**VICTOR VICTORIA**

**London run:** Bridewell, January 13th – 31st

**Music:** Henry Mancini

**Extra music:** Frank Wildhorn

**Lyrics:** Leslie Bricusse

**Book:** Blake Edwards

**Director:** Phil Willmott

**Choreographer:** Jack Gunn

**Musical Director:** Annemarie Lewis Thomas

**Cast:** Ria Jones (Victoria), Christopher Holt (Toddy), Mark Halliday (King Marchan), Stewart Alexander (Squash), Emma Barton (Norma), Matthew Daines

**Songs:** Paris By Night, If I Were a Man, Le Jazz Hot, Paris Makes Me Horny, Crazy World, King’s Dilemma, Almost a Love Song, (Music by Frank Wildhorn: Living in the Shadows, Trust Me, Louis Says)

**Story:** In 1930s Paris, singer Victoria Grant is down on her luck and her gay friend, Toddy, comes up with a money-making idea: she will bill herself as “Victor”, a Polish count and female impersonator. Her new career takes off, but problems arise when she falls in love with King Marchan, a gangster. At the same time the gangster’s bodyguard, Squash, finds he is strangely attracted to Victor (and yet he is not gay!), while Marchan’s zany girlfriend, Norma, adds even more complications.

**Notes:** Originally a 1933 German play “Viktor und Viktoria” by Rheinhold Schunzel, the first English version was the 1935 Jessie Matthew film, “Just a Girl”. Blake Edwards re-made the film in 1982 with music and lyrics by Henry Mancini and Leslie Bricusse, and with his wife, Julie Andrews in the lead. In 1995 he adapted this into a Broadway musical, again starring Julie Andrews. Extra songs were needed and Mancini and Bricusse started work on the project, but sadly Mancini died, and newcomer Frank Wildhorn completed the score. It opened in New York in October 1995 and ran for 734 performances. Julie Andrews was nominated for a Tony but rejected the nomination because, as she explained in a curtain speech, “However, flattered as I am, and honoured to be nominated, I have to say how deeply sad I am to be the only nominee in this extraordinarily gifted company.” However, Julie Andrews and the show received and won several other awards from the Drama Desk and Outer Circle critics. Julie Andrews stayed with the show for almost two years, during which she took a short holiday when Liza Minnelli stood in. A great scandal ensued when the leading man walked out in protest at Minnelli’s poor performance. When Julie Andrews finally left the show in June 1997 she was replaced with Raquel Welch, but without its legendary star, the show came off very quickly.

---

**PASSION (1st Revival)**

**London run:** Bridewell, March 9th – April 3rd

**Music & Lyrics:** Stephen Sondheim

**Book:** James Lapine

**Director:** Carol Metcalfe

**Choreographer:** Mykal Rand & Omar F. Okai

**Musical Director:** James McKeon

**Cast:** Mark Carroll (Giorgio), Clare Burt (Fosca), Kate Arneil (Clara), Matthew White (Colonel Ricci), Simon Masterton (Doctor Tambourri), David Menkin, Nigel Pilkington, Christopher Jay, William Kenning, Dominic Brewer

This small-scale revival marked the 10th anniversary show of the Bridewell company, and received a muted welcome from the critics. However, there was much praise for Clare Burt as Fosca.

**Notes:** Original London production: Queen’s Theatre, March 1996
**LES MISÉRABLES (Transfer)**

*London run*: Barbican, September 30th (63 Performances)
Transferred to Palace Theatre, December 4th
Transferred to Queen’s Theatre, April 3rd 2004

*Music*: Claude-Michel Schönberg
*Lyrics*: Alan Boublil
*English lyrics*: Herbert Kretzmer
*Director*: Trevor Nunn & John Caird
*Musical Director*: Stephen Brooker
*Producer*: Cameron Mackintosh


*Notes*: After 19 years at the Palace Theatre the production was moved to the smaller Queen’s Theatre (the Palace needed considerable renovation to meet safety standards). In order to fit into the new space the scenery was reduced in size and the physical production needed shrinking. The most controversial aspect of the move was the size of the orchestra. The Palace pit accommodated 21 musicians, but the Queen’s could only hold 11. The rest of the sound was provided by a computer. The Musicians Union threatened a strike, but capitulated when Cameron Mackintosh claimed the only alternative was to close the show. The critics generally agreed that the “reduced” version had suffered no loss of richness or texture, and the new orchestral sound was perfectly satisfactory thanks to the new-fangled “Sinfonia” computer. Having now been seen by more than 50 million people in 38 countries and 21 languages, “Les Mis” had now become the most successful musical of all time.

---

**JAILHOUSE ROCK**

*London run*: Piccadilly Theatre, April 19th (420 performances)

*Music*: Various
*Book*: Rob Bettinson & Alan Janes
*Director*: Rob Bettinson
*Choreographer*: Drew Anthony
*Musical Director*: Julian Littman

*Cast*: Mario Kombou (*Vince Everett*), Roger Alborough (*Hawk*), Lisa Peace (*Peggy van Aulden*), Gilz Terera (*Quickly*), Annie Wensak (*Mama Everett*), Dominic Colchester, Melanie Marcus, Mark Roper, Gareth Williams,

*Songs*: Are You Lonesome Tonight, Burnin’ Love, Always On My Mind, This Ole House, Suspicious Minds, The Wonder of You, Tutti Frutti, Blue Suede Shoes, Such a Night, Pretty Little Angel Eyes

*Story*: Poor white boy, Vince Everett, in a quarrel over a girlfriend, accidentally kills a man and is sentenced to ten years. In prison he’s taught to play guitar by a fellow prisoner called Hawk, and then gets spotted by Peggy van Aulden, a talent scout. On his release Vince becomes an overnight star and promptly turns his back on everyone who helped him, Hawk, Peggy, a black convict called Quickly, who helped him survive in prison, and even the ghost of his poor old Mama, who pops up now and again to tell about his childhood. Vince then suffers the pressure that money and fame can bring, and clashes with shifty record producers, Hollywood starlets and crafty lawyers until finally seeing the light.

