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‘You’re Terrible Muriel...’

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Dear Teacher,


This education program is designed for students aged 16 years and over to coincide with the rating of the film when it was released in 1994 and suggested age group for attendance to the stage musical. This production includes strong language, sexual references and adult themes, including suicide and parental discretion is advised. Details of additional support services are available in Appendix Seven of this resource.

This resource includes discussion points, eight lesson plans - two for you to give before seeing the show with the remainder to take place afterwards. These later projects concentrate on social issues and themes in the story as well as elements of the live production, including characterisation, music and staging which lead to students writing their own personal review of the show. In addition, using the themes within the story students are provided with an opportunity to identify, discuss and then form their own strategy to build self-esteem, deal with the challenges posed navigating social media, combat bullying and promote increased acceptance in line with current education departmental guidelines.

Each activity is based around the challenges faced taking an existing story from the screen and to the stage while maintaining the existing plot, characters and their unique circumstances, ensuring relevance of a story originally told in 1994. Combined with a visit to the show these lessons will give your students an insight in the production of the musical and journey of Muriel and Rhonda as they navigate their individual and mutual challenges.

This resource pack has been created for use in the classroom and is designed to facilitate discussion and the gaining of knowledge surrounding the complex elements which when combined result in this production.

We hope your students enjoy their journey with *Muriel’s Wedding The Musical*. 
BEFORE SEEING THE SHOW

BACKGROUND INFORMATION - ‘YOU’RE TERRIBLE MURIEL’

‘Astonishing…A triumphant blaze of colour and emotion’

THE AGE

‘A star is born in this clever adaptation of a beloved Australian film.’

LIMELIGHT


Muriel’s Wedding The Musical is the inspiring story of Muriel Heslop, a young social outcast steals money from her parents to fund a trip where she hopes to find happiness and perhaps love. While on her own challenging, often confronting journey of self-doubt after spending her life trying to fit in, she ultimately realising true happiness comes from an unconditional strong female bond and friendship and just being herself.

This courageous and timeless tale originated as PJ Hogan’s award-winning feature film in 1994, gaining international acclaim, launching the careers of Toni Collette and Rachel Griffiths and depicting a universal story which remains just a relevant today.

In a new all-singing, all-dancing theatrical production, Muriel’s Wedding The Musical brings this true to life story, featuring the beloved ABBA music from the original film, cleverly blended with new compositions from Australian songwriters Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall.

Winner of five Helpmann Awards, seven Sydney Theatre Awards, an Awig Award, the 2018 David Williamson Prize and an ARIA Award Nomination, Muriel’s Wedding The Musical.
FROM STAGE TO SCREEN TO STAGE – TURNING MURIEL'S WEDDING INTO A MUSICAL

Originally premiering at the Cannes Film Festival in 1994, Muriel's Wedding was a box office hit around the world, and has left a lasting legacy not only in Australia, but internationally as well.

*Muriel's Wedding* was a career breakthrough for writer and director PJ Hogan. “At the time, I felt it was really my last shot at getting to make a feature film,” PJ recalls. “I was getting close to 30 and I thought, ‘maybe it’s not meant to be’. People I had gone to film school with had established careers, and had some success. And here I was, yet to make my breakthrough film.” After years of striving in the industry, PJ followed the age-old advice to ‘write what you know’ when it came to *Muriel's Wedding*. “I don’t think I found my voice as a filmmaker at all until I made that film. I wrote something that I knew a lot about, which was feeling like a failure. So I sat down and I wrote what I knew... On a scale of 1-10 of crazy, I came from a family that was about an 8. So, I wrote about them. I wrote my story, my sister’s story and my family’s story. And that was the film we made.”

PJ grew up in the small coastal city of Tweed Heads – the real-life inspiration for his fictional town of Porpoise Spit. “The scenes in Porpoise Spit were shot in my home town, Tweed Heads, on the Gold Coast. I was a little worried that my Dad might recognise himself as a character (Muriel’s father, Bill ‘The Battler’ Heslop). And filming in his home town would be a dead giveaway. But it was the only town that looked right in the frame. I also thought, it has to be Tweed Heads because Tweed Heads was the inspiration for the story.” The film ended up becoming a smash hit, grossing US$57 million worldwide (the equivalent of about AU$117 million today) – no mean feat, considering the comparatively low production budget. The film was a celebration of Australian vernacular. It also landed at a particular time for Australian cinema, sitting alongside the likes of Strictly Ballroom and Priscilla, Queen of the Desert. All three movies put Australian filmmaking in the international spotlight – and the world loved it. The film’s success also launched the careers of its leading actors, Toni Collette and Rachel Griffiths, who played Muriel and Rhonda. As Rachel Griffiths recalls, “I went from complete anonymity to somewhat fame and really being part of a juggernaut that people had such passion and feeling about, which is different from just becoming famous. It was a particularly unique experience, where your fame is built on something which is so adored and important to people.” Toni Collette was nominated for a Golden Globe for her breakthrough performance as Muriel. As she recently told ABC’s 7.30, “It’s a wonderful compliment that the film is still relevant. It gave me a life I could never have imagined. I did it because I loved it and I was lucky to get the job at the time, but I could never even contemplate that there would be an audience.” Along with the performances, the film is also remembered for its iconic soundtrack.

To get ABBA’s approval to use their music, the film’s producer sent the script to the band’s assistant who loved it and encouraged them to continue asking.

“I would send them a letter once a week. And I was shameless. I compared them to The Beatles. I think I called them good looking,” PJ recalls. Eventually, PJ threatened to travel to Sweden and beg them in person. They finally agreed that PJ could use their songs in the movie. Two decades later, the Australian-based production company, Global Creatures, approached PJ about turning his iconic film into a musical. Global Creatures’ CEO Carmen Pavlovic has been instrumental in bringing the likes of Moulin Rouge! The Musical, Strictly Ballroom and King Kong to life on stage. Carmen was in a bookshop when inspiration struck for Muriel's Wedding. “I often wander around bookshops in order to get some perspective and think about new projects. I was in Borders when I stumbled across a book about Muriel's Wedding on the shelves and the penny dropped,” she recalls. “I wondered why this film hadn’t previously been made into a musical.” Carmen got in touch with PJ and pitched the idea. Funnily, it turned out that he was already in conversations with Simon Phillips about directing Muriel's Wedding as a stage musical. “I adore Simon and think he’s super smart and super funny. It was great timing and in the end we all agreed to go forward together,” Carmen recalls. Carmen had previously developed a connection with ABBA when she was based in London overseeing various productions of Mamma Mia! throughout Europe. “I was already in contact with ABBA’s management because Benny and Björn used to come and visit during rehearsals. So, I got in touch with them and reminisced over those Mamma Mia days and then I asked about Muriel's Wedding. They said ‘no’. But I just kept going back, asking the same question in different ways, until 18 months later I finally got an email saying, ‘OK, could you please come and meet with Benny and Björn next Wednesday in Stockholm?’ Carmen flew to Stockholm and eventually received ABBA’s blessing.
With that challenge overcome, the next step was to formalise the creative team. PJ hadn’t previously written for the stage but he took on the job of adapting his own film script. As Carmen puts it, “I’ve always felt that if you’re going to put a film on stage, you have to have something new to say. There has to be a certain amount of ‘reimagining’ in the adaptation or else why bother? PJ was interested in that from the beginning. He immediately asked – ‘who would Muriel be in 2017? Oh, if she could, she’d be Kim Kardashian. She’d have her own reality TV show’. PJ also created a genius device for the ABBA music by making ABBA characters in the show. This really established the musical conceit.” The next question was who would write the music. “We all searched here and abroad. But we never felt that an international artist would be able to capture the wit and cultural references of such specific Australian locations in a truly authentic way.” “I remember thinking that it would be great to have a female voice writing for Muriel,” Carmen recalls.

“We understand a lot about Muriel through her inner thoughts. Film can capture that in a close-up of a gesture or a glance, but you can’t do that kind of close up on stage.

A musical requires the inner monologue to come via lyrics and song. To have a female voice writing those very emotional ballads for Muriel was really important.” Having admired her from afar, Carmen approached Kate Miller-Heidke and was impressed by her love and knowledge of musical theatre. “Kate was really drawn to the material and she knew the form. It was a relief when Simon and PJ met Kate and immediately loved her too.” Kate collaborated with her songwriting partner Keir Nuttall, and worked on ‘musicalising’ the production, integrating songs with the script that PJ had written. Finally, finding a home for the show wasn’t as easy as one might expect.

“While some theatre owners welcomed the idea of our show, sadly I can’t say that all of the commercial venues we needed on board were prepared to pave the way for Muriel’s Wedding back in the early days,” Carmen recalls. “This was exasperating in light of the current industry concern over the lack of new musicals being developed in Australia. Eventually, I realised the show would benefit far more from the protective environment of an organisation that actually celebrates and welcomes the idea of creating new work.” So Carmen approached the then Artistic Director of Sydney Theatre Company, Jonathan Church, to explore the idea of the two organisations partnering to produce the show. There was an immediate meeting of the minds. “Jonathan just got it. Right away he understood the importance of Sydney Theatre Company supporting the development of this particular musical,” Carmen recalls. Now, hundreds of hours of workshops and rehearsals later, Muriel is finally back and ready to hit the stage in this new production of a beloved classic.
LESSON 1: FROM SCREEN TO STAGE

This lesson allows students to explore the challenges and processes of transferring a story from the screen in 1994 to the stage in 2017. It reviews the original structure and elements portrayed in the film and analyses how effectively they are translated in the development of a new musical theatre production, updating the time in history which the story has been set.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To research the history and the place in time behind the making of the Australian film, Muriel's Wedding.
• To determine what challenges would have been faced in translating the story from a film to a musical theatre production set in a time 23 years apart.
• To gain greater understanding of the relationship between storytelling in films and live musical theatre productions.

PREPARATION

View Muriel's Wedding (1994 film - resource not supplied)
Photocopy Activity Sheet 1 for each student.

LESSON OUTLINE

Students should be encouraged to note their existing knowledge about the Australian film, Muriel's Wedding. The film was made in 1994, what do they know about what Australian culture was like at this time, in the cities and the suburbs? What occupied their leisure time, what entertainment existed, what was on television, what was in fashion and how did Australian's think of themselves against the rest of the world?

Students should then be given the opportunity to view the film, Muriel's Wedding (1994). While watching the film they should begin to identify what challenges would be faced concerning the film's setting and iconic environments in translating the story to the stage in 2017.

In addition, they should be asked to research stories originally told in feature or small budget films, in Australia and overseas, which have since been adapted into stage productions (playscript or musical) in recent years.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

To further their knowledge students are encouraged to research and answer the following questions surrounding the development of Australian films and musicals:

• What do they believe the major factors of difference are in producing a film versus a musical?
• Do they think it could be more difficult to create new films here in Australia? If so, why?
• Do they think it could be more difficult to create new musicals here in Australia? If so, why?
• What other films have been created in Australia over the last 20 years?
• What other musical theatre works have been created in Australia over the last 20 years?
• What, if anything about these films or musicals are uniquely Australian? Consider subject matter, character, style, reflection of Australian cultural values and depiction of our way of life.
• How successful have these films been here in Australia and overseas? Consider box office, critical reviews.
• How successful have these musicals been here in Australia and overseas? Consider box office, critical reviews.
• What do they think is a good story or subject matter for other Australian films and musicals and why? (ie historical events, personal stories of celebrities or sporting heros, existing books or novels). If they are not current stories, what challenges would be faced to ensure relevance to a contemporary audience.

‘Destined to become an Australian theatre masterpiece’
PJ Hogan wrote and directed the original film Muriel’s Wedding. When the movie came out in 1994, it became a global sensation and launched the careers of PJ and its stars, Toni Collette and Rachel Griffiths. Over two decades later, PJ has been pivotal in bringing his film to the stage as Muriel’s Wedding the Musical, writing the book and updating the story to the present day.

PJ, it’s been said that you based Muriel’s dysfunctional family on your own experiences growing up. Is that true?

Muriel’s Wedding isn’t completely autobiographical but it is based on real events. My sister was the inspiration for Muriel and my father was the original Bill the Battler.

