

The CBSO logo is rendered in a bold, white, sans-serif font. The letters are thick and closely spaced, with a slight shadow effect that makes them stand out against the dark background of the concert hall.

CBSO

City of
Birmingham
Symphony
Orchestra

Best of the West End
Symphony Hall
Friday 9 June, 2023
7:30pm

CBSO.CO.UK

A wide-angle photograph of a symphony orchestra performing in a large concert hall. The musicians are seated on a raised platform, and the audience is visible in the background. The lighting is dramatic, with a mix of blue and purple hues. The text 'BEST OF THE WEST END' is overlaid in large, white, bold letters at the bottom of the image.

**BEST
OF THE
WEST END**

Concert programme £4



Principal Funders:

PROGRAMME

Styne Overture from *Gypsy*
Sondheim Company from *Company*
Kander All That Jazz from *Chicago*
Rodgers Some Enchanted Evening from *South Pacific*
Bernstein Something's Coming from *West Side Story*
Kander Maybe This Time from *Cabaret*
Loewe I Could Have Danced All Night from *My Fair Lady*
Lloyd Webber 'Til I Hear You Sing from *Love Never Dies*
Anderson-Lopez & Lopez Let It Go from *Frozen*
Schönberg Stars from *Les Misérables*
Schönberg One Day More from *Les Misérables*

Interval

Lloyd Webber Music of the Night from *The Phantom of the Opera*
Pasek & Paul You Will Be Found from *Dear Evan Hansen*
Lloyd Webber Buenos Aires from *Evita*
Arlen Somewhere Over the Rainbow from *The Wizard of Oz*
Loesser Luck Be A Lady from *Guys & Dolls*
Elton John Can You Feel the Love Tonight from *The Lion King*
Schwartz Popular from *Wicked*
Schwartz Defying Gravity from *Wicked*
Andersson & Ulvaeus Medley of hits from *Mamma Mia!*

Michael England Conductor
Sophie Evans Vocalist
Louise Dearman Vocalist
David Thaxton Vocalist
Scott Davies Vocalist
Paul Whittaker BSL Interpreter



This concert will be BSL Interpreted


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BEST OF THE WEST END

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BEST OF THE WEST END

This unmissable collection of showstoppers from some of the world's favourite musicals, old and new, is guaranteed to put a smile on your face, have you tapping your toes and singing along in no time. So, take your seats and let four fabulous singers and one of the world's finest orchestras take you on a magical, musical tour.

Another opening, another show! Jules Styne and Stephen Sondheim's *Gypsy* (1959) is the flamboyant story of the mother of all stage-mothers and her mission to see her daughter make it big, whatever it takes (or whatever she has to take off). One thing's for certain: its red hot **Overture** is a show-stopper before the show's even started. "Blow the roof off!" Styne told the trumpeters on opening night – and by the end, there's no possible doubt that he means (show)business.

But Stephen Sondheim's **Company** (1970) proves that you can have a great show without big stars, without a high-kicking chorus - without even a story. This is a show about city life here and now: about bus stations, dinner parties, Karate classes and ladies who lunch. And above all, it's about Robert, a 30-something Manhattan singleton coolly dissecting his friends' relationships. The opening number buzzes and bustles like a telephone exchange or an email server. If you've ever struggled to stay on top of everything – or to keep everybody happy – you'll know exactly what they're singing about.

With Kander and Ebbs's *Chicago* (1975), meanwhile, we're on the mean streets of Prohibition-era America. Sassy, sleazy and seriously toe-tapping, the big opening number, **All That Jazz** sets the mood with all the flair you'd expect from the guys who wrote *Cabaret*. That's confidence: but then, "breaking the rules didn't bother us" said Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein II, and when rumours circulated that the star of *South Pacific* (1949), the great Italian operatic baritone Ezio Pinza, was having an affair with leading lady Mary Martin, it did the box office no harm at all. True to Pinza's operatic pedigree, Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote him one of musical theatre's very greatest love songs – **Some Enchanted Evening**. In 1949, the Second World War-set *South Pacific* was as up-to-the-minute as *Company*, but its heart was timeless.