*Notes*: Based on the classic 1957 Elvis Presley film, this was adapted for the stage by the same team that created the successful “Buddy”. However,Lieber & Stoller refused permission for any of their film songs to be used (on the grounds they were planning their own stage version), and the Presley estate refused permission for any reference to Elvis himself. Accordingly the musical content became a collection of some 20 or so of the lesser know Elvis numbers and several generic 50s hits with no actual reference to Elvis Presley himself. The show was praised for its energy, and ran for a year.
FOLLOW MY LEADER
London run: Hampstead, April 26th – May 22nd
Music & Lyrics: Richard Blackford
Book: Alistair Beaton
Director: Mark Clements
Choreographer: Paul J. Medford
Musical Director: David Roper
Producer: Birmingham Rep Theatre Co
Cast: Jason Durr (Tony Blair), Stuart Milligan (George Bush), Peter Poycarpou (God/Comical Ali/Osama bin Laden, etc), Sévan Stephan (Clare Short, Iraqi newsreader, etc.), Martyn Ellis, Dawn Hope, Nicola Hughes, Paul J. Medford, Giles New, Warren Wills.
Songs: Jesus Votes for Tony Blair, We’re Sending you a Cluster Bomb from Jesus, Pre-Emptive Defence, I Am the Conscience of the Party
Story: Set in the years of Anglo-American war-mongering following the 2001 Camp David summit, God appears on earth asking Tony Blair to be a restraining influence on George Bush. But, in spite of the seeming fervent Christianity of the two men who have unleashed the dogs of war, God’s attempt is unsuccessful. Comical Ali makes an appearance as a Number 10 Spokesman – “No more spin, from now on, big jolly happy lies!” An Iraqi TV reporter broadcasts the disappearance of Tony Blair and speculates about his use of body doubles; Osama Bin Laden appears to thank Blair and Bush - “You have given me all that I dreamed of”, and Blair ends up in a poodle-costume at the feet of George Bush in a stage covered in American flags and one tiny Union jack.
Notes: Very few musicals of political-satire ever get beyond a fringe-type try out, but this one transferred from the prestigious Birmingham Rep and boasted one of the most talented and respected casts in London theatre. In spite of this, the general reaction was one of distaste and disdain for its feeble unfocused satire on soft targets. “Witless, weak and drab” was the verdict.

BEAUTIFUL AND DAMNED
London run: Lyric Theatre, May 10th – August 14th
Music & Lyrics: Les Reed & Roger Cook
Book: Kit Hesketh-Harvey
Additional material: Laurence Myers
Director-Choreographer: Craig Revel Horwood
Musical Director: John Rigby
Cast: Michael Praed (Scott), Helen Anker (Zelda), Katie Foster Barnes (Scottie), Heather Douglas (Lois), David Burt (Ernest Hemingway), Susannah Fellows, Loren Geeting, Jo Gibb, Jolyon James
Songs: She’s Over the Top and He’s Under the Table, I’m Dancing, One of You Can Take Me Home Tonight, Beautiful Magnolia, Refuse to Be a Girl, Little Miz Alabama, Golden Days, Tender is the Night, The Old World Shines Again
Story: The story opens in 1938 with Zelda in a mental institution and is told through a mixture of flashbacks and present day reality. Back in the Roaring Twenties she was the stylish young wife of Scott Fitzgerald, a successful young author. Outrageously glamorous and fashionable, they created their own world of enchantment and became the envy of all with their high-spending and high-living lifestyle. Their marriage produced a daughter, Scottie, but was an “open” one, allowing them to take other partners if they wished. However, jealousy consumes Zelda when she sees Scott with Lois, a famous actress Lois, and this leads to tragedy of epic proportions.
Notes: Using the title of F. Scott Fitzgerald’s second novel, this was based on the true life story of Scott and Zelda. It was an expensive production with a lavish water fountain effect at the end of Act One. The critical reaction was extremely damming – “this calamitous enterprise resembles a slow motion car crash” – dull songs and an extremely dull book was the general verdict.
**THE BLACK RIDER**

**London run:** Barbican, May 21st – June 19th  
**Music & Lyrics:** Tom Waits  
**Text:** William S. Burroughs  
**Director:** Robert Wilson  
**Musical Director:** Bent Clausen

**Cast:** Matt McGrath (*Wilhelm*), Mary Margaret O’Hara (*Käthchen*), Marianne Faithfull (*Pegleg*), Dean Robinson (*Bertram*), Jack Willis, Monika Tahal, Gabrielle Santinelli, Nigel Richards, Richard Strange, Sona Cervena, Jake Thornton, Janet Henfrey.

**Songs:** Come Along with the Black Rider, The Last Rose of Summer, Gospel Train, I’ll Shoot the Moon, Just the Right Bullets

**Story:** Wilhelm, a young clerk, falls in love with Käthchen, a huntsman’s daughter, but her father will only permit marriage if the clerk proves as adept with the rifle as he is with the pen. His fortunes are transformed when he is offered magic bullets by the devil, Pegleg, who provides him with magic bullets that never miss their target. However, Pegleg stipulates that, while most of the bullets will hit anything Wilhelm pleases, one of the bullets will remain under Pegleg's control. Foolish, naive, and overrun with desperate hope, Wilhelm accepts the deal. On his wedding day, the final bullet strikes his beloved dead. Wilhelm then goes mad, and joins the previous victims of Satan’s cunning in the Devil's carnival.