How does it feel reworking the story as a musical so many years on? Does it feel as personal now?

To be honest, the movie feels like it doesn't belong to me anymore. It's great that it's still being watched after all this time - I think Muriel’s Wedding belongs to everyone who loves it and keeps returning to it. I was most excited by what a musical version of the film could do for the character of Muriel. When we made the film, it was hard to tell Muriel's story because she was such an inarticulate character. But a musical allows its characters to sing what's in their hearts. What Muriel couldn't express in words she could sing in a song, while remaining her awkward, inarticulate self.

One of Muriel's big challenges is that she dreams of fame but doesn't actually have any discernible talent with which to achieve it. Back when I made the film, having talent was actually a prerequisite to fame. But now, with the advent of the internet, it is quite possible to be completely untalented and famous. Fame is a democracy now - with enough clicks and likes anyone can be the next Kim Kardashian. I updated the setting because I think Muriel would have loved to be living in the age of YouTube, Instagram and Twitter - social media allows you to promote your ideal version of yourself, invent a perfect life. In a way, Muriel was a reality TV star before there were reality TV stars. She married for fame and money and became celebrated for just being herself. Muriel seemed very 2017 to me.

What was the catalyst for turning the film into a musical?

Over the years, a lot of people have approached me to turn Muriel’s Wedding into a musical. I think because it has ABBA songs, and that music is such an essential part of Muriel's life, people felt that the film was born to become a stage musical. But I was never so sure. I thought of stage musicals as light and funny - I know that The Sound of Music has Nazis in it but nevertheless it remains a pretty upbeat show. But the musical has changed over the years. Sondheim showed that musicals could be dark, but shows like The Book of Mormon, Once and Dear Evan Hansen showed that darker material could also attract a broader audience. Not only do those shows work as musicals but they feel like musicals that reflect our crazy times. It's no longer a Rodgers and Hammerstein world out there, if it ever was. Outside the theatre, it's global warming, Brexit and Donald Trump. I think audiences still want to forget their troubles, but a modern musical can't pretend that those troubles don't exist.

Another reason it took so long was that I never thought you could put Muriel’s Wedding on stage without ABBA. Back in the early 90s, when I made the movie, there was a lot of ABBA prejudice. Despite recording all those great songs, a lot of people considered ABBA a little bit naff. So much so that when I approached Benny and Björn about using their music for the film, they said no because they thought I might make fun of them. In fact, that had happened the last time they’d allowed one of their songs to be used in a movie. I had to reassure them that Muriel loved their music and that the songs of ABBA articulated what she couldn’t put into words - ‘Dancing Queen’ especially; ‘Dancing Queen’ was Muriel’s dream of her ideal self. It seems amazing to me now, but ABBA eventually gave us the rights to their songs for free. They did ask for a financial stake in the movie but they couldn't have known that the movie would do as well as it did. And then came Mamma Mia!, which was put together with ABBA's involvement. So, when anyone approached me about turning Muriel’s Wedding into a musical, I'd always say sure, but that they should talk to Benny and Björn first.

And, because of Mamma Mia!, Benny and Björn always said no - they didn't want their songs featured in two competing shows. So, it couldn't happen - at least not with ABBA's involvement - until Mamma Mia! had run its course. Carmen Pavlovic from Global Creatures was the one who Benny and Björn said yes to. And here we are...
WELCOME – PRODUCER’S NOTE

Muriel Heslop is one of the great anti-heroes of Australian film. She’s terrible Muriel Heslop is one of the great anti-heroes of Australian film. She’s terrible alright, but we love her regardless. Muriel immediately snatched a piece of our misfit loving hearts and it was only a matter of time before her story demanded to be exploded into a stage musical. The underlying material is rich in humour, emotion and inner dialogues with surprising plot points that twist and turn.

*Muriel’s Wedding* mercilessly portrays small town Australia and lets us cheer at the undoing of bullying and corruption. It’s a profound study in the sadness of loneliness and our yearning to belong. The film is an ode to the power of self-discovery and a testament to the power of enduring friendship.

It’s a thrill to bring a story to the stage which reflects aspects of our own culture right back at us. We’re indebted to PJ Hogan not only for creating such an outstanding film but for then re-creating it again in a version re-imagined specifically for the stage. Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall have created a unique and complex score, deftly weaving the music of ABBA throughout their contemporary, original songs which span ballads created from inner monologues and production numbers that evoke Porpoise Spit and Sydney and the colourful inhabitants of each. PJ’s film alerted the world to the incredible reservoir of talent that exists here in Australia. We are delighted that the musical will no doubt remind the world again thanks to the immense capabilities of the entire creative team - helmed by the brilliantly gifted Simon Phillips - and the outstanding cast.

Creating new musicals requires daily leaps of faith and nerves of steel. In a country where the frequency of brand new, locally created musicals is not nearly as common as it should be, the hurdles are many. A new show needs champions. In this particular regard, the production was incredibly fortunate to call the Sydney Theatre Company home during its developmental phase. The resulting 10-week premiere season was a commercial and critical hit.

We are also grateful to Sandra Chipchase and for the support of the NSW government through Destination NSW.

To anyone that has ever felt like a misfit or an outsider, insecure or alone, or just like having a rollicking good time - YOU are welcome here. You’re at *Muriel’s Wedding the Musical* “where you get to be what you want to be; do what you want to do, say what you want to say... where...You will finally get to be you!”

CARMEN PAVLOVIC
Producer
Global Creatures
LESSON 2: MARKETING A MUSICAL

This lesson allows students to explore the challenges and processes of determining the marketing brief and development of the branding, production logo and marketing collateral for a musical theatre production, based on an existing branding depicted in film collateral of the same name. The activity assesses the original artwork, messaging and elements of the story portrayed in the film branding in 1994 and analyses how they may be translated alongside the parallel development of a new musical theatre production more than 23 years later, resulting in a new contemporary look for the musical production.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To review the branding and marketing collateral for Muriel’s Wedding the film, as well as that for Muriel’s Wedding The Musical, identifying the themes, messages and imagery within.
• To determine what challenges would have been faced in the reinvention of the branding from an established film brand to a musical theatre production, taking into account current design trends.
• To develop their own branding and marketing collateral, as well as a marketing strategy for the successful advertising and promotion of Muriel’s Wedding The Musical to potential audiences.

PREPARATION

Photocopy From Screen to Stage
Photocopy Activity Sheet 2 for each student.
Photocopy Appendix 5: Marketing Collateral – Film and Musical

LESSON OUTLINE

Students should be encouraged to note their existing knowledge about marketing and branding for the film Muriel’s Wedding. The film premiered in 1994 and a marketing strategy, including branding and was designed to promote the film using collateral such as posters and soundtrack artwork, based on design trends, available conventional marketing channels at this time in Australian cultural and film history.

Students should then be given the opportunity to view the film branding and collateral for Muriel’s Wedding (1994) as well as that for Muriel’s Wedding The Musical. They should be encouraged to identify the themes, messages and imagery in both and compare and contrast the look, feel and impact of the branding for each, while identifying their effectiveness in marketing and selling the production, based on the initial film concept and the updated musical production (where the time and place of Muriel’s work has been moved to the present day embedding it firmly in the rise of social media).

In addition, they should be asked to identify the challenges they believe would have been overcome in the reinvention of the existing brand for another genre of entertainment, to ensure the most effective marketing and promotion of the musical, while considering the changes in marketing strategy (how product messaging is designed and work sold) over the last two decades.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Furthering their knowledge and skills, students are encouraged to design and develop new branding and marketing collateral of their own for the live production. In order to do so they should consider the following, remembering their potential audience is relying on this collateral to tell them what the production is about and that they will be less familiar with the details of the film and musical than those working on the branding and marketing.

• Who are the target audience and potential target audience for the production? How do they determine this and what details about them assist in focusing on meeting their needs and wants?
• What messages and imagery does the branding need to contain to appeal to them?
• What do these messages and imagery say about the production and how does this assist them in crafting the marketing strategy in order to appeal to the target and potential target audience?
LESSON 2: MARKETING A MUSICAL CONT.

- Using information derived from these questions, they should design a logo and branding for the production incorporating the message and imagery which they believe best sells what the musical has to offer, taking into account the design elements need to work in diverse mediums.
- They should then determine what marketing channels they would use for the marketing of the production, such as, but not limited to advertising (radio, television, print, outdoor, electronic and social media) printed collateral, publicity and social media, and create storyboards for the production of this advertising, design printed collateral and determine appropriate opportunities to promote the musical for presentation, where they should be asked to explain the choices they have made. Inspiration can be drawn from other contemporary entertainment brand design.

‘Enormous fun. Bold, brash and big-hearted’
HERALD SUN

‘It’s funny, it’s moving and it’s downright brilliant.’
BROADWAY WORLD
AFTER SEEING THE SHOW

DISCUSSION TOPICS

You may want to give your students an opportunity to discuss their experience of the performance. For example:

• Did you enjoy the musical theatre production? What did you like the most?
• Was there any part of the musical you didn’t like? Why was this?
• How effective was the transfer of the story from the film in 1994 to the musical in 2017?
• Who was your favorite character/s and why? In what way were they important to the story?
• Could you identify any of characters with people you see in Australia today? If so, which characters and where would you find them?
• Did you have a favorite production number and why was it important to the story?
• Did the musical choices propel or hold back the narrative of the piece? How well was the new original music integrated with the existing ABBA music from the film soundtrack?
• How did the choreography support the narrative? Do you believe it was critical to the story?
• What themes do you see woven throughout the production? Were any of more significance today?
• What was the most effective element of the set in creating the scene? Why do you think so?
• Was there a particular costume or set of costumes which stood out to you? Why was this?
• How do you think scenery movements on stage were operated? Did the design seem filmic in nature, flow smoothly from scene to scene and created necessary intimacy at certain moments?
• How effective was the lighting in creating interior and exterior scenes, day and night, the unique light in city and Porpoise Spit? What Australian cities or ‘like’ suburbs featured in the production?
• Were there elements of the production that you believe did not work to propel the story forward? Why do you believe this and how would you have designed or directed this differently?
• Did the opening scene of the production achieve its aims to set the scene for the characters?
• Were their other occasions when the audience was encouraged to participate in the action, breaking the fourth wall convention, and what impact did this have on the experience of the show?
• What Australian icons appeared or were mentioned in the production? What iconic images were recreated for the stage from the original film and did they do justice to the original ideas?
• What other elements of Australian culture could you identify in the script and production?
• What do you think Muriel and Rhonda learned about themselves and each other in the sometimes hostile and unsupportive environment in which they grew up and later in the story? What did the other characters learn from them throughout their journey? What did you learn from them?
• Were there controversial issues raised in the piece? Are these issues still relevant today? How have the social, cultural and technological issues changed in Australia between 1994 and the present day? What impact can you see social media has made on updating the story?
• Do you think you would notice different elements of the story should you see it again? Would you recommend attending the show to your family and friends? If so, why?