The same goes for the energy – the passion – that pulses through every note of *West Side Story* (1957). Leonard Bernstein wrote the music, Sondheim wrote the lyrics, and the electrifying rhythms and

of this gangland reinvention of *Romeo and Juliet* revolutionised musical theatre. You can still feel the raw urban energy of numbers like **Something's Coming**. Love this strong can be dangerous, and in **Maybe This Time** small-time bar singer Sally Bowles hopes that despite her own terrible romantic track-record – and the fact that 1930s Berlin is rapidly filling with Nazis – there might still be a happy ending for her latest affair. Unluckily for her, she's in Kander and Ebb's *Cabaret* (1966).

It couldn't be further from the optimism of Lerner and Loewe's *My Fair Lady* (1956). Everyone knows the story of Professor Henry Higgins's one-man mission to turn “squashed cabbage leaf” Eliza Doolittle into “a passable imitation of a Duchess”, and everyone knows the songs with which Alan Jay Lerner and Fritz Loewe told it. It's the most British musical ever to take America by storm – no small achievement for a Broadway show based on a play by an Irishman, and written by an Ivy League frat-boy and a Viennese former boxer. Lerner and Loewe bought matching Rolls Royces with the proceeds. **I Could Have Danced All Night** is a moment of pure happiness.

Meanwhile, Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Love Never Dies* nearly vanished altogether when in 2007, Lloyd Webber's kitten Otto leapt onto his digital piano and deleted the entire score. “One would think the furry creatures would have more respect for the composer of *Cats*” remarked *Playbill*. Lloyd Webber knuckled down once more, and this sequel to *Phantom of the Opera* finally opened in 2010. In his towering lair high above the Coney Island funfair, the suspiciously masked Mr Y dreams of a love that once was, and might just be, once more: **Till I Hear You Sing**.

It's an instant classic: though if we knew exactly why some songs just stick in the memory, we'd all be writing hit shows. Just ask anyone with kids aged 10 or under, and

try and remember that barely a decade ago **Let It Go** from Disney's *Frozen* (2013) didn't even exist. But that's the magic of the musicals. Most experts predicted a flop for Frenchmen Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg when they had the nerve to premiere a musical based on Victor Hugo's sprawling 19th century novel *Les Misérables* (1985). “The reduction of a literary mountain to a dramatic molehill” declared one critic, and most experts predicted an audience of precisely zero. 38 years on, it's played worldwide to an estimated 130 million people. The show that performers call “The Glums” is the longest-running musical in West End history, and with numbers as powerful as **Stars** – a defiant cry of idealism in a broken world – or the soul-stirring **One Day More**, it's easy to understand why.

The organ blasts out, a giant chandelier lights up and we're swept back in time to 1881 to hear a strange and wonderful tragedy of passion, music and a love as strong as death. There's nothing in musical theatre quite like *The Phantom of the Opera*. Andrew Lloyd Webber had created hits out of the Bible (*Joseph*), TS Eliot (*Cats*) and *Thomas the Tank Engine* (*Starlight Express*). The one thing no-one expected next was a sumptuous gothic love-story, drenched in romantic melody. When *The Phantom of the Opera* opened in the West End in 1986, it rewrote the rules for West End musicals. “I'd always wanted to write my own *Some Enchanted Evening*” said Lloyd Webber and with songs like the melodramatic *The Phantom of the Opera* and above all **Music of the Night**, he finally got his wish.

For Evan Hansen, life is even more complicated. He's an ordinary teenager in a century of social media: awkward, anxious and making all sorts of mistakes in his desperation to be liked (or even just understood). A high school musical for the internet era, with a terrific score by Benj

Pasek and Justin Paul, *The Guardian* hailed *Dear Evan Hansen* as “superb and often deeply heartrending” when it transferred to the West End in 2019 – in other words (though no-one then knew it), at just about the worst possible moment. Evan’s **You Will Be Found** offers a moment of hope from a very relatable kind of hero.

A truly great show feels relatable whatever its subject. A rock opera inspired by an Argentinean dictator might not sound like a great night out, but think again: this is *Evita*. As a baby, Andrew Lloyd Webber had been rocked to sleep to the rumbas of Edmundo Ros’s danceband, so the Latin flair he needed for songs like **Buenos Aires** just came dancing through. “Magnificent” exclaimed the *Sunday Times* when *Evita* opened in June 1978. The government of Argentina promptly banned it.