**Notes:** Based on the German folktale which had been used in Weber’s opera, “Der Freischütz”, this version was a collaboration between theatre director Robert Wilson, musician Tom Waits, and the writer William Burroughs. It contains strong autobiographical elements from Burroughs’ real life: he accidentally shot his own wife in a drunken attempt at recreating the William Tell legend. The premiere was in Hamburg in March 1990, and an English language version had played Canada in 1998 and New York in 1999. The 1993 album, with its mixture of Kurt Weill-type operatic and avant-garde sounds was highly successful. This London production, with its quasi-Japanese Kabuki staging, trapezes, symbolism and stylised settings, was the prelude to a world tour, later moving to San Francisco and Sydney. Due to ill health, Marianne Faithfull was forced to withdraw from the production in Australia and her understudy Nigel Richards filled the part.

---

**COLE (1st Revival)**

**London run:** Upstairs at the Gatehouse, May 26th – June 20th  
**Music & Lyrics:** Cole Porter  
**Book:** Benny Green & Alan Strachan  
**Director:** Racky Plews  
**Musical Director:** Chris Lambert

**Cast:** Angela Bleasdale, Tim McArthur, John Martin, Gemma Morsley, James Pearson, Nicolas Sagar, Lincoln Stone, Ollie Usiskin, Georgina Wyatt, Hara Yannas

**Notes:** This tribute to Cole Porter had last been seen in London twenty years earlier.

Original London run: Mermaid Theatre, July 1974
SATURDAY NIGHT FEVER (1st Revival)

London run: Apollo Victoria, July 6th
Music: The Bee Gees (and others)
Adaptation: Nan Knighton, Robert Stigwood, Paul Nicholas
Director-Choreographer: Arlene Phillips
Musical Director: Chris Newton
Producer: Robert Stigwood & Adam Spiegel

Cast: Stephane Anelli (Tony Monero), Zoe Ebsworth (Stephanie), Kym Marsh (Annette), Alex Jessop (Bobby C), Shaun Williamson (Monty), Mark Faith (Fusco/Frank Monero), Joyce Springer (Flo Manero), Russell Walker (Frank Junior), Lucy Banfield (Maria), Tom Goodall (Cesar)

This was a completely new version, differing in many respects from the earlier Palladium and touring productions. Musical changes included the addition of just one new song—"Words" sung by Tony and Stephanie - replacing "More than a Woman", but the book itself and the structure of the show had undergone significant changes. Original London production: London Palladium, May 1998

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE FORUM (3rd Revival)

London run: Olivier Theatre, July 9th – November 2nd (In repertoire)
Music & Lyrics: Stephen Sondheim
Book: Burt Shevelove & Larry Gelbart
Director: Edward Hall
Choreographer: Rob Ashford
Musical Director: Martin Lowe

Cast: Desmond Barritt (Pseudolus), Hamish McColl (Hysterium), Sam Kelly (Senex), Harry Towb (Erronius), David Schneider (Lycas), Isla Blair (Domina), Vince Leigh (Hero), Philip Quast (Miles Gloriosus), Caroline Sheen (Philia), Jane Fowler, Lorraine Stewart, Michelle Lukes

Notes: See Original London Production, Strand October 1963
First revival: Piccadilly Theatre, November 1986
Second revival: Open Air, July 1999

SNOOPY– The Musical (2nd Revival)

London run: New Players Theatre, July 21st – August 15th
Music: Larry Grossman
Lyrics: Hal Hackady
Book: Charles M. Schulz Creative Associates
Director: Arthur Whitelaw
Choreographer: Kay Cole
Musical Director: Stuart Pedlar

Cast: Alex Woodhall (Woodstock), Clare Louise Connolly (Sally Brown), Sarah Lark (Lucy), Kellie Ryan (Peppermint Patty), Stuart Piper (Linus), Robin Armstrong (Snoopy), Steven Kynman (Charlie Brown)

This show was the opening production at the New Players Theatre, underneath the arches in Charing Cross. The lavishly refurbished new venue (although very similar to the old one, was one or two arches further along.)

Original London production: Duchess Theatre, September 1983
First revival: Jermyn Street, February 2003
CAMELOT (3rd Revival)
London run: Open Air, Regent’s Park, July 23rd – September 4th
Music: Frederick Loewe
Lyrics & Book: Alan Jay Lerner
Director: Ian Talbot
Choreographer: Gillian Gregory
Musical Director: Catherine Jayes
Cast: Daniel Flynn (King Arthur), Lauren Ward (Guinevere), Raymond Bowers (Merlin), Russ Abbot (Pellinore), Matt Rawle (Sir Lancelot), Mark Hilton (Mordred),

The original was rather bitchily described by Noel Coward as “Parsifal without the jokes”, and forty years later the critics reviewed this revival as “a hugely over-long and desperately unwieldy Arthurian hotch-potch” and as “seventeen hummable songs hung on a hokey story-line”.