FROM SCREEN TO STAGE (SEE ACTIVITY SHEET 1A)

Having now seen Muriel’s Wedding The Musical, students should be encouraged to answer the following questions:

• What do they think the biggest differences in the depiction of the story as told in the 1994 film as compared to the 2017 musical? Describe the characteristic of the genre of film, as compared to live musical theatre?
• What challenges do they think were faced when adapting the story of Muriel’s Wedding from a film to a stage musical? What techniques or tools were these challenges overcome in the updating the story?
• How successfully do they believe the story of the film was translated to the live musical theatre production?
• Do they think any element of the story was lost during the transfer from film to the stage? If so, can you suggest how if could have been better incorporated? Was there anything which was done better?
• Do they believe transferring another film to the stage possess the same or different challenges?
• In films, close-ups are used to create intimacy and wide-shots, landscape and space - how do they think staging, settings and lighting may be used to take the place of these elements onstage?
FASCINATING FACTS

SCENERY, PROPS, LIGHTING AND SOUND
- Every show there are 70 people working on the show including cast, band and crew
- In Act Two, the band play 47 minutes of continuous music
- The production has 50 delay speakers and 36 surround speakers throughout the auditorium
- 32 radio microphones are used by the cast for each show
- Muriel wears two microphones every show
- The ‘Waterloo’ competition wigs have a microphone each in them.
- The production uses a total of 204 rechargeable batteries on a rotating basis, using 68 per show
- The production has approximately 300 lighting fixtures
- There are 24 screens on the Proscenium Arch surround
- Over Seven tonnes of scenery hanging above heads that’s not including all the lighting trusses
- The star cloth includes 250 stars
- The heaviest piece of scenery is Sydney Harbour Bridge, weighing in at 1092 kilograms

COSTUMES AND WIGS
- There are 411 Costume ‘looks’ throughout the production
- These looks are made up of more than 1200 costume items
- Muriel’s quickest costume change is completed in under 20 seconds
- Muriel’s wedding dress weighs 16 kilograms and is suspended in a bag above the stage until it is worn
- The production has 139 wigs
- The wigs are made from a combination of human hair, synthetic hair and Yak hair.
LESSON 3: FROM KITSCH TO KOOL - AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

Critical to the successful translation of the story of *Muriel's Wedding The Musical*, for the stage is the use of elements to ensure an authentic adaptation and creation of environments found in Australian culture, personalities and the landscape translated into the present day to support the narrative. This includes the use of Australian iconography, references to actual and fictitious places, products, organisations and individuals and most importantly language and colloquialisms reflecting our unique cultural attributes. Such factors help translate a version of our Australian Identity on stage, our cultural environment, how we see ourselves and how we believe we are viewed by others, our sense of purpose and how we choose to overcome obstacles which prevent us from being ourselves both individually and collectively.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To identify, explore and discuss the use of Australian iconography in the production.
• To discuss the use of Australian imagery and its place in helping to depict the Australian environment and cultural landscape in the present day, in an updated setting.
• To identify, explore and discuss the use and meanings of Australian language and colloquialisms within the production and their impact in shaping and defining the world of Porpoise Spit and Sydney as depicted in the show.

PREPARATION

Photocopy Activity Sheet 3 for each student.

LESSON OUTLINE

Students should be asked to identify and explore the use of Australian icons, imagery, language and colloquialisms in the production to determine why they may have been used and how important they were to the fabric of the production, themes, characters and the story, including the updated time in which the action takes place. The following questions should be addressed to encourage this identification and class discussion:

What Australian icons, brands and products can they identify in the show? Remind them that they could be large set items or smaller costume detailing. How effective do they believe the use of these icons was in setting the environment in which the musical takes place?

What Australian imagery could they see in the show and how important was this in the creation of the landscape for Muriel's journey and transformation throughout the piece?

What is a colloquialism? Provided are a list of Australian colloquialisms which feature in the production. They should be asked to determine what each of these mean and discuss why they have been used in the script and what effect they have on the flavour of the language and overall tone of the production.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

What other Australian icons can they think of that could have been integrated into the production to reflect Australia culture now and where would they have used them in line with the naturalistic design?

What elements of popular culture and Australian society (locations, personalities, social groups, social media, companies, products) can they identify as being referenced in the show?

What impact do they believe they have on the production overall, creation of the world for the characters and how effectively would the story be portrayed if they were excluded?
LESSON 4: YOU’RE TERRIBLE MURIEL – FUNNY, NOT FUNNY?

Like the film, Muriel’s Wedding The Musical begins by setting the scene of misfit Muriel doing almost anything to fit in, even if it means making poor choices and acting dishonestly. This sets her on a path which blends her real world with a fantasy world to escape the bullying and unhappiness which has a marked impact on her feelings of self-worth, and allow her to dream of something better. This activity looks at social interactions and the new role social media plays in condoning behaviour, in a world where it is increasingly easy to avoid taking responsibility for the consequences. While there are complex themes and characters throughout, each with their own stories, motivations and justifications for their behavior, the themes of bullying and acceptance are both paramount and universal, now perhaps more than ever.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To explore and discuss as a group what constitutes bullying and anti-social behavior and explore what leads to this type of behavior and the impact it can have on an individual and group.
• To develop individual and a shared understanding of bullying and anti-social behaviour, including cyberbullying and the use of social media as a running commentary on our lives. What effect shared responsibility and early intervention can have to prevent this behaviour developing?
• To devise individual strategies which will help create safe and accepting environments, which seek to exclude bullying, discrimination and anti-social behaviour and ensure well-being for all.

PREPARATION

Photocopy Activity Sheet 4 for each student.

LESSON OUTLINE

Students should begin by discussing the meaning of ‘You’re terrible Muriel’, which seems like a harmless comment, even a joke, but when you explore further is evidence of putting Muriel down, no doubt impacting on her feelings of self-worth and confidence.

Students should be encouraged to identify and discuss as a group what they believe constitutes bullying and anti-social behaviour, what leads to this type of behavior and how they are able to recognize it?

Students should be encouraged to cite examples in the show, entertainment products (film, television shows, books) or their own lives, explain why they believe it is unacceptable, identify what impact it may have on individuals and groups.

In addition, students should work together to develop a shared understanding of these behaviours, how early intervention can prevent this behaviour developing and how they can avoid repeating such behaviour in their own lives, looking specifically at how they communicate on social media, texting etc.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Using the courage and strength shown by Muriel in overcoming the obstacles and learning from her mistakes, student’s should determine what bullying looks, sounds and feels like and design their own strategy for creating an inclusive and supportive environment in the classroom, school, family and other social environment such as a sporting group, drama group and/ or online environments.

They should begin with an overriding purpose, followed by aims and objectives which should be reflected in written material, as well as a description of acceptance verbal and non-verbal language. The strategy should address how they would facilitate a safe and accepting environment, promoting and celebrating the differences of individuals, challenging attitudes and seek to exclude discrimination and harassment. Should draw from recent shifts from movements such as #MeToo, #TimesUp, #Instabullying, #antibullying

‘Updateable, Unemployable, Unstoppable’
LESSON 5: THE UGLY DUCKLING – SUCCESS IS THE BEST REVENGE

The plot of Muriel’s Wedding The Musical may be considered to be a tale of an ugly duckling; a story where the anti-heroine struggles to meet expected conventions, including looks and behaviour and fit in with the other characters. A good musical begins with strong characters and a good storyline. This lesson allows students to explore the diverse and larger than life characters in Muriel’s Wedding The Musical, their relationships with each other, how these are portrayed and how they develop during the course of the production.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To explore, discuss and understand characterisation as portrayed on stage (as based on the film)
• To investigate the themes and concepts as reflected in the musical.
• To write concise and detailed character profiles of the characters.
• To understand how characterisation is important to the development of the story in a stage production.

PREPARATION

Photocopy Activity Sheet 5 for each student.

LESSON OUTLINE

Instrumental to an effective musical theatre plot are strong, complex characters assisting in both the telling of the story and communication of its themes and concepts. Students should be asked to look at the diversity found in the characters and list the themes and concepts they can identify in the story and select two characters, including but not limited to Muriel, Rhonda, Bill, Betty, Perry, Malcolm, Joanie, Deidre, Tania, Cheryl, Nicole or Janine and provide a character analysis or breakdown for each.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Using their two existing character profiles from Muriel’s Wedding The Musical, students should compare and contrast them to determine how important their characterisation and relationship is in the development of the plot, exploration of the themes and what impact their relationship has on other characters.

‘This is the sort of show you’ll want to see again and again. Do not miss it.’

THEATRE PEOPLE
Central to *Muriel’s Wedding The Musical* is an eclectic blend of popular and familiar ABBA songs mixed with original music and lyrics written for the production which not only carry the plot forward, but also provide insights into the characters, entertains the audience and provide endless opportunities for both staging and choreography. Students will explore the impact such choice of music has on this non-traditional structure of the musical, what challenges are to be overcome and the strengths these choices present for the production.

**LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

- To understand the importance of musical choices on the structure of a musical.
- To investigate the impact music has on the plot, characters and as a tool for integration of other elements such as staging and choreography in a musical.
- To determine what challenges the musical choices needed to solve to enhance the overall structure of the production and what strengths the choice of music and lyrics may have on the characters, their individual stories and overall plot of the musical.

**PREPARATION**

Photocopy Activity Sheet 6 for each student.
Photocopy Appendix 3 - The Music

Additional resources (not supplied): *Muriel’s Wedding The Musical* Soundtrack by the original cast (see murielsweddingthemusical.com/discover/ or full tracks on Spotify)

**LESSON OUTLINE**

*Muriel’s Wedding The Musical*, falls outside the structure of classic musicals, such as a book musical or jukebox musical, and instead fuses existing and familiar music from the 1970’s musical era with new work written for the production with a particular purpose in mind. This musical mix provides infinite opportunities for characterisation and as an underscore to the movements of the staging components. Students should assess the following:

- How important do they think the music was to the structure of *Muriel’s Wedding The Musical*?
- Discuss how different musical numbers within a musical can range in type, change a mood and alter the speed of the plot.
- Identify what other functions the music can play when translating a story from a screenplay/ film to a stage musical? Could the music been seen to take the place of the camera through its ability to create intimacy and expanse from scene to scene?
- Looking at the Music of *Muriel’s Wedding The Musical*, select five songs and discuss the following for each of them:
  - In this context what is the intended meaning for the song?
  - Why do you they think particular song was selected or written for the production?
  - Which character/s, if any, do they learn more about through the use of this song?
• How valuable was the song to the overall context, themes and plot of the show?

LESSON 6: MAMMA MIA! – MUSICAL FUSION CONT.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY
To further student’s ability to draw from the stories depicted in songs written for specific purpose in a theatrical context, they are encouraged to undertake the following exercise:

• Select two original songs from Muriel’s Wedding The Musical Original Cast Recording which were written by Kate-Miller Heidke and Keir Nuttall. Examples could include: Amazing, Girls Like Us, Why Can’t That Be Me, Shared, Viral, Linked, Liked, My Mother (Eulogy)
• Listen to the lyrics of the songs and determine the themes and story being told.
• Determine what makes this song stand out and how do the lyrics, tempo and instrumentation assist in delivering the story?
• Ascertain what role does this song play in the musical? (ie describe a character, describe the cultural circumstances, reveal a plot point, be reflective etc) Do you believe it is effective?
• Compare and contrast the two songs and determine what similarities can be found and what differences?

‘It isn’t just as good as an ABBA song, it’s better’

LIMELIGHT
LESSON 7: ICONOGRAPHY AND PERFECT WEDDING – SETTING THE SCENE

This lesson allows students to explore the physical production elements central to the staging of Muriel's Wedding The Musical which are responsible for creating diverse outdoor and indoor spaces and enhance the production through the creation of environments such as the Porpoise Spit and the iconic backdrop of the city of Sydney. The musical, like the film before it, sees the costumes as an integral part of the creation of the onstage environments reflective of Muriel's world, social and cultural environments and the characters which make up in where the Heslops, Muriel and Rhonda live.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To understand how staging, costumes, lighting, sound and special effects can create the illusion of different times and places, using the one space.
• To understand the process of design which is undertaken for each element of the production.
• To demonstrate an understanding of how one production element was vital to this musical staging and enhanced the story.
• To research the impact of technology on staging techniques and past practices leading to the development of staging, lighting, sound and costuming and identify those used in the production.

PREPARATION

Photocopy Activity Sheet 7 for each student.
Photocopy Appendix 4 – Designer’s Note and Costume Designs

LESSON OUTLINE

Students should be asked to identify two pieces of staging or costuming used to create the internal and external environments of Porpoise Spit and Sydney city and suburbs. One of the scenes should be of an interior, the other an exterior.

Once the staging has been selected the student should suggest how think it was achieved including all the design elements which contribute to the creation of the scene. (Consider icons, colour, shape, materials)

In addition to noting the set pieces and scenery, attention should be paid to the way in which lighting works to enhance these moments as well as how a sound scape or sound effects contribute to the overall atmosphere.

Students should be asked to reflect upon the contribution made to the imagery by the costumes, wigs, shoes, hair pieces and properties in their analysis.