And who doesn’t remember the moment in *The Wizard of Oz* (1939) where the film turns from black and white to colour – or the song that Harold Arlen and Yip Harburg wrote for the film’s 16-year old star, Judy Garland? Incredibly, when the film was first tried out, studio bosses demanded that **Somewhere Over the Rainbow** be cut. Luckily it survived, to win a Best Song Oscar, and to become the unofficial anthem of anyone who’s ever dreamed of a better world.

But not everyone on Broadway is quite so wholesome. Showbiz has always been a magnet for shysters, hoods and straightforward low-down no-goodniks – and Frank Loesser made a whole show about them. One scene in *Guys and Dolls* (1950) even takes place in a drain. We might be in the sewers, but that needn’t stop us aiming for the stars: life is a crapshoot, and when Sky Masterson prays **Luck be a Lady Tonight**, the odds are even higher than usual. It’s proof that – with a bit of imagination, and a gift for melody – you can make anything into great musical

theatre. And to be fair, it takes something slightly like genius to find the right tone for a Disney re-telling of *Hamlet* starring talking lions and a flatulent warthog. Elton John and Tim Rice’s songs made *The Lion King* take wing, and **Can You Feel the Love Tonight?** stormed both the 1995 Oscars and the UK singles chart.

Wicked (2003) starts with one great advantage: we already know the story, even if we don’t at first realise it. Stephen Schwartz’s show asks the question, what if the Wicked Witch of the West in *The Wizard of Oz* was actually just the Misunderstood Witch of the West? Then she might find herself getting an unwanted makeover from her practically-perfect room-mate Galinda. In **Popular** Schwartz wrote a comedy number that’s the musical equivalent of a cupcake – “just empty calories”, he says. But there’s nothing fluffy about *Wicked*’s great anthem **Defying Gravity**, as Elphaba, our green-skinned, aquaphobic heroine takes to the air, shaking her fist at the tyrannical Wizard.

If you really want to boogie, though, there’s one show that tops them all. It’s practically a law of physics that if you want to fill the dancefloor, you put ABBA on the decks. So **Mamma Mia!** couldn’t fail. It’s been bringing pure holiday sunshine into the West End since 1999 (though for connoisseurs of pure cheese it’ll always come a poor second to Pierce Brosnan’s legendary rendition of SOS in the 2008 film version). You already know the songs, so come on: you know you want to! *Lay All Your Love*, *Mamma Mia*, *Money Money Money*, *Fernando*, *Winner Takes It All*, *Dancing Queen* and *Gimme Gimme Gimme*... What’s left to say, except, thank you for the music?

Programme notes © Richard Bratby

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MICHAEL ENGLAND

Michael England's diverse career encompasses classical music, ballet, film, television and musical theatre.

In London's West End, he has been Musical Director for productions of *Les Misérables*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Jerry Springer – The Opera* (also BBC TV), Monty Python's *Spamalot*, *The Producers*, *The Pajama Game* and *Miss Saigon*. He has also conducted productions of *The Sound of Music*, *Cats*, *Top Hat* (UK), *Evita* (Oslo), *Aspects of Love* (Ireland), *Grease* (Ljubljana), *Cats* (Hong Kong) and *The Pirates of Penzance* (Australian Tour/Sydney). He was invited to conduct the opening weeks of Cameron Mackintosh's new 25th anniversary production of *Les Misérables*; he also conducted the Live cast album and worked on the 2012 film.

Television includes work as conductor and orchestrator for the live broadcast of BBC Sports Personality of the Year 2017, (broadcast live to 8 million) and he was Musical Director for the UK television premiere, *The Sound of Music - Live*, for ITV television. Michael has conducted many of the top British orchestras, with international engagements including the Shanghai Opera House Orchestra, Shanghai Philharmonic, Stockholm Sinfonietta, Slovenia Radio Symphony and Bangkok Symphony Orchestra.