Notes: See original London run: Drury Lane, Aug 1964; First revival: Apollo Victoria, Nov 1982
Second revival: Freemason’s Hall, June 1996

SWEENEY TODD (6th Revival)
London run: Trafalgar Studios, July 27th – October 9th
Transfer: Ambassadors Theatre, October 13th – Feb 5th 2005
Music & Lyrics: Stephen Sondheim
Book: Hugh Wheeler
Director: John Doyle
Musical Director: Sarah Travis
Producer: Watermill Theatre, Adam Kenwright, etc.
Cast: Paul Hegarty (Sweeney Todd), Karen Mann (Mrs Lovett), David Ricardo-Pearce (Anthony), Colin Wakefield (Judge Turpin), Rebecca Jenkins (Johanna), Sam Kenyon (Tobias), Stephanie Jacob (Pirelli), Rebecca Jackson (Beggar Woman), Michael Howcroft (Beadle)

With a cast of just nine in modern dress, all doubling as on-stage musicians, with the barber’s chair replaced with a black onstage coffin, with blood being poured from one bucket to another each time a person is killed – this was a very “different” interpretation of Sondheim’s “Sweeney Todd. Originally produced at the Watermill Theatre, Berkshire, this limited run transfer divided the critics into two distinct camps. On the one hand: “superbly inventive”, “spectacular versatility”, “brilliantly expressive symbolic approach”; on the other, “the worst sort of university theatre, didactic, over-stylised. . . crassly obvious”, “cramped and inadequate”, “there are times when small is not beautiful”. In November 2005 John Doyle re-created this production on Broadway and won the Tony Award for Best Director.

Notes: See Original London production: Drury Lane Theatre, July 1980
1st revival: Half Moon Theatre, May 1985
2nd revival: Cottesloe June /Lyttleton Dec 1993
3rd revival: Holland Park, June 1996
4th revival: Sadler’s Wells, June 2002
5th revival: Royal Opera House, Dec 2003
**RELEASE THE BEAT**

**London run:** Arcola, July 29th – August 21st  
**Music & Lyrics:** Karl Lewkowicz  
**Book:** Judith Johnson  
**Director:** Mehmet Ergen  
**Choreographer:** Mykal Rand  
**Musical Director:** Kate Young

**Cast:** Rosalind James (*Simone*), Ami Ameen (*Winston*), Zabrina Norry (*Dionne*), Pieter Lawman (*Tom*), Peter Gallagher (*Jay Vinyl*), Golda Rosheuvel (*Lady Luck*), Natalie Wright, Nina Kristofferson, Tosin Olomowewe, Dean Elliott  

**Songs:** Never Have Kids, Perfect Relationship, The Ruby and the Photo, I don’t Need Her, Big Up, No Excuses

**Story:** 18 year old Simone and her would-be boyfriend, DJ Winston from the pirate radio station Heat FM are planning a trip to her Dad’s club on Ibiza, accompanied by best mates Dionne and Tom, a rival DJ from the Tang radio station. But Simone’s record-producer Dad, Jay Vinyl, won’t let her go. Exam revision must come first, he says. So, she sneaks off without permission – and thus begins an updated kind of “Midsummer Night’s Dream” story set in the world of discos, booze and recreational drugs. Two boys competing for the loves of two girls, a Puck-like woman called Lady Luck, an irate father, a long-lost mother turning up unexpectedly – the story is played out in a score combining house and hip-hop with traditional musical fare.

**Notes:** Although produced on a small-scale and on the cheap, this show was felt to have a lot to commend it and received a fair bit of praise. However, with its pirate radio stations and vinyl records, it was also felt to be out of date.

---

**SINGIN’ IN THE RAIN (3rd Revival)**

**London run:** Sadler’s Wells, August 3rd – Sept 4th  
**Music:** Nacio Herb Brown & others  
**Lyrics:** Arthur Freed & others  
**Book:** Betty Comden and Adolph Green  
**Director:** Paul Kerryson  
**Choreographer:** Adam Cooper  
**Musical Director:** Julian Kelly  
**Producer:** Leicester Haymarket

**Cast:** Adam Cooper (*Don Lockwood*), Simon Coulthard (*Cosmo Brown*), Josefina Gabrielle (*Kathy Selden*), Ronni Ancona (*Lina Lamont*), Claude Close (*Roscoe Dexter*).

**Notes:** This was planned for a five week run before transferring to the Leicester Haymarket Theatre. It received very mixed notices, especially for Adam Cooper (who had earlier been the great success of the Matthew Bourne version of “Swan Lake”. However, there was universal praise for Ronni Ancona, who stole the show as Lina Lamont.

See Original London run: London Palladium, June 1983  
First revival: London Palladium, June 1989  
Second revival: Olivier Theatre, June & December 2000
**PURLIE**

**London run:** Bridewell, September 2nd – October 2nd

**Music:** Gary Geld

**Lyrics:** Peter Udell

**Book:** Ossie Davis, Philip Rose & Peter Udell

**Choreographer:** Mykal Rand

**Musical Director:** Steve Dula

**Cast:** Tee Jaye (*Purlie*), John Lyons (*Cap’n Cotchipee*), Victoria Wilson James (*Missy Judson*), David Menkin (*Charlie*), Joanna Francis (*Lutiebelle*), Miguel Brown, Irene M. Forrester, Mykal Rand, Ife Kuku, Aaron Morgan, Peter Svensson, Craig Williams,

**Songs:** Walk Him Up the Stairs, New Fangled Preacher Man, Skinnin’ a Cat, I Got Love, First Thing Monday Mornin’, Big Fish Little Fish, The Harder They Fall

**Story:** Told in flashback, this is the story of Purlie, a self-styled new-fangled preacher-man who wants to buy the Big Bethel Church in a sleepy rural Georgia town. However, he comes up against Cap’n Cotchiepee, the bigoted plantation owner, who is so against the idea of a black preacher, that he decides to bid for the church himself. But aided and abetted by big black momma, Missy Judson, by Charlie, the Captain’s rebellious son, and by the maid Lutibelle (soon to become the preacher’s wife), Purlie finally emerges victorious.