Finally, students should be asked to design their own set design or costume design for an existing scene in the production ensuring they provide an environment in which the plot can unfold which also incorporates the distinct qualities of the characters.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

As a research task, students are to compile a report focusing on the art of stage and special effects using the development of technology over the last 20 years. Automation (the system which controls the set movements and flown scenery), moving lights, computer operated sound desks and projection are now key production elements in live musical theatre design.

As part of this research, students should also explain how at least two technical effects which are featured in the production of Muriel’s Wedding The Musical were achieved through the use of such technology.

‘Everything about this show is phenomenally good.’

DAILY REVIEW
LESSON 8: REVIEWING THE PERFORMANCE

This lesson encourages students to discuss the performance they have experienced and to critically analyse this experience, while assessing each of the production elements which contributed to the show. In addition, they are invited to critique a published review allowing for the broadening and refining of their analytical skills with regard to other points of view when looking at the same production.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

• To share thoughts and opinions on the shared experience of attending the production.
• To critically analyse their experience of Muriel’s Wedding The Musical.
• To clarify one’s own view and be able to express persuasively and succinctly.
• Assess the production’s elements and value of the production as entertainment.
• To critique and respond to the views of professional critics in a written assessment.

PREPARATION

Photocopy Activity Sheet 8 for each student.

LESSON OUTLINE

Student should be asked to prepare their own review of the production incorporating all the creative elements such as structure, libretto, musical choices, production design, costuming, lighting and sound. They should be encouraged to assess the effectiveness of, but not limited to the following:

CHARACTERS: How did they develop throughout the performance? Did they push the narrative forward?
SETTING: How effective was the setting in depicting parts of Australia’s cities and towns today?
STAGING: Did the staging achieve its aims for so many diverse interior and external environments? How?
COSTUMES: How well did the costumes depict the different scenes and each character? Did they succeed in gaining the attention they required in particular scenes? If so, what are some examples?
MUSIC: How did the music assist to propel forward the narrative and what was most interesting about the musical choices made? How successfully was the new original music fused with existing ABBA music?
CHOREOGRAPHY / MOVEMENT: How did it assist in the creation of the worlds of Porpoise Spit and Sydney and how well did it support the musical choices, characters and storyline for the production?
THEMES: How effectively did elements of the production support and portray the story and characters.

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

REVIEWING THE REVIEW

Following their personal review of the production, students should be encouraged to review an existing published review as follows:

• Critically analyse a published review of the production.
• Identify those comments they agree with, as well as those they disagree with regarding the structure of the production, the plot, music choices, set and costumes design, choreography, lighting, sound, performances and the adaption of the story from film to stage.
• Explain why they agree or disagree with the reviewer of his assessment of the actor’s performances and their characterisation.

‘Enormous fun. Cheeky, Smart and Big-hearted’
HERALD SUN
APPENDIX ONE – WELCOME FROM THE DIRECTOR

What makes Muriel tick?
In a world that seems to reject her almost entirely, Muriel doesn't simply want to fit in, she wants to shine.

I first approached PJ Hogan about doing a musical version of *Muriel's Wedding* in 2005, when I was Artistic Director of Melbourne Theatre Company. He listened politely and explained that in spite of the obvious temptations, the material was far too complex to turn into a musical – inevitably either the show or his story would be compromised. In 2011, when I left MTC, I thought I'd see if I could chip away at his resolve. *Muriel's Wedding* felt to me like the great, untapped treasure in terms of musicalising Australian films. I tried to convince him that the emotional complexities of the story and the darkness that inhabits much of the second half were the most exciting thing about it – that they lent the story a real richness that would make its feel-good factor feel even better.

This time, he seemed more inclined to agree. But only, he insisted, if he were to do the adaptation. Yes, he'd never written for the theatre, but the characters were too close to him to put into the hands of anyone else. I was quick to learn that PJ's nose for Muriel's theatrical potential far outstripped my own. He was determined, for example, that the story be updated to a contemporary setting – that its themes were more relevant than ever to a modern world. And, for someone who had never worked outside of celluloid, he had some inspired ideas as to how to deliver the story in innately theatrical ways. The only problem was that PJ could not entirely control the re-telling of his story. It was a musical. And while he was excited about song's potential for opening up the inner life of his characters, trusting anyone to put lyrics in their mouths proved considerably more difficult. The artist in him wanted a consummate musician; the man behind the story felt positively evangelical about protecting his babies from misrepresentation.

The search was extensive and international. Established and upstart songwriters fell by the wayside. I felt quite strongly that the voice should be Australian. PJ didn't care as long as they felt like they had an insight into the pain inside his characters, and, oh yes, were capable of writing an uplifting and toe-tapping hit. If this feels like a contradictory brief, perhaps it's little wonder that it took two people to fulfil it. The day Kate and Keir came on our radar was the luckiest day in the making of this musical. Their talents, individual and combined, have given distinctive voice to a wide variety of characters, from self-proclaimed Aussie battler Bill Heslop to the inanely self-regarding Tania and her friends. And, to crown it all, they had to capture the psychology of PJ's socially inept, alarmingly dishonest and reality-averse heroine. I think we all felt that, in spite of her extremity, if we could articulate that desire, we would speak to the little bit of Muriel in all of us. Consequently, her inner voice is necessarily more articulate than her public one. In song, she can string her hopes, fears, insecurities and sense of injustice together in a way she could never do in the film. PJ has also given her four infinitely entertaining confidantes who listen to her and encourage her with a lack of judgement that only the imaginary can muster.

So, all in all, we hope we have done Muriel and her family and friends proud. We are indebted to Carmen Pavlovic at Global Creatures for picking up the project and running with it and to everyone at Sydney Theatre Company for their commitment and for pushing their resources to the limit to bring such an ambitious production to life. And to all the actors who have served this story so loyally and generously through its lengthy development to the stage.

SIMON PHILLIPS
APPENDIX TWO – CREATIVE TEAM AND CAST

GERRY RYAN – Producer
Gerry Ryan OAM is Chairman of Global Creatures. He is a Melbourne-based entrepreneur with diverse business interest that span the manufacturing, property, entertainment, leisure and tourism industries internationally. It was Gerry’s strong belief in the potential of Walking with Dinosaurs and his steadfast financial support that launched Global Creatures and allowed a dedicated and hugely talented team to develop the production over years in Melbourne. How to Train Your Dragon Live Spectacular followed and then War Horse, the award-winning hit King Kong, Strictly Ballroom the Musical and Muriel’s Wedding the Musical. Gerry was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 1999.

CARMEN PAVLOVIC – Producer
Throughout the 1990s, Carmen’s career spanned various theatre companies, including the Really Useful Company (Australia) where she was the executive producer. In 2001, Carmen took up the London-based role of executive producer at Clear Channel Entertainment. Later, she became the director of the International production department for Stage Entertainment, responsible for establishing new territories (including Russia, Italy and France), licensing and programming for 25 theatres across Europe, and overseeing international productions in Germany, Holland, France, Italy, Spain and Russia. In 2008, Carmen returned to live in Australia and founded Global Creatures with business partner Gerry Ryan where she also holds the position of CEO. Carmen’s favourite drama is raising her two children, Ned and Mille with husband Pete.

PJ HOGAN – Book
PJ Hogan graduated from the Australian Film, Television and Radio School, where he wrote, directed and edited the short film Getting Wet. The film went on to win two Australian Film Institute awards including Best Short Fiction. In 1986, he directed and co-wrote The Humpty Dumpty Man, a film for television. In 1991, he was second unit director and script editor on the acclaimed feature film, Proof, directed by his wife Jocelyn Moorhouse. In 1994 he made his motion picture directorial debut with Muriel’s Wedding, which he also wrote. When Muriel’s Wedding premiered at the Cannes Film Festival’s Director’s Fortnight in 1994, it received a standing ovation. The film dominated the Australian Film Institute Awards with 11 nominations, including Best Achievement in Direction. It won AFI awards for Best Film, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actress and Best Achievement in Sound. In 1996, PJ followed his success with My Best Friend’s Wedding starring Julia Roberts and Rupert Everett, which was the highest grossing comedy ever at that time. PJ’s next project was Unconditional Love, which he co-wrote and directed in 2001. In 2003, PJ wrote and directed a live-action version of Peter Pan, based on the J.M Barrie book and followed this up with Confessions of a Shopaholic in 2009. PJ’s latest film Mental saw him taking on a writer/director role, premiering in 2012 at the Melbourne International Film Festival. The film went on to screen at international film festivals such as Palm Springs International, Miami International and Okinawa International. In 2014 he co-wrote The Dressmaker with Jocelyn Moorhouse, and was an Executive Producer, as well as 2nd Unit Director, on the movie. Muriel’s Wedding the Musical premiered in 2018 which PJ adapted for the stage from his screenplay.
KATE MILLER-HEIDKE – Music & Lyrics
Kate Miller-Heidke is an award-winning singer-songwriter who traverses the worlds of contemporary pop, folk and opera. She has released four albums in Australia, achieving multi-platinum status and appearing in the Top 10 album and singles charts numerous times. Her latest album, O Vertigo!, debuted at number 4 on the Australian album charts, broke Australian crowdfunding records and was nominated for an ARIA award. Her previous albums include Nightflight, which reached number 2 on the ARIA chart, and Curiouser, which reached double platinum sales in Australia and spawned the multi-platinum hits ‘The Last Day on Earth’ and ‘Caught in the Crowd’. In 2009, she became (along with her collaborator Keir Nuttall) the first Australian to win the grand prize in the International Songwriting Competition for ‘Caught in the Crowd’ rained as a classical singer at the Queensland Conservatorium, Kate has appeared at the Metropolitan Opera, New York, in John Adams’ The Death of Klinghoffer. She has performed several roles for English National Opera, and appeared in Jerry Springer: The Opera at Sydney Opera House. Her debut opera as a composer, The Rabbits (based on the book by John Marsden and Shaun Tan), was commissioned by Opera Australia and premiered at the Perth Festival in 2015, followed by sold-out seasons in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane. It won four Helpmann Awards, including Best Score and Best New Australian Work. In 2015, Kate broke into national television, featuring in The Divorce, a four-part comedy opera miniseries by Elena Kats-Chernin and Joanna Murray-Smith, broadcast by the ABC. Both The Rabbits and The Divorce were nominated for Best Soundtrack/ Cast Recording at the 2016 ARIA Awards. In 2016, Kate released the first retrospective of her work, The Best of Kate Miller-Heidke: Act One, a two-disc set which, alongside tracks from early EPs, all four studio albums and various other singles, features the new song ‘You’ve Underestimated Me, Dude’ and a bonus disc of rarities, covers, live versions and previously unreleased material. Kate performed a suite of her songs with the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra at Mona Foma 2016 in Hobart, with visuals created by artist Amy Gerhardt. The show won the Helpmann Award for Best Australian Contemporary Concert for 2016, and has since been performed in cities around Australia throughout 2017. Her three concerts with Sydney Symphony Orchestra were recorded and the resulting album, Live at the Sydney Opera House, was released in August 2017. At Eurovision – Australia Decides in February 2019 she was chosen by a combination of jury and public votes to be Australia’s representative at Eurovision 2019, where she performed her latest single ‘Zero Gravity’, written with Keir.