Vocalist

SOPHIE EVANS



Sophie Evans hails from Tonypany, Wales. She came to prominence in 2010 as a finalist in the BBC series *Over the Rainbow* and was subsequently chosen to play the alternate Dorothy in selected performances of *The Wizard of Oz* at the London Palladium, a role she took over in 2012 until the show closed. Alongside her role of Dorothy, Andrew Lloyd Webber paid for Sophie to train at the Arts Educational in London. She also performed live around the country, as well as various TV appearances, most notably on the S4C show *cariad@iaith/love4language* and as the subject of the ITV documentary *Dare to Dream*. In 2012 she had her own show on BBC One Wales, with invited guests Michael Ball and Only Boys Aloud, accompanied by the BBC National Orchestra of Wales. Other theatre roles include, most recently, two glorious years playing Glinda in *Wicked* at the Apollo Victoria. Sophie has toured the world as a featured soloist, most notably with Russell Watson, Paul Potts, Michael Flatley's *Lord of the Dance* and *Voices of the West End*.

Vocalist

LOUISE DEARMAN



Louise Dearman's theatre roles include Glinda and Elphaba in *Wicked* at the Apollo Victoria, Daisy in *Side Show* at the Southwark Playhouse, Miss Adelaide in *Guys and Dolls UK Tour* and Mrs D in the world premiere of *The Waterbabies* at the Leicester Curve. Louise opened The Festival of Remembrance in the presence of The Royal Family, broadcast live on BBC One. She has performed as a guest artist for Josh Groban, Michael Ball, Ramin Karimloo and Lee Mead. As a soloist, Louise has performed with many orchestras – including the BBC Concert, London Concert, Royal Philharmonic and the Hallé – and has performed solo shows at The Other Palace, Leicester Square Theatre, Prince Edward Theatre (with Kerry Ellis). She sang The National Anthem at the Capital One Cup Final (Wembley Stadium). On television Louise has been seen in the BBC Proms performances of *Kiss Me Kate*, *Gershwin in Hollywood*, *Cole Porter in Hollywood* and *The Warner Brothers Story*.

DAVID THAXTON



David Thaxton trained at the Royal Welsh College of Music and Drama. His West End theatre credits include Javert in *Les Misérables* at the Sondheim Theatre, a role he previously played at the Queen's Theatre, Kevin T/Garth in *Come from Away* at the Phoenix Theatre, the title role in *The Phantom Of The Opera* at Her Majesty's, Giorgio in *Passion* at the Donmar Warehouse for which he won an Olivier Award for Best Actor in a Musical, King Arthur in *Camelot* at the London Palladium, Pilate in *Jesus Christ Superstar* at Regents Park Open Air Theatre, Raoul in *Love Never Dies* at the Adelphi Theatre, *West End Men* at the Vaudeville, and Enjolras in *Les Misérables* at the Queen's Theatre. Concert performances include *Broadway to the Bay* at the Wales Millennium Centre, Welsh Guards Centenary Celebration in Cardiff, *Friday Night is Music Night* for BBC Radio 2, *A West End Christmas* with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra and *Bring Them Home* at Cardiff Castle.

SCOTT DAVIES



Scott Davies was born and educated in Glasgow, and continued his musical education at the Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama. His opera work includes Spoletta in *Tosca*, Remondado in *Carmen*, The Painter in *Lulu*, Borsa in *Rigoletto*, Don Riccardo and, on occasions, the title role in *Ernani*, all for English National Opera. His theatre work includes the title role in *The Phantom of the Opera* (Her Majesty's Theatre), The Father in *Halisinia* (National Theatre), Gus, Bustopher Jones and Growltiger in *Cats* (UK Tour), Mr Snow in *Carousel* and Kayama Yesaemon in *Pacific Overtures* (Leicester Haymarket), *Chess* (European Tour) and Sandy in *Brigadoon* (Victoria Palace). Television appearances include *Taggart*, *Take the High Road*, *The Laurence Olivier Awards*, *Unreported Incident* and *Call Me Mister*. Scott's concert work includes performances with some of Europe's leading orchestras. Scott celebrated his 2,000th performance as The Phantom in *The Phantom of the Opera* in November 2019.

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