**Notes:** Based on Ossie Davies’s 1961 play “Purlie Victorious”, this opened on Broadway in March 1970, and after a quiet start became one of the big hits of the season. It ran for 688 performances and then went on tour before returning to New York for a brief run in 1972. (Gary Geld and Peter Udell would go on to further Broadway success in 1975 with “Shenandoah”.) This was its first production outside the USA, and although it would have been a trail-blazing piece at the time of the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s, it was now felt to be no more than a tuneful, jolly but very dated piece of Black History.

---

**BAT BOY**

**London run:** Shaftesbury Theatre, September 8th – February 14th 2005

**Photo by Ivan Kyncl**
**BAT BOY**

**London run:** Shaftesbury Theatre, September 8th (181 performances)

**Music & Lyrics:** Laurence O’Keefe  
**Book:** Keythe Farley & Brian Flemming  
**Director:** Mark Wing-Davey  
**Choreographer:** Lynne Page  
**Musical Director:** Ian Vince-Gatt  
**Producers:** West Yorkshire Playhouse, John Newman, etc.

**Cast:** Deven May (Bat Boy), Rebecca Vere (Meredith Parker), John Barr (Dr Parker), Emma Williams (Shelley Parker), Andrew Bolton (Sheriff), Gareth Richards, Julie Jupp, Robyn Isaac, Maurey Richards, David Beckford.

**Songs:** Christian Charity, Hey Freak, Watcha Wanna Do?, Another Dead Cow, Show You a Thing or Two, Let Me Walk Among You, Apology to a Cow, Mine All Mine

**Story:** This is a satire on small-town American values, fearful of freaks and outsiders. Bat Boy is rescued from his cave and taken to the local vet, where Meredith Parker (the vet’s wife) adopts him and teaches him to walk and talk (and also dance and sing!). She even manages to introduce him to a revivalist meeting at the local church and impress the Rev Billy Hightower with his progress. However, he does retain his appetite for blood. The vet becomes jealous of his wife’s obsessions with Bat Boy and turns to murder, blaming the deaths on Bat Boy. Soon the vet’s daughter, Shelley, falls in love with Bat Boy, and offers him her heart (and then her veins). Hounded by the local hicks, they run and hide in the forest, where the great god Pan presides over an orgy.

**Notes:** Inspired by a story in the weird and wonderful “Weekly World News” in June 1992, which claimed a “Bat Boy” half-boy, half-bat, had been found living in a cave, the musical opened off-Broadway in March 2001 for an 8 month run. The script and score were heavily revised for the UK production which was first staged at the West Yorkshire Playhouse. The book deals with serious themes (such as hypocrisy, acceptance, forgiveness, racism, revenge and scape-goating), but all too often punctures any underlying serious satire with slapstick, surrealism, camp-horror and irony. With only one or two exceptions, it was hated by the critics. “This asinine, pretentious and self-admiring musical is one of the most repulsive shows I’ve ever seen” (Sunday Times). There was some praise for Deven May, the American performer who re-created his off-Broadway performance in the UK. It ran just four months.

---

**THE TRANSLUCENT FROGS OF QUUUP**

**London run:** New Ambassadors’ Theatre, September 9th -17th  
Transfer to King’s Head, November 8th – 26th December

**Music & Lyrics:** Chris Larner & Mark Stevens  
**Book:** Chris Larner  
**Director:**  
**Choreographer:** Nicky McGinty  
**Musical Director:** Mark Stevens

**Cast:** Jonathan Robbins (Anthony Marigold Bentley), Rosalie Craig (Edith Marigold Bentley), Chris Larner (Narrator, etc), Mark Stevens (Pianist, etc)

**Songs:** Love is Like an Aubergine, A Moment in Time

**Story:** In the year 1922, a newly wed couple from Surbiton go on a honeymoon trip up the Amazon so that the husband, with a deep interest in all things amphibian, can search for the legendary eponymous frogs. En route they meet native salesmen, wise-cracking tribesmen and exotic unknown fruits, but Anthony is more interested in the frogs than in consummating his new marriage. So, poor Edith literally gets to grips with the natives and her new found sexual awakening.

**Notes:** An odd little piece from the Edinburgh Festival by the co-writer of the successful “The Play What I Wrote”, it was a great hit on the Edinburgh Fringe and some London reviewers regarded it as a piece of great charm and gusto. However many others took the view “too many average-to-inadequate shows get praised to high heaven during the annual Fringe frenzy, when theatre critics seem to either lose their marbles or get light-headed on the Edinburgh air and laugh hysterically at anything.”
**THE WOMAN IN WHITE**

**London run:** Palace Theatre, September 15th – February 25th 2006

**Music:** Andrew Lloyd Webber  
**Lyrics:** David Zippel  
**Book:** Charlotte Jones  
**Director:** Trevor Nunn  
**Choreographer:** Wayne McGregor  
**Musical Director:** Stephen Brooker  
**Producer:** Really Useful Theatre Co & Sonia Friedman

**Cast:** Martin Crewes (*Walter Hartwright*), Angela Christian (*Anne Catherick*), Maria Friedman (*Marian Halcombe*), Jill Paice (*Laura Fairlie*), Edward Petherbridge (*Mr Fairlie*), Oliver Darley (*Sir Percival Glyde*), Michael Crawford (*Count Fosco*)

**Songs:** I Hope You Like it Here, Trying Not to Notice, You See I Am No Ghost, If I Could Only Dream the World Away, Evermore Without You, I Can Get Away with Anything, Lost Souls, The Perfect Team