KEIR NUTTALL – Music & Lyrics
Keir Nuttall began his career as a guitarist in numerous obscure and revolting indie bands including industrial metal purveyors Dogmachine and brief Triple J darlings Transport. In 2002, he began collaborating with Kate Miller-Heidke. He arranged, co-produced and co-wrote her Nightflight and Curiouser albums, achieving Gold and Platinum status respectively. In 2008, their song ‘Caught in the Crowd’ won the International Songwriting Competition and went on to attain Platinum sales. Their song ‘The Last Day on Earth’ sold multi-platinum copies, which enabled him to get his first credit card. As Kate's guitarist, Keir has appeared on her entire catalogue to date and toured extensively with her. Kate has banned him from playing the ‘Sweet Child O’ Mine’ riff in sound checks. In 2009, he wrote and produced the electronic music project Fatty Gets A Stylist. The single ‘Are You Ready?’ has been used in several high-profile commercial campaigns around the world. Keir believes it isn’t selling out if you write the song before the ad. Keir performs comedy under the pseudonym Franky Walnut. The album The Franky Walnut Reflective Drink Coaster was nominated for an ARIA for Best Comedy Release in 2014 because it was hilarious. Not hilarious enough to win though. He has recently completed a second Fatty Gets A Stylist album and is working on another Franky Walnut album but is open to offers.
SIMON PHILLIPS – Director
Simon began his career in New Zealand before immigrating to Australia in 1984 to take up a position as lecturer and director at the West Australian Academy for Performing Arts. He was an associate director at the Melbourne Theatre Company from 1987 to 1989 before being appointed Artistic Director of the State Theatre Company of South Australia from 1990 to 1993. He returned to the Melbourne Theatre Company as Artistic Director from 2000 to 2011, overseeing the design and construction of the company's new headquarters and the Southbank Theatre. His directing credits range from new works to contemporary and Shakespearean classics to musicals to opera. He has directed works by most of the great contemporary writers, as well as the premieres of many works by leading Australian writers, including David Williamson, Hannie Rayson, Stephen Sewell, Matt Cameron and Joanna Murray-Smith. Simon's musical credits in Australia include Priscilla, Queen of the Desert (which has had numerous international seasons including the West End and Broadway), the new Australasian version of Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Love Never Dies (which was filmed by Universal, has had seasons in Tokyo and Hamburg, and the USA), A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum, The Drowsy Chaperone, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, Urinetown the Musical, Company, The Three Penny Opera, Cabaret, Dream Lover - The Bobby Darin Musical and two adaptations by his wife, Carolyn Burns: High Society (which also toured the UK) and Ladies in Black, which won the Helpmann for best new Australian work. In 2018 Simon’s production of Muriel's Wedding the Musical opened to public and critical acclaim in Sydney. Simon's opera credits include The Turk in Italy, L'Elisir d'Amore, Faustaff, La Bohème and Lulu for Opera Australia, The Magic Flute and Don Giovanni for Opera New Zealand and A Midsummer Night's Dream and Billy Budd for Hamburg State Opera. He has received seven Green Room Awards and six Helpmann Awards.

ANDREW HALLSWORTH – Choreographer
Andrew won the 2018 Helpmann Award for ‘Best Choreography in a Musical’ for the World Premiere season of Muriel's Wedding the Musical (STC/Global Creatures). He also won the 2015 Helpmann Award for Opera Australia’s Anything Goes and the 2014 Helpmann Award for the Hayes Theatre’s inaugural production of Sweet Charity. Sydney Theatre Critics Awards include Muriel’s Wedding in 2017 and Little Shop of Horrors (Luckiest Productions and Tinderbox Productions) in 2016. Andrew’s theatre credits also include Assassins (Hayes Theatre Co), Dream Lover (GFO & Gilbert Theatrical), Sydney Opera House – The Opera and Two Weddings One Bride (Opera Australia), Ladies in Black (OTC/MTC), Rupert (Daniel Sparrow Productions), Dream Song, Shane Warne the Musical (concert), A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum and the World Premiere musical An Officer and A Gentleman (GFO). For the MTC he has choreographed Twelfth Night, Rupert which toured to the Kennedy Center in Washington, Private Lives, Egg, Hamlet, Next to Normal, and The Drowsy Chaperone. Andrew co-choreographed the international production of Priscilla Queen of the Desert for Broadway and its other worldwide seasons including the recent 2018 10th anniversary Australian celebration tour. For The Production Company he has co-directed and choreographed The Producers and Anything Goes and choreographed Jerry's Girls, La Cage Aux Folles, The Pirates of Penzance, Gypsy, The Boy from Oz, Carousel, Mame and The Boy Friend. He co-choreographed The Music Man and Bye Bye Birdie. Further choreographic credits include the original Australian production of Eurobeat – Almost Eurovision, which was revived for the Edinburgh Festival, West End and UK tour. Menopause – the Musical, Leader of the Pack – The Ellie Greenwich Musical (Betty Pounder Green Room Award winner for Best Choreography), Sideshow Alley, The Merry Widow for Melbourne City Opera, Wombat Stew and Prodigal. Other live and cabaret shows include Doris Day - So Much More Than The Girl Next Door, Britney Spears the Cabaret, Newley Discovered, Todd McKenney – Songs and Stories of Peter Allen and Cry Me A River – The World of Julie London. Andrew's television credits include the Australian series of So You Think You Can Dance, “Indigeridoo” and “Ja’ime’s Assembly Routine” on the cult TV show We Can Be Heroes, Dead Gorgeous for ABC/BBC TV, The Librarians for the ABC and Mr and Mrs Murder for Fremantle Media (TEN).
GABRIELA TYLESOVA – Set, Costume and Projection Designer

Gabriela Tylesova is an award-winning, internationally acclaimed designer. Her awards include: Helpmann Award for Best Set Design in 2009, 2011 and 2014; Helpmann Award for Best Costume Design in 2011, 2012, 2014 and 2018; Green Room Award for Best Set Design in 2003 and 2011; Green Room Award for Best Costume Design in 2002, 2006 and 2011; Australian Production Design Guild Award for Best Set Design in 2012; Australian Production Design Guild Award for Best Costume Design in 2012 and 2014; Sydney Theatre Award for Best Costume Design in 2012 and 2013; and Sydney Theatre Award for Best Set Design in 2013. Gabriela’s work was exhibited at Prague Quadrennial in 1999 and in 2015, and in the Moscow exhibition Costume at the Turn of the Century in 2015. Gabriela’s design work includes: Il Turco in Italia, Così Fan Tutte, Baroque Masterworks, Salome, Sweeney Todd, The Rabbits and L’elisir d’amore for Opera Australia; Ladies in Black for Queensland Theatre Company, The Pillowman, Tomfoolery, Urinetown, Cyrano de Bergerac, The Visit and Blithe Spirit for Melbourne Theatre Company; Muriel's Wedding the Musical for Global Creatures/Sydney Theatre Company; A Flea in Her Ear, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead, This Little Piggy, Macbeth, Volpone, Attempts on Her Life and Twelfth Night for Sydney Theatre Company; Sleeping Beauty and Schéhérazade for The Australian Ballet; Boomerang and Of Earth and Sky for Bangarra Dance Theatre; Can we Afford This/The Cost of Living for DVB Physical Theatre (Sydney 2000 Olympic Arts Festival); Love Never Dies for Really Useful Group (Australia, Japan, Germany, US); A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum for Gordon Frost Organisation; and the musical adaptation of First Wives Club (USA). Gabriela also designed the sets and costumes for the opening and closing ceremonies of the 2006 Asian Games in Doha, Qatar. She collaborated with David McAllister on a beautiful picture book of The Sleeping Beauty, which was published in 2017. Gabriela is designing Swan Lake for the National Ballet of Canada.

TRENT SUIDGEEST – Lighting Designer

Trent designed the World Premiere season of Muriel's Wedding the Musical for Sydney Theatre Company and Global Creatures with further designs for STC including Accidental Death of an Anarchist, Talk and Hay Fever. His prior engagement with Simon Phillips was the commercial season of Eddie Perfect's The Beast for Ambassador Theatre Group. Trent collaborated with composer Kate Miller-Heidke and designer Gabriela Tylesova on the multi-award winning production The Rabbits for Opera Australia and Barking Gecko Theatre Company, which toured to major festivals. Trent’s lighting for The Rabbits was recognised with a WA Performing Arts Award and a Green Room Award nomination for Best Lighting Design of an Opera. Following this commission Trent was invited by Opera Australia to light John Bell’s repertory production of Carmen, and the inaugural season on the Opera House forecourt: Sydney Opera House - The Opera (The Eighth Wonder). Trent began his early career under the wing of Black Swan State Theatre Company. He created set and lighting designs for Dinner, Shrine and Death of a Salesman, and lighting designs for Next to Normal, The Red Balloon, Extinction, Laughter on the 23rd Floor, The Importance of Being Earnest, The Motherf**ker With The Hat, Boy Gets Girl, Arcadia, The White Divers of Broome, When The Rain Stops Falling, The Dark Room, pool [no water] and coproductions with Queensland Theatre Company, and with Melbourne Theatre Company for National Interest. Trent also lit The Sapphires for Black Swan/ Belvoir, including the National Tour and seasons in South Korea and London’s Barbican Theatre. Other recent designs include Griffin Theatre Company: Prima Facie, Feather In The Web, Kill Climate Deniers and co-production with Malthouse Theatre: The Homosexuals, or 'Faggots'. For Barking Gecko Theatre Company: Duck, Death and the Tulip and World Premiere of Jasper Jones. For Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company Waltzing The Wilarra at Perth International Arts Festival, and for Performing Lines/Sydney Festival: I Am Eora. His musical theatre highlights include designs for The Production Company, Melbourne: The Boy From Oz, Jesus Christ Superstar (Green Room Award Nomination), Dusty, Nice Work If You Can Get It, Kismet, The King and I. For Trevor Ashley: The Bodybag - The Panto (set and lighting). For Hayes Theatre Co: Gypsy, The View UpStairs, Darlinghurst Nights, Only Heaven Knows and Calamity Jane. The latter has enjoyed an Australian Tour with two return seasons to Melbourne, and earned Trent a Green Room Award nomination. In 2015 Trent received the Mike Walsh Fellowship and a WA Department of Culture and the Arts Young People Fellowship, and he went on to assist at Toneelgroep Amsterdam with Ivo van Hove and Jan Versweyveld on their Shakespearian epic Kings of War. Trent is a graduate of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts with a Bachelor of Performing Arts (Production & Design).
MICHAEL WATERS – Sound Designer

Original sound designs include: Muriel’s Wedding the Musical; Saturday Night Fever (2019 - Australia; 2015 Asia Tour; 2004 Australia/Asia/ NZ); Barnum; Mamma Mia! (2018); My Fair Lady; Dream Lover; Singin’ in the Rain; The Rabbits; Fiddler on the Roof; Anything Goes; Priscilla Queen of the Desert (worldwide); The King and I (2014 - Australia; 2007 – China/Asia); Hot Shoe Shuffle; Dirty Dancing – The Classic Story On Stage; Doctor Zhivago (Australia/Korea); Dead Man Walking; Orpheus in The Underworld; Dusty – The Original Pop Diva; ATOMIC - The Musical (Sydney/ New York); Grease - The Arena Spectacular. As Associate Sound Designer: Disney's The Lion King and Aladdin. Awards include: Helpmann Award for Best Sound Design; Muriel's Wedding (2018); The King and I (2014); The Woman In Black (2007); Dusty - The Original Pop Diva (2006). Green Room Award for Best Sound Design; My Fair Lady (2017); Dirty Dancing (2005); Italy's DAPA Award for Best Sound Design: Priscilla Queen of the Desert (2012). As sound designer and mix engineer: Hugh Jackman's Broadway To Oz; Anthony Warlow with Faith Prince; Placido Domingo; The Boy From Oz (1999 & 2006); The Magic of the Music with Anthony Warlow and Lesley Garrett. Prior to life in darkened theatres Michael toured both bland and exotic parts of the world with artists such as Phil Collins; Keith Richards & the X-Pensive Winos; Genesis; Pink Floyd; Mick Jagger, and Paul McCartney.

ISAAC HAYWARD – Music Supervisor, Orchestrations, Arrangements & Additional Music

Isaac is a young music director, multiinstrumentalist, orchestrator and arranger. He has been nominee and recipient of highly prestigious awards including a Sydney Theatre Award, a Helpmann Award and the Rob Guest Endowment Musician Award. Currently residing in New York, he has recently made his Broadway debut as assistant conductor and co-electronic music designer on King Kong. Making his professional debut at age seventeen, Isaac toured as co-creator, music director, arranger and multi-instrumentalist in The Rock Show with the late Jon English. The show went on to win a Mo Award for Best Rock Act, and was nominated for an ARIA for Best Soundtrack/ Cast/Show Album. Isaac first collaborated with Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall as music director for The Rabbits (Opera Australia), in which he played cello, piano and accordion. The show’s live cast recording was nominated for an ARIA for Best Soundtrack/Cast/Show album. With director Simon Phillips, he music directed and supplied additional orchestrations for the original production of Ladies in Black (Queensland Theatre), for which his music direction was nominated for a Helpmann Award. His recent credits include The Mikado (New Zealand Opera) as conductor, The Secret River (STC) as music director and multi-instrumentalist, and the first professional concert version of Jon English and David Mackay’s rock opera Paris: A Rock Odyssey, for which he conducted, revised and re-orchestrated the score. Other arranging and orchestrating credits include Adelaide Symphony Orchestra, The Idea of North, Sydney Jazz Orchestra and ABC TV. His orchestrations for Popstars: The ’90s Musical are licensed internationally.

