are matched with New York emerging producers, some are presented by theatres/producers, and some are self-produced by the writers. For more information study www.nymf.com, and talk to those producers and writers from the UK who have been involved. It is an expensive process to self-produce, but over the last two years UK writers have won Best Lyricist, Best Score, and Best New American Musical awards.

Musical Theatre Matters MTM:UK is an organisation which all writers should be aware of, although it is a network for producers, creatives (directors, designers etc), administrators, and business managers working in Musical Theatre in the UK – rather than writers. It specifically excludes writer members in order to remain distinct from the work of MMD. The membership meets regularly to explore ways to nurture and develop new Musical Theatre, and the community and audience for new work in this Country. It has 150 members across the UK and since starting in 2005 it has held a successful Conference on new work, connected practitioners to allow the creation of Perfect Pitch, and established an Award programme to celebrate new work at the Edinburgh Festival Fringe. For more information visit www.musicaltheatrematters.org.uk

The MTM:UK Edinburgh Festival Fringe Awards were established in 2007 and allow for the reviewing of every new Musical Theatre piece being presented by professionals or aspiring professionals in Edinburgh (last year 120 works). A shortlist is selected and assessed by a small panel of Judges and awards are then given to raise awareness of the writers and the works, and to acknowledge best practice. The 2008 Awards will include:

The Dress Circle Award for Best Musical Production

The OD Musical Award for Most Promising New Work

The MTM:UK Awards for Best Book, Music, and Lyrics (3 awards)

For more information visit www.musicaltheatrematters.org.uk where all reviews of this year's works will be displayed.

New Work is showcased in many different spaces, and it is worth being aware of what is being presented to producers, the emerging producers developing work, and the spaces being used. Look out for work at **Jermyn Street Theatre, The Drill Hall, The Actors' Centre, The Pleasance Theatre** Islington, **Lyric Hammersmith Studio, Theatre 503, The Finborough, The Union** Southwark, and **Upstairs at the Gateway**. Most of these events are publicised with leaflets available at **Dress Circle Records** on Monmouth Street off Seven Dials.

Also keep an eye out for the adventurous Drama Schools who are beginning to pick up new work for their students to explore, and some are even commissioning new pieces. Learn more about **Arts Ed Schools, LAMDA, LIPA, RSAMD** and, likely to be fast movers in this area, a revitalised **Welsh College** and the new **Musical Theatre Academy** opening in Sept 09 close to RADA under the directorship of Annemarie Lewis Thomas.

And finally, if you have an International perspective then there are a number of the major commercial producers & academies who are actively looking for new work to secure rights on to present in the future. The biggest is Stage Entertainment in Holland, also houses/schools in Denmark, Sweden, NIDA in Australia, and many producers in Korea. If you are developing a work which you feel has an International audience then make sure, as a member of MMD you make this clear to the officers – because most of these producers and international players will first check out writers in MMD membership.

For information, the following organisations/opportunities no longer exist, and are listed here to save time for writers and others trying to find them !!

The Writing Block the informal monthly presentation of new material by writers created by Martin Seager. **The International Festival of Musical Theatre in Cardiff** was a bi-annual celebration of musicals established in 2000 including the Global Search for New Musicals. It ceased to trade in 2006, but remains an ambition for some of those who started the process. **The Highland Quest for New Musicals** was a one-off search funded by the Scottish Executive and the Mackintosh Foundation to uncover a new work. Over 3 years the search went from idea – assessment – writer retreat – shortlist – showcase – chosen work – development – full production – tour. The first time the complete arc has been funded in one process. We continue to hope that the model, brilliantly captured in Don Coutts' 3hr BBC documentary entitled MacMusical produced by Endemol, will be repeated in other areas and for other projects. **The Bridewell Theatre** was for 10 years until 2005 a dedicated champion for new work. It closed down when no grants could be secured to support a massive rental hike on the building. Carol Metcalfe, the founding artistic director, continues to run Bridewell Theatre Company Ltd, supporting new work, not to be confused with the theatre space which is still called the Bridewell but is now operated as an amateur/hire space. And finally **The Vivian Ellis Prize** which was a national search for new work and a showcase of emerging writers at the London Palladium each year. Sadly the Trustees decided to re-route their money away from new Musical Theatre

We hope this information will be useful to you.

Last Update 22nd May 2008