**Story:** Walter Hartwright, stranded at night on a railway station, meets a mysterious woman in white, Anne Catherick, who warns him of a terrible secret. Walter is tutor to Marian Halcombe and her half-sister, the heiress Laura Fairlie, nieces of Mr Fairlie. Walter falls in love with Laura, but she is already promised to the sinister Sir Percival Glyde. At their wedding Marian is repulsed by amorous advances from Sir Percival’s best man, the fat Italian, Count Fosco. The Woman in White re-appears to warn Laura her life is in danger because Sir Percival has married her for her money and shortly afterwards Laura is dead - allegedly fallen from a window whilst sleep-walking. Because of her “deranged” accusations, Sir Perival orders Anne Catherick to be locked away in a secret lunatic asylum. Marian and Walter decide to avenge Laura’s death and trick Count Fosco into revealing the location of the asylum so they can question Anne on the true story. From here on, in traditional Victorian melodrama, the plot thickens!

**Notes:** The show opened to luke-warm reviews with much criticism of the set design - a series of projections said to be dizzying, out of focus, and out of synch with the revolve. After four months Michael Crawford collapsed (as a result of over-sweating in the fat suit he wore to play Count Fosco) and his understudy, Steve Varnom, took over for several weeks. From February to April 2005 the role of Count Fosco was then played by Michael Ball, in a radically new interpretation of the part. From April onwards Fosco was played by Anthony Andrews.

The “original” version of the show closed on July 9th, and two days later re-opened with many cast changes and a heavily re-written libretto and song-order. This “new” version previewed through the summer with the Press invited to review the show in September – at which point Simon Callow became the fifth actor to play Count Fosco. This time the critics were a little more enthusiastic and the projections and revolving effects were said to be much better. However, the show closed on February 25th 2006 after a 19 month run and its 500th performance. The Broadway production – a slightly shortened version - opened in November 2005, generally to negative reviews, with the feeling it was not a terrible show, just very unexciting. During the run Maria Friedman was taken ill and missed a number of performances while she underwent treatment for breast cancer. In a surprise decision, the Broadway show closed in February – a week before the London version. It had given just 109 regular performances and 20 previews. The producers cited Maria Friedman’s frequent absences (as well as the negative reviews) as difficult obstacles to overcome.

*Photo by Manuel Harlan*

*Michael Crawford as Count Fosco*
BRIGHTON ROCK
London run: Almeida, October 5th – November 13th
Music: John Barry
Lyrics: Don Black
Book: Giles Havergal
Director: Michael Attenborough
Choreographer: Karen Bruce
Musical Director: Steven Edis

Cast: Michael Jibson (Pinkie), Sophia Ragavelas (Rose), Nicholas Lumley (Fred Hale), Harriet Thorpe (Ida Arnold), David Burt, Neil McCaul, Paul Bentall, Corinna Powlesland, Gary Milner

Songs: Some Things Never Leave You, Skin on Skin, I Don’t Care What He’s Done, You Know You Can Rely on Me, I Believe in You

Story: Pinkie Brown is a teenage sociopath in pre-War Brighton. He has just become leader of a local gang because the former leader was betrayed when journalist Fred Hale wrote an article in the Daily Messenger about a slot-machine racket run by the gang. Ida Arnold, a decent, moral woman is drawn into the action by a chance meeting with the terrified Hale after he has been threatened by Pinkie's gang. Eventually Pinkie murders Hale inside the Dante's Inferno funfair ride on Brighton Pier, and then tries to cover his tracks and remove all evidence of Hale's visit to Brighton. This leads to a chain of fresh crimes and even to the sex-hating Pinkie marrying an infatuated young waitress, Rose – she unknowingly has the power to destroy his alibi, but a wife cannot testify against her husband. Ida decides to pursue Pinkie relentlessly, because she believes it is the right thing to do, and also to protect Rose from the deeply disturbed teenage gangster she has married.

Notes: Graham Greene’s 1938 novel was adapted into a play and then the famous 1947 film starring Richard Attenborough as Pinkie. Although ostensibly an underworld thriller, the story has an underlying challenge to Roman Catholic doctrine concerning the nature of sin and the basis of morality. Pinkie and Rose are Catholics, as was Greene, and their beliefs are contrasted with Ida's strong but non-religious moral sensibility. This musical version was directed by Richard Attenborough’s son, Michael, with music by the great film-score composer, John Barry and lyrics by Don Black. It was, however, a flop, with a general consensus that uninspired music and lyrics added nothing to a dark, disturbing and complex morality tale.

OSCAR WILDE—The Musical
London run: Shaw Theatre, October 19th
(Closed the same day!)
Music & Lyrics: Mike Read
Director: Mike Read
Musical Director: Steve Innes-Etherington

Cast: Peter Blake (Oscar Wilde), Anita Louise Combe (Constance Wilde), Jonathan Tatum (Bosie), Christopher Corcoran (Marquess of Queensbury), Sarah Redmond, Frank Owen, Jon de Ville, Michael Strasse, Craig Nicholls.