ELLEN SIMPSON – Associate Director and Choreographer

Ellen has had a varied and successful career as a performer both on stage and on screen but has more recently taken a jaunt to the other side of the desk. Her credits as a creative are as follows: As Resident Director/Choreographer, Little Shop of Horrors (Luckiest Productions/Tinderbox Productions); Dream Lover (Gordon Frost Organisation) and the Sydney Theatre Company season of Muriel's Wedding the Musical. As Assistant Director, An Ideal Husband (Melbourne Theatre Company), I am My Own Wife (The Old Fitz). As Choreographer, Lovebites (Hayes Theatre Co); Miss Saigon (Gold Coast Performing Arts Centre); Into the Woods (Federation University); Only Heaven Knows (Hayes Theatre Co).
CHARLES DAVIS – SET DESIGN ASSOCIATE

Charles is a set and costume designer for theatre, opera, dance and film. A graduate of NIDA, Charles also studied architectural design at Monash University. During his final year at NIDA, Charles was awarded the William Fletcher Foundation Award for emerging artists and designed sets for the world premiere productions of Stephen Sewell’s Kandahar Gate and Michael Gow’s Writing For Performance. Charles’ theatre designs include: The Revue (Sydney Theatre Company); Buyer and Cellar, The Kitchen Sink and Widow Unplugged (Ensemble Theatre); An Act of God (Darlinghurst Theatre Company); Smurf in Wonderland (Griffin Theatre/National Theatre of Parramatta); The Whale (Old Fitz), Unfinished Works (Seymour Centre); set design FLY Lano and Woodley national tour (Token Events); A Smoke Social (Darwin Festival); and co-design The Grand Hotel (Sydney Grammar). Charles is associate set designer for Muriel’s Wedding the Musical with Global Creatures and Sydney Theatre Company. Opera designs include: Artaserse, The Coronation Of Poppea (Pinchgut Opera); Biographica (Sydney Chamber Opera/ Sydney Festival); Oh Mensch! (Sydney Chamber Opera, costume); Hansel and Gretel directed by Michael Gow (Queensland Conservatorium). Charles was associate set designer for Carmen directed by John Bell and The Merry Widow directed by Graeme Murphy (Opera Australia). In 2018, Charles was awarded a 2018 Mike Walsh Fellowship. He was nominated for a Sydney Theatre Award for best set design for The Whale. In 2019, Charles designs include Tom Stoppard’s The Real Thing directed by Simon Phillips for Sydney Theatre Company; Ned Kelly the opera, for Perth Festival and Lost and Found Opera; and set design for the Melbourne International Comedy Festival television and stage Galas. Charles is lecturer and mentor for NIDA’s undergraduate design programme. View Charles’ designs at charlesdavisdesigner.com.

ALICIA CLEMENTS – COSTUME DESIGN ASSOCIATE

Alicia is a Costume and Set Designer for theatre, film and live performance who has worked across Australia and the UK. Graduating from WAAPA in 2008, Alicia furthered her training in Paris and London. She received the 2014 Kristian Fredrikson Scholarship for Design in the Performing Arts and a selection of her designs now belong to permanent collections at Beleura House and the Arts Centre Melbourne. Currently based in Sydney, Alicia’s work has been seen at companies such as Sydney Theatre Company, Bell Shakespeare, Pinchgut Opera, Ensemble Theatre, Darlinghurst Theatre Company, The Hayes Theatre Co, and Sport for Jove Theatre Company. Her designs for the Stephen Sondheim musical, Assassins, received Best Set Design of an Independent Musical and Best Costume Design of an Independent Musical at the 2018 Sydney Theatre Awards. Her costume designs were also shown in Moscow as part of the global exhibition, From Russia With Love: Costume at the Turn of the Century 1990-2015. Her short film credits include production and costume design for the Screen Australia-funded, Problem Play, colonial period drama, Cold Hearts, Lexus Fellowship recipient, Outbreak Generation, and the upcoming 1980’s children’s drama Sherbert Rosencrantz, You’re Beautiful. She has designed extensively for Perth’s major theatre companies and was previously Resident Designer at Black Swan State Theatre Company. She collaborated with Barking Gecko Theatre Company under John Sheedy, as well as Lost and Found Opera, Deckchair Theatre Company, and STEPS Youth Dance Company. In London Alicia has worked for Shakespeare’s Globe Theatre, and as an assistant designer on productions designer on productions across the UK and West End.
**DANIEL PUCKEY – MUSICAL DIRECTOR**

Daniel Puckey has undertaken studies at both the Melbourne Conservatorium of Music and Box Hill Institute majoring in Classical and Contemporary Piano. Most recently, he was the Assistant Musical Director and Associate Conductor of *The Book of Mormon* in Sydney. Further credits include: Associate Musical Director for the Australian Tour of *The Wizard of Oz* with Anthony Warlow; Assistant Musical Director and Associate Conductor on *The Bodyguard Musical, Disney’s The Lion King*, and the Anniversary Tour of *Hot Shoe Shuffle*; Keyboardist on *Kinky Boots, We Will Rock You, The Sound of Music, The Lion King,* and *King Kong* and Musical Director on *The Last Five Years, The Gathering, Dreamsong,* and various other works for both The VCA and Federation University of Australia. He has also helped develop arrangements and conceive music for two new Australian works: *The Gathering* and *Dreamsong.* Daniel has also worked abroad as Music Director and Music Manager for the entertainment company AIDA Cruises based in Hamburg, Germany. He has also worked extensively within Performing Arts Education as a Music Tutor and Accompanist at The VCA, Federation University, Victorian State Schools Spectacular and Stage School Australia.

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**CAMPBELL YOUNG – HAIR, WIGS AND MAKE UP**


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**NATALIE ABBOTT – MURIEL HESLOP**

Much like Muriel, Natalie left her small coastal town and moved to Sydney where she began her Bachelor of Music degree, in Musical Theatre, at the Australian Institute of Music (AIM). In 2015, Natalie was cast in the AIM production of *The Witches of Eastwick* and played the principle role of Jane Smart, produced by Jenifer Murphy. In 2016/2017 Natalie was cast in Supply Evolutions production of *Bare: A Pop Opera* where she played one of her dream roles, Nadia McConnell. Natalie is a proud member of Actors’ Equity and is passionate about supporting new Australian theatre. Natalie is so thrilled that her professional debut is in *Muriel’s Wedding the Musical* and would like to give a huge ‘thank you’ to everyone who has helped her along on her journey.

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**STEFANIE JONES – RHONDA EPINSTALL**

Stefanie’s music theatre career began at the age of seven when she appeared as Young Éponine in Cameron Mackintosh’s 10th Anniversary tour of *Les Misérables*. The following year she was cast in SEL and GFO’s production of *The Sound of Music* playing Brigitta. In 2011 Stefanie graduated from the Victorian College of the Arts having completed a Bachelor of Music Theatre, and whilst at the VCA received the Cassidy Bequest Fund Award on behalf of the University of Melbourne Trust. Stefanie has trained extensively in dance, having studied with the Queensland Ballet through their Junior Extension Program, and also holds her Associate Diploma in Music for Violin. Professional theatre credits include Liesl in *The Sound of Music* (RUG/GFO), Giulietta in *Aspects of Love* (Walk This Way Productions) Jean Maclaren in *Brigadoon* (TPC), Dream Laurey in *Oklahoma!* (TPC), *Dream Lover* (GFO), *Once the Musical* (MTC/GFO), *South Pacific* (Opera Australia/GFO), *Carmen Live or Dead* (Oriel Entertainment Group) and in 2016 was a finalist in the prestigious Rob Guest Endowment Awards. Stefanie’s screen credits include *Molly* (M4Entertainment/Seven Network), *The Divorce* (Princess Pictures/Opera Australia) and the role of Megan Dennison in *Neighbours*. Stefanie is a proud member of Actors’ Equity.
DAVID JAMES – BILL HESLOP
A NIDA graduate, David’s acting career spans nearly three decades. On stage, he has worked for many of Australia’s leading theatre companies: MTC, STC, Bell Shakespeare, Queensland Theatre, Black Swan, Griffin and Gordon Frost Organisation. Recent theatre credits include: The Boy from Oz (The Production Company), The Sound of Music (GFO), And I’m the Queen of Sheba (Brown’s Mart), The Speechmaker (MTC), David Williamson’s When Dad Married Fury (HIT Productions), Australia Day (MTC/STC), All About My Mother (MTC) and Ying Tong – A Walk with the Goons (STC/MTC/OTC). He also toured Australia and NZ in the Helpmann award-winning Australian production of the musical Avenue Q. On television, David is best known for his role as Phillip in Working Dog’s political satire The Hollowmen, and for his 15 years as a presenter of ABC TV’s Play School, also touring nationally as part of the show’s live concert program. Other TV credits include: True Story 1 & 2, Jack Irish, Olivia Newton-John: Hopelessly Devoted to You, Offspring, Childhood’s End, Miss Fisher’s Murder Mysteries, It’s a Date, Howzat: Kerry Packer’s War, Chandon Pictures, The Postcard Bandit and Very Small Business. David’s film credits include: The Whistleblower, Healing, Any Questions for Ben?, Fish ‘n’ Chips, Prick, The Rage in Placid Lake and the award-winning Your Call is Important to Us. David recently recorded the audio-book First Person by Richard Flanagan and has been a proud member of Actors’ Equity since 1991.

PIPPA GRANDISON – BETTY HESLOP
Pippa is already a familiar face in the Muriel’s Wedding world, having played Nicole in the original film. Her stellar career has seen her playing lead roles in musical theatre as diverse as 60’s pop sensation Judith Durham in the world premiere production of the musical Georgy Girl, to Mrs Banks in the Disney/Cameron Mackintosh blockbuster musical Mary Poppins and Elphaba in Wicked for GFO. Prior to this she starred in Kookaburra’s production of Company, Michael Coppel’s We Will Rock You, The Production Company’s The Pajama Game, Jacobsen Entertainment’s The Witches of Eastwick, Ensemble Theatre’s production of Mary Bryant, and for Sydney Theatre Company Into the Woods and A Little Night Music. Pippa’s more recent theatre credits include Boys Will Be Boys for The Street Theatre, The Graduate alongside Jerry Hall in Melbourne, and Europe at the Seymour Centre. A selection of Pippa’s television credits: Here Come the Habibs!, Home and Away, Mr and Mrs Murder, Underbelly: Razor, Magical Tales, All Saints, Balmain Boys, South Pacific, Twisted Tales, Water Rats, E Street, GP, Brides of Christ, Golden Fiddles, A Country Practice and Come in Spinner. Pippa has recently finished shooting the feature films: Book Week and Akoni. Other film appearances include: Mr Accident, A Change of Heart, Hotel de Love, Dating the Enemy, Over the Hill and, of course, Muriel’s Wedding!
APPENDIX THREE – THE MUSIC

KATE MILLER-HEIDKE AND KEIR NUTTALL

Partners in life and work, Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall have written the original music and lyrics for Muriel’s Wedding the Musical.

**KATE:** After composing the music for Opera Australia’s The Rabbits in 2014, I was looking for a great story to adapt into a musical. I never imagined that it would be the dream project of Muriel’s Wedding. The film came out when I was twelve years old and Muriel Heslop was the first female anti-hero I had ever seen. I saw my own life reflected. I recognised Muriel’s flaws, her awkwardness, her need to fit in. I recognised her ability to dream. I recognised the horrid bullying she was subjected to. And I recognised the power of finding a friend like Rhonda.

**KEIR:** We started working on Muriel’s Wedding the Musical not long after we found out Kate was pregnant with our first child. In the early writing stages, Kate’s belly swelled, our son Ernie was born between workshops, and started walking and talking at the time the actors started rehearsing the show. It would be a clumsy metaphor if it were fiction.

**KATE:** Keir and I have collaborated for years, but this is the first time we have worked on a project of this nature or scale. It was a perfect fit for us. We both had childhoods in regional Queensland, so the universe of Porpoise Spit is familiar to us. Tania and the girls listen to Taylor Swift and Beyoncé, but they still sing with a Porpoise Spit edge.

**KEIR:** Bill Heslop’s song is supposed to sound like a Rolling Stones tribute act playing in Twin Towns casino. The hardest voice to discover was that of Muriel herself – giving voice to an inarticulate character. What did her innermost feelings and thoughts sound like? After many lengthy conversations with PJ Hogan, we decided that, even in song, she wouldn’t be overly eloquent (“Someone is gonna wanna marry me someday, someone is gonna come and sweep me all away”).

**KATE:** As the show progresses and she unearths more of her honest feelings she becomes more articulate. The eulogy, ‘My Mother’ – Muriel’s low point – is also Muriel at her most poetic. That is the power of a musical adaptation of Muriel’s Wedding. Hearing the characters sing (especially Muriel) gives us such a clear window into their feelings, the quality of their spirits. This is a much-loved story for a reason – all the characters have so much vitality, it’s a tale full of humour and tragedy. The love for the film and its enduring legacy made this project daunting at times. More than one of my friends raised an eyebrow at the news I was working on the musical adaptation, as if to say, “Careful bitch, that’s a sacred text”.

**KEIR:** When PJ told us that the musical version would be set in the present day, we were initially sceptical. But when he explained that Muriel would fit perfectly into the age of social media, it all became clear. It felt so natural from the very first draft. Now, I have a hard time imagining her being twenty-one years old in the nineties, having lived for so long with our thoroughly modern Muriel.
**KATE:** Another intimidating factor was having our songs sit side-by-side with ABBA, who wrote some of the greatest pop songs in history.

**KEIR:** Approaching a song on this show was, at times, like playing an advanced board game. There was an entire rulebook of opening positions to internalise before even striking the first note. Fortunately, our core creative team had wisdom and grace to guide us.

**KATE:** Simon Phillips is one of the most charming and witty chaps on the planet. He creates a work environment that is full of laughter and joy, while still moving dramaturgical mountains. He has incredible musical instincts, and honed in on strengths and flaws in our songs we weren’t aware of.

**KEIR:** PJ Hogan has experienced life from the gutters of Tweed Heads to the red carpets of Hollywood. I rarely say the ‘g’ word, but I believe PJ is a genius. More than once during the writing of the show we saw him perform a baffling alchemy that started out as several pages of bizarre ABBA-related material and gradually became hilarious, painful scenes that reverberated with the human condition.

**KATE:** I love theatre because of what an immensely collaborative environment it is. The way a piece with this many moving parts comes together is incredible, and every single person involved made invaluable contributions. I don't have room to list everyone here, but if they are in the program they created this. However, we must mention Isaac Hayward, who is so young and so talented it’s disgusting.

**KEIR:** Earl Gray Stevens (whoever that is) said that confidence, like art, doesn’t come from having all the answers but remaining open to all the questions. The workshop process was like string theory: we lived through an infinite series of parallel worlds until the clearest one emerged. I sincerely hope you enjoy watching this particular version of reality.

**KATE:** Theatre is an intimate form in an era in which we are increasingly removed from each other’s physical space. This increasing distance between people is one of the themes in *Muriel’s Wedding the Musical*. I would love for people to be affected enough by the show to contemplate
# MUSIC SYNOPSIS

## ACT ONE

**Sunshine State of Mind**  
Company

**The Bouquet**  
Muriel Heslop

**Meet the Heslops**  
Perry Heslop, Malcolm Heslop, Joanie Heslop, Betty Heslop

**Dancing Queen/The Bouquet (reprise)**  
Muriel Heslop, Agnetha Fältskog, Anni-Frid Lyngstad, Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus, Company

**Progress**  
Bill Heslop, Deidre Chambers, Company

**Can’t Hang**  
Tania Degano, Cheryl Moochmore, Nicole Stumpf, Janine Nuttall

**Lucky Last/Perry Heslop**  
Muriel Heslop

**Money, Money, Money**  
Anni-Frid Lyngstad, Agnetha Fältskog, Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus

**People People**  
Tania Degano, Cheryl Moochmore, Nicole Stumpf, Janine Nuttall

**Girls Like Us**  
Muriel Heslop, Perry Heslop

**Waterloo**  
Rhonda Epinstall, Muriel Heslop

**Amazing**  
Rhonda Epinstall, Muriel Heslop

**Sydney**  
Company

**Any Ordinary Night**  
Company

**Strangely Perfect Stranger**  
Muriel Heslop, Brice Nobes

**Any Ordinary Night**  
Rhonda Epinstall, Muriel Heslop, Brice Nobes, Company

## ACT TWO

**Perry Heslop (reprise)**  
Perry Heslop

**Here Comes the Bride**  
Company

**A True Friend**  
Muriel Heslop, Rhonda Epinstall

**Never Stick Your Neck Out**  
Brice Nobes, Male Company

**Why Can’t That Be Me?**  
Muriel Heslop

**True Friend (reprise)**  
Rhonda Epinstall, Muriel Heslop

**Take a Chance on Ken**  
Björn Ulvaeus, Benny Andersson, Agnetha Fältskog, Anni-Frid Lyngstad

**Life is a Competition**  
Ken Blundell, Company

**Mr and Mrs Shkuratov**  
Muriel Heslop, Alexander Shkuratov, Ken Blundell, Company

**Shared, Viral, Linked, Liked**  
Tania Degano, Cheryl Moochmore, Nicole Stumpf, Janine Nuttall

**I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do**  
Tania Degano, Cheryl Moochmore, Nicole Stumpf, Janine Nuttall

**The Bouquet, Can’t Hang (reprises)**  
Company

**SOS**  
Agnetha Fältskog, Anni-Frid Lyngstad, Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus

**My Mother (Eulogy)**  
Muriel Heslop, Perry Heslop, Malcolm Heslop, Joanie Heslop, Company

**Strangely Perfect Stranger (reprise)**  
Brice Nobes, Muriel
“Dancing Queen”; “Waterloo”; “Fernando”; “I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do, I Do” & “SOS”:
Written by Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus & Stig Anderson.
Used with kind permission of Universal Music Publishing AB.
“Money, Money, Money” & “Take a Chance on Me”:
Written by Benny Andersson & Björn Ulvaeus.
Used with kind permission of Universal Music Publishing AB.
Songs by Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall used with kind permission of Sony ATV Music Publishing (Australia) Pty Ltd.

‘This is the sort of show you’ll want to see again and again. Do not miss it.’
THEATRE PEOPLE

‘Even more fabulous a second time around.’
BROADWAY WORLD

‘Leaving audiences in stitches for its risqué humour, to crying in their seats’
THE AU REVIEW
## THE MUSIC

### ORIGINAL CAST RECORDING

#### ACT ONE

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<th>1. Sunshine State of Mind</th>
<th>The Cast of Muriel's Wedding The Musical</th>
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<td>Maggie McKenna</td>
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<td>3. Meet the Heslops</td>
<td>Michael Whalley, Connor Sweeney,</td>
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<td>4. Progress</td>
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<td>5. Can't Hang</td>
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<td>Hilary Cole, Laura Murphy</td>
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<td>6. Lucky Last/ Perry Heslop</td>
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<td>7. Girls Like Us</td>
<td>Madeleine Jones, Maggie McKenna</td>
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<td>8. Waterloo</td>
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<td>Sheridan Harbridge, Jamie Hadwen, Aaron Tsindos</td>
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<td>9. Amazing</td>
<td>Madeleine Jones, Maggie McKenna</td>
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<td>10. Sydney</td>
<td>The Cast of Muriel's Wedding The Musical</td>
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<td>11. Strangely Perfect Stranger</td>
<td>Maggie McKenna, Ben Bennett</td>
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#### ACT TWO

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<td>Maggie McKenna</td>
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<td>15. Life Is a Competition</td>
<td>Dave Eastgate, The Cast of Muriel's Wedding The Musical</td>
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<td>16. Mr and Mrs Shkuratov</td>
<td>Maggie McKenna, Stephen Madsen, Dave Eastgate,</td>
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<td>The Cast of Muriel's Wedding The Musical</td>
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<td>17. Shared, Viral, Linked, Liked</td>
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<td>Hilary Cole, Laura Murphy</td>
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<td>18. SOS</td>
<td>Jaime Hadwen, Sheridan Harbridge,</td>
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<td>Aaron Tsindos, Mark Hill</td>
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<td>19. My Mother (Eulogy)</td>
<td>Maggie McKenna, Michael Whalley, Connor Sweeney,</td>
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<td>Briallen Clarke, The Cast of Muriel's Wedding The Musical</td>
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<td>20. A True Friend</td>
<td>The Cast of Muriel's Wedding The Musical</td>
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APPENDIX FOUR – DESIGNER’S NOTE

GABRIELE TYLESOVA

Gabriela Tylesova is an award-winning, internationally acclaimed designer working across the full spectrum of the arts. Born in the former Czechoslovakia, she came to Australia twenty years ago. For *Muriel’s Wedding the Musical*, she has designed both the set and costumes.

My first experience of *Muriel’s Wedding* was at a film festival in Prague, many years ago. At that time, I was a young, aspiring painter and it never crossed my mind that one day I would be living in Australia and working on a musical adaptation of the film. When Simon Phillips asked me to work on the musical of *Muriel’s Wedding*, I was thrilled – the film has always stayed in my heart and was one of my first windows into Australia and its culture. I have worked on several adaptations of well-loved films or books in the past, and am aware of the importance and pressure of not disappointing the audience. I was excited to be working with Kate Miller-Heidke again (after *The Rabbits*, for Opera Australia) and also the film’s original writer-director, PJ Hogan.

PJ has brilliantly updated the screenplay for the stage and brought the story into the present time. In reimagining the show for 2017 it was vital that we didn’t lose the essence of the original film, both in the settings and the costuming of the characters we all know and love. We had to think hard about who these characters would be, and how they would dress, in 2017, growing up amongst the technical innovations that are now available. Aside from the artistic considerations, we had an incredible number of technical challenges to contend with, as is always the case with new musical productions of this size. There are about 360 costumes in the show – and many ultra-quick costume and wig changes!

Moving from screen to stage presents many challenges. For instance, how the vast number of locations are created and how to transition smoothly between them. Simon and I have created a theatrical equivalent of a camera zoom by using moving set pieces which close the space right down, and focus the action into a single point on the stage, or open it up again. We also have revolving mechanisms which facilitate fluidity of scene changes. It’s a very technical, complex show, but from an audience point of view should feel seamless and magical.

Another important aspect was the use of colour. We both instinctively agreed on a bold, bright and cheerful colour palette. I still remember the unique quality of light and the strength of the colours in the landscape during my early days in Australia. I have been fortunate to be working with my associate designers Alicia Clements and Charlie Davis, who are both talented designers in their own right and grew up in Australia (unlike myself) and were able to lend an important perspective. I didn’t want to make any mistakes working on such an iconic Australian film!

I hope our new musical will give audiences worldwide the same amount of joy as the original movie has done.
COSTUME DESIGNS:
APPENDIX FIVE – MARKETING COLLATERAL

FILM COLLATERAL

MUSICAL BRANDING & COLLATERAL
APPENDIX SIX – REVIEWS

Time Out Review: The return season of this homegrown hit is better than an ABBA song
By Cassie Tongue, Jul. 8 2019
★★★★★

Muriel Heslop is the designated loser of small-town Porpoise Spit. She stole a dress from Target to wear to a wedding, she flies away from reality on the wings of ABBA songs, and she bamboozles her mother into handing over the family credit card by exploiting her insecurities. And yet, when she steals her family’s money and runs away to Sydney to define life on her own terms, it’s exhilarating. We root for her every step of the way.