Songs: Grief Never Grows Old, I’ll Make the World Go Away

Notes: The life-story of Oscar Wilde, before, during and after the trials, performed with a sextet of strings, keyboards and woodwind, and with the dialogue given in rhyming couplets. This was staged to mark the 150th anniversary of the birth of Oscar Wilde and to mark the re-launch of the Shaw Theatre. Mike Read, the former Radio 1 DJ, had been heavily criticised for his 2003 tribute musical to Cliff Richard, and this time the critics were even more censorious: “trite rhymes and clumping couplets”, “bilge”, “pitiful”, “rhymes worthy of William McGonagall”.
MURDEROUS INSTINCTS

London run: Savoy Theatre, October 7th – 16th (12 performances)
Music: Alberto Carrion
Book & Lyrics: Cinda Fox
Additional lyrics: Steve Fox
“Artistic Advisors”: Murray Melvin & Syd Ralph
Choreographer: Jhesus Aponte
Musical Director: Milton Sesenton
Producer: Manny Fox

Cast: Nichola McAuliffe (Edwina Buckingham), Arvid Larsen (Colin), Natalie O’Donnell (Lauren), Jonathan D. Ellis (Miguel), Kevin Colson (Adolfo), Simon Clarke (Tweedman, the lawyer), John Capes (Homeless Man), Jhesus Aponte (Enrique), Janet Fuentes Torres (Graciela)

Story: The evil and unloved rum tycoon, Bradley Buckingham, has died in his Puerto Rican mansion. His widow, the booze-addicted former salsa-dancer, Edwina, and his children, Colin and Lauren, gather for the will reading. The children are horrified to discover everything will go to sozzled Momma, and when she suddenly disappears the next day, the accusations of murder start flying around. There are a lot of skeletons in this Puerto Rican closet: strait-laced married Colin is having a secret affair with Miguel, a pink-suited outrageously gay dancer; Lauren once ditched her black musician boyfriend and had an abortion; Adolfo, the butler, writes romantic novels under a woman’s name; the family lawyer confesses to having had an affair with the dead tycoon; and a homeless derelict arrives and reveals his true identity – a missing son of the family. During the scene changes a chorus of servants dance and cartwheel over the furniture, and the finale is a ten minute long sequence featuring two servants, Enrique and Graciela, who (in real life) are the world salsa dance champions.

Notes: Billed as the “Salsa Comedy Murder Mystery”, written by Cinda Fox, heiress of the Firestone Rubber Company, and produced by her husband, Manny – this was a vanity production doomed from its earliest days. Several directors came and went: one, Bob Carlton, was publicly sacked by a screaming Manny in front of the matinee audience during a Norwich try-out; the second, Michael Rooney (son of Mickey) was forced to quit when refused a work permit, although he did (apparently!) attempt to direct it by telephone from Paris; pre-opening rumours suggested several other director casualties and finally no directing credit appeared – just last minute Murray Melvin and Syd Ralph billed as “Artistic Advisors”. The critics rocked with laughter – laughing at, rather than with, this “fantastically dreadful new musical” – and it was immediately referred to as “Suicidal Tendencies”. It closed after just one week.

SIMPLY HEAVENLY (2nd Revival)

London run: Trafalgar Studios, October 25th – March 5th 2005
Music: David Martin
Lyrics & Book: Langston Hughes
Director: Josette Bushell-Mingo
Choreographer: Paul J. Medford
Musical Director: Jason Thompson

Cast: Ruby Turner (Miss Mamie), Nicola Hughes (Zarita), Rhashan Stone (Semple), Allyson Browne (Joyce Lane), Clive Rowe (Melon), Melanie Marshall, C. Gerod Harris, William Byrd Wilkins, Kennie A. Andrews, Roger Davies-Roberts, Fraser Collins, Dawn Hope, Dale Superville

Notes: This was a re-creation of the Young Vic production from March 2003 – with several cast changes and with a change of musical director. This time it received excellent notices and was highly praised.

Original London production: Adelphi, May 1958;
First revival: Young Vic, March 2003
THE PRODUCERS

London run: Drury Lane, November 9th (920 Performances)

Music & Lyrics: Mel Brooks
Book: Mel Brooks & Thomas Meehan
Director-Choreographer: Susan Stroman
Musical Director: Paul Christ
Producer: Rocco Landesman, David Ian, etc.

Cast: Nathan Lane (Max Bialystock), Lee Evans (Leo Bloom),
Leigh Zimmerman (Ulla), Nicolas Colicos (Franz Liebkind),
Conleth Hill (Roger de Bris), James Dreyfus (Carmen Ghia)

Songs: The King of Broadway, We Can Do It, In Old Bavaria, Der Guten Tag Hop Clop, Keep it Gay, When You Got It Flaunt It, Haben Sie Gehört das Deutsche Band?, Springtime for Hitler, Prisoners of Love.

Story: Broadway producer Max Bialystock and his nerdy accountant Leo Bloom hit on a guaranteed money-making scheme: find a script that is bound to flop, give it the worst production team and cast that can be found, raise backing money far in excess of the 100% needed, and then, when the show closes after the first night, jet off to Rio on the proceeds. No one ever worries about the money when a show flops. They find “Springtime for Hitler” written by Frank Liebkind, a Nazi playwright; they employ cross-dressing Roger de Bris and his extremely gay assistant Carmen as their directors, and then raise $2 million backing from a harem of little old ladies. What can possibly go right? But audiences scream with delight at the brilliant satire of “Adolf and Eva”, and the scam is exposed. Max and Leo end up in jail, where they immediately start planning their next show, “Prisoners of Love”.