Muriel (Natalie Abbott) is complicated and stubborn, and her actions can be thoughtless, cold or criminal. But in both PJ Hogan’s 1994 film Muriel’s Wedding, and this disarmingly bold stage adaptation, she’s also deeply loveable. Muriel just wants to be loved, and don’t we all? Can’t we all understand the way her pain, and the rotten foundation of a cruel father and a small-minded community, have fuelled her to change her life by any means possible?

And don’t we all want to cheer, or laugh, or burst into tears (or all three) when Muriel finally finds an ally in Rhonda (Stefanie Jones), a fellow Porpoise Spit-expat with a hedonistic zest for life? She takes down Muriel’s frenemies with a single line, beautiful in its precise obliteration of her targets, and suddenly anything feels possible.

So off Muriel goes to Sydney, following Rhonda’s path to liberation. To her, Sydney looks endlessly exciting – a place full of queers, queens and weirdos coming together; her Sydney is a place is where you “finally get to be you.” And when she sees Sydney that way, we believe it. Later, a parking inspector shows us the pessimist’s Sydney: full of raging business-types, dotted with garbage, under construction, lacking connection. The beauty of it all is that both Sydneys exist at the same time – it just depends how you look at it.

Isn’t this a triumph of Australian musical theatre? Directed by Simon Phillips, a showman and ringleader for big, tricky stories, this is a smart, devastating, hopeful confection that runs on pop music dreams and a distinctly Australian understanding of the world.

After a five-star first season at the Roslyn Packer Theatre and a trip down to Melbourne, Muriel’s Wedding has returned to the city that sits at the centre of its beating heart. Like anyone who has gained more experience and done some traveling, it’s grown and changed a little. But the changes are good ones: the show moves more swiftly and tightly, its structure has been streamlined, and it doubles-down on the true love story of at its heart: the epic, life-altering romantic friendship between Muriel and Rhonda.

Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall’s score, written to sit alongside and in conversation with ABBA’s colossal hits, still sparks and sparkles (Daniel Puckey is musical director), and the new cast find their way into the songs with refreshing, direct performances.

Laura Murphy now plays the role of Porpoise Spit Queen Bee Tania Degano, and she wields her power with a new kind of intimidation; there’s a scrappiness to her that suggests she might actually destroy you with her own two hands if you cross her. Pippa Grandison’s take on Muriel’s mother Betty, the musical’s truest and most heartbreaking tragedy, is genuinely moving. Stephen Madsen continues to both look charming and sing better than you remember as Muriel’s dream man, and Jarrod Griffiths, a newcomer taking on the role of Brice Nobes, has a hapless everyman charm.

But the musical belongs to Muriel and Rhonda, and Abbott and Jones are a great match as the new leads. Jones’s Rhonda has an irresistible swagger and a dirty-lovely affect that lets you understand at once that she’s too big for any town, especially Porpoise Spit. And Abbott, who must carry the whole show, does it with unstoppable energy and a clear affection for the difficult, wonderful always-striving nature that makes Muriel an enduring, iconic Australian character.

The Lyric is a big house for any story, but Muriel’s Wedding fills the space with big energy, big performances and big voices. Gabriela Tylesova’s costumes feel even smarter in a bigger space, and Andrew Hallsworth’s choreography feels clever and dynamic without detracting from essential character moments.

The show will have you laughing in its first ten minutes and then reduce you to (quiet and dignified, we swear) sobs in the second act. It’s beautiful, funny and difficult, and it feels like a miracle that something so pretty, so sly, and so smartly emotional has been developed, produced, and found its way to the Lyric. It’s better than an ABBA song, it’s better than most musicals we import from overseas, and it’s a modern classic. We’re in love.
APPENDIX SIX - REVIEWS

Sydney Morning Herald Review: You’re incredible, Muriel! The misfit from Porpoise Spit is back
by Joyce Morgan Jul. 5, 2019
★★★★

She’s back. The misfit from Porpoise Spit.

But it’s a new bride who sings, dances and scams her way up the aisle.

As Muriel Heslop, Natalie Abbott has brilliantly caught the bridal bouquet in the return of the production that premiered to acclaim in Sydney two years ago.

The musical remains a remarkably adventurous piece. With its sun-kissed aura, catchy songs and gelato-coloured visuals, it is easy to be seduced by its highly polished gloss. But it is underpinned by a dark tale indeed.

A dysfunctional family, a disabling illness, and a suicide are part of this tale of besties and bullies. They were part of PJ Hogan’s 1994 movie and they have not been airbrushed away. They are what makes this musical, with book by Hogan, more complex and satisfying than a straight Cinderella story.

Updated to our narcissistic social media age, the staging makes clever use of a proscenium arch studded with iPads and smartphones. There are some contemporary references to our current prime minister, police raids and fake news.

Anti-heroine Muriel is a curious creature. As Australian as a Hills Hoist, she is a socially awkward, overweight dreamer. She also light-fingered and capable of cruelty. She must convince she can change. And Abbott does. She makes an impressive professional debut in the role that made a star of Maggie McKenna in 2017 and of Toni Collette on screen. Abbott invests Muriel with such vulnerability that even her worst actions seem driven more by neediness than wilful intent. And she delivers with ringing clarity songs that range from upbeat pop to sorrowful ballads. Her eulogy My Mother is heartbreaking.

Stefanie Jones is outstanding as Muriel’s tough-talking bestie Rhonda. Their duets, especially A True Friend, are among the many delights of Simon Phillips’ seamless production. David James is convincingly brash as corrupt mayor and Muriel’s monstrous father Bill Heslop. As his downtrodden wife Betty, Pippa Grandison comes to the fore in the darker second act. She hauntingly intertwines her mental unravelling with Abba’s SOS and it is deeply affecting.

There’s a pleasing symmetry to having the four Abba members as characters on stage. They are comic and ethereal counterpoints to the quartet of mean girls, headed by Laura Murphy as Tania Degano. Jarrod Griffiths channels his inner-dag as parking inspector Brice Nobes. Stephen Madsen and Dave Eastgate are strong presences as they reprise their roles as Russian swim star/beefcake and swim coach.

Two years on, the big gamble of putting original music by Kate Miller-Heidke and lyrics by Keir Nuttall alongside Abba’s well-known songs seems inspired. This is a marriage made in musical heaven.
BWW Review: MURIEL’S WEDDING THE MUSICAL is a Triumph in Melbourne
by Victoria Beal Mar. 24, 2019

It doesn’t matter if you saw the film in 1994 or if you’re a millennial who’s never heard of it - everyone will love this show.

After a smash hit opening run in Sydney, Muriel’s Wedding The Musical has arrived in Melbourne at Her Majesty’s Theatre. Contrary to one of the show’s numbers, definitely stick your neck out and get your hopes up for tickets and an unbelievably fun night out.

With marvellous music and lyrics by Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall (of course with the necessary smattering of ABBA hits), this new musical is set to be this country’s new favourite musical. The stage adaptation has all the things we loved about the film - it’s funny, it’s moving, and it’s downright brilliant.

PJ Hogan has returned to the story he wrote 25 years ago, bringing it into the world of social media and viral sensations which only strengthens the relevance of the story by shining a light on the way social media presents a pressure to be perfect and a constant need for validation. The rest of the story stays true to the original narrative, so fans of the film will get all the favourite one-liners that remain colloquialisms today. You know the ones...

We follow Muriel Heslop and friends from drama and scandal in Porpoise Spit to self discovery and tall tales in the bright lights of Sydney. Both Porpoise Spit & Sydney are brought to life by the inimitable talents of Gabriela Tylesova. The boldly coloured and seamlessly moving set, paired with Trent Suidgeest’s lighting, is simple but by no means minimal, never questioning where we are. From cruise ship bar to hills hoist-ed backyard, the design is spectacular. In case you though Tylesova’s talents were set specific, she’s also responsible for the stunning costumes adorned by every member of this mighty cast. Budgie smugglers, leather chaps, ABBA jumpsuits, and bridal gowns galore; every outfit on the stage outdoes the one before and creates a wonderful spectrum of colour and contrast. So many Aussie characters are represented throughout the show, often without a word and sometimes with just a stroll across the stage, and this is totally attributed to Tylesova’s inspired design.

Worth a mention is the petal adorned proscenium arch that flawlessly incorporates graphics on “tablets” and “phones” throughout. When you need to see them, they’re perfect and when you don’t, they totally disappear. A masterclass in
modern set design. Andrew Hallsworth's choreography is equal to Tylesova's design in vibrancy and energy, bringing all the personalities to life and rounding out the impressive visual spectacle that is this show.

With a powerhouse professional debut, Natalie Abbott is an absolute superstar. From the minute she appears on that stage you know you're in for a treat. Paying homage to the brilliant Toni Collette, Abbott still makes her own mark on the role. Despite all her awkwardness and the truly terrible decision making, you can't help loving Abbott's Muriel. You'll laugh with her and you'll cry with her - you'll want to be her friend. With an incomparable voice and charm for days, Natalie Abbott is here to stay.

Stefanie Jones as BFF Rhonda Epinstall is both hilarious and heartbreaking. Her performance packs a punch, with both vocals and presence, and also does nothing but justice to the role made famous by Aussie favourite Rachel Griffiths. Jones commands the emotional ups and downs of the story, having you laughing one second and tearing up the next.

With such an exceptional and talented cast, it's so hard to just name a few but special mention absolutely must go to Pippa Grandison as Betty Heslop and Manon Gunderson-Briggs as Joanie Heslop who will both break your heart with merely a few words. Christie Whelan Browne is perfectly painful and just hysterical as Tania Degano (her appearance as the bridal store manager will also have you in stitches), and Jarrod Griffiths is wonderful as the bumbling but charming parking inspector Brice Nobes.

Director Simon Phillips has ensured the stage adaptation of Muriel's Wedding is a triumph of love and laughter. It's everything you want from a night at the theatre and more. It's a show that will make you laugh, cry, dance in your seat, and want to buy the soundtrack tomorrow. The themes are still so relevant, and the message is one we need to hear - perhaps more than ever. Now Melbourne knows why everyone in Sydney was talking about Muriel and soon everyone in Melbourne will be talking about her too.

### APPENDIX SEVEN - ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

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<td><strong>Original Cast Recording</strong></td>
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Muriel’s Wedding
THE MUSICAL

EDUCATION RESOURCE PACK
ACTIVITY SHEETS
ACTIVITY SHEET 1: FROM SCREEN TO STAGE

What do you know about the Australian film, Muriel's?

The film was made in 1994, what do you know about what Australian culture was like at this time, in the cities and the suburbs? What occupied our leisure time, what entertainment existed, what was on television, what was in fashion and how did Australian's think of themselves against the rest of the world?

AFTER SEEING THE FILM

What challenges do you think would be have faced concerning the film's setting and iconic environments when translating the story to the stage in 2017?

Research stories originally told in feature or small budget films, in Australia and overseas, which have since been adapted into stage productions (playscript or musical) in recent years. Did they face the same or similar challenges and how were they solved?
ACTIVITY SHEET 1: FROM SCREEN TO STAGE

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

What do you believe are the major factors of difference in producing a film verses a musical?

Do you think is could be potentially difficult to create new films here in Australia? If so, why?

Do you think is could be potentially difficult to create new musicals here in Australia? If so, why?

What other films have been created in Australia over the last 20 years?

What other musical theatre works have been created in Australia over the last 20 years?
ACTIVITY SHEET 1: FROM SCREEN TO STAGE

What, if anything about these films or musicals is uniquely Australian? Consider subject matter, character, style, reflection of Australian cultural values and depiction of our way of life.

How successful have these films been here in Australia and overseas? Consider box office, critical reviews.

How successful have these musicals been here in Australia and overseas? Consider box office, critical reviews.

What do you think is a good story or subject matter for other Australian films or musicals? (ie historical events, personal stories of celebrities or sporting heros, existing books or novels)
If they are not current stories, what challenges would be faced to ensure relevance to a contemporary audience.
ACTIVITY SHEET 2: MARKETING A