Notes: Originally the hugely successful Mel Brooks 1968 film, this musical version opened on Broadway in April 2001 to massive acclaim, winning 12 Tony Awards, becoming the first Broadway show to take $1 million a week at the box office. It ran for 2,502 performances. The original much-acclaimed stars were Nathan Lane and Matthew Broderick. In due course British actor Henry Goodman replaced Nathan Lane and Steven Weber replaced Matthew Broderick, but Henry Goodman lasted just 30 performances before being replaced by Brad Oscar. The London production originally announced Richard Dreyfuss as Bialystock, but he dropped out a week before opening night and Nathan Lane rushed in to take over (at a fee of £39,000 per week!) until January, after which he was replaced with Brad Oscar. With just two exceptions, the London critics fell over themselves with the most lavish praise and every superlative they could muster. There was delight in the fact that, at last, London had a musical “comedy” – no more gloomy revolutions, dubious South American political figures, wars in the Far East or disfigured recluses in opera houses – this was glorious, unadulterated, politically incorrect, fall-off-your-seat with laughter hilarity of the highest order. (The two exceptions found a musical about Hitler and jokes about Jewish producers and gay directors to be distasteful.) The show ran for just over two years, during which time cast replacements for Bialystock included Fred Applegate and Cory English, and for Bloom – John Gordon Sinclair and Reece Shearsmith.
GRAND HOTEL (1st Revival)
London run: Donmar, November 29th – February 12th 2005
Songs: Robert Wright & George Forrest
Additional music & lyrics: Maury Yeston
Book: Luther Davis
Director: Michael Grandage
Choreographer: Adam Cooper
Musical Director: Jae Alexander

Cast: Julian Ovenden (Baron von Gaigern), Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio (Ballerina Grushinskaya), Gillian Bevan (Raffaela), Martyn Ellis (Director Preysing), Daniel Evans (Otto the accountant), Helen Baker (Flämmchen), David Lucas (Erik Front Desk), Gary Raymond, Graham MacDuff, Sarah Annis, John Conroy, Sévan Stephan, Helen Baker

Michael Grandage’s scaled-down production in the Donmar was much better received than the original short-run, lavish Dominion Theatre production twelve years earlier – though the book itself was still considered to be a handicap. This time there was much praise for the intimacy of the performances and the emotional appeal of the score.

Original London production: Dominion Theatre, July 1992

Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio & Gillian Bevan

PIPPIN (1st Revival)
London run: Union, December 9th – January 8th, 2005
Music & Lyrics: Stephen Schwartz
Book: Roger O. Hirson
Director: Ben De Wynter & Sasha Regan
Musical Director: Sam Gosden

Cast: Andrew Whitlaw (Leading Player), Daniel Lane (Pippin), Adam Booth (Charlemagne), Jasper Hone (Lewis), Sioned Jones (Fastrada), Susan Travers (Berthe), Charlotte Marisa Moore (Catherine), Bryony Hannah (Theo)

This was a slightly tongue-in-cheek revival of the show, framing it as a show within a show, for example, using the device of a glove puppet for the scene where Theo’s duck dies, and slightly sending up the over-sentimental parts of the show.

See Original London production: Her Majesty’s, October 1973
MARY POPPINS

London run: Prince Edward, December 15th (1,283 performances)
Music & Lyrics: Richard M Sherman & Robert B Sherman
Additional music & lyrics: George Stiles & Anthony Drewe
Book: Julian Fellowes
Director: Richard Eyre
Choreographer: Matthew Bourne & Stephen Mears
Musical Director: Nick Davies
Producer: Cameron Mackintosh & Disney Theatrical Productions

Cast: Laura Michelle Kelly (Mary Poppins), Gavin Lee (Bert), David Haig (George Banks), Linzi Hateley (Winifred Banks), Rosemary Ashe (Miss Andrew), Julia Sutton (Bird Woman), Kevin Williams (Park Keeper)

Songs: (Original film score: ) Chim Chim Cherrie, The Perfect Nanny, Jolly Holiday, A Spoonful of Sugar, Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious, Fly a Kite, Feed the Birds, (New songs: ) Practically Perfect, Cherry Tree Lane, Being Mrs Banks, Precision and Order, Brimstone and Treacle, Step in Time, Anything Can Happen.

Notes: The musical had been re-worked to incorporate more of the original P.L.Travers’ stories than had appeared in the film, and to remove some of the cartoon effects. The children were ruder and more snobbish, Mrs Banks no longer quite so dizzy, Mr Banks more workaholic, and Mary Poppins herself far more eccentric and formidable than Julie Andrews. It played two months of try-outs at the Bristol Hippodrome before moving into the West End. All in all this was more “real” and less “cockneyfied” than the film. It was also a technically awe-inspiring show with its special effects, including Bert tap-dancing up one side of the proscenium arch and then continuing upside-down until descending on the other side, and, of course, Mary Poppins flying over the heads of the audience at the finale. It received a triumphant critical reception, won two Olivier Awards (Best Performance in a Musical & Best Choreography), and ran for three years, finally closing on January 12th 2008. (The Broadway production, starring Ashley Brown and Gavin Lee opened in November 2006 and celebrated its fifth birthday in November 2011.)

Productions have been mounted in Australia, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, The Netherlands, Hungary, Czech Republic and Canada and have undertaken tours in the UK and USA.
THE HOT MIKADO (1st Revival)

London run: Upstairs at the Gatehouse, December 18th – January 30th 2005

Music: Sir Arthur Sullivan & Rob Bowman
Book & Lyrics: David H. Bell
Director: John Plews
Choreographer: Racky Plews
Musical Director: Christopher Whitehead

Cast: Erin Carter (Katisha),
Richard Meek (The Mikado),
Alex Browne (Nanki-Poo),
Ben Farrow (Ko-Ko),
Stewart Charlesworth (Pooh-Bah),
Clare Reilly (Peep Bo),
Clare Lomas (Yum-Yum),
Louisa Copperwaite (Pitti-Sing),
Claire Greenaway, Fiona Keats

This fringe production was highly praised indeed, especially for the choreography of Racky Plews and the performances of Ben Farrow and Richard Meeks. It was described as a “triumph” and “West-End worthy”.

See Original London production: Queen’s Theatre, May 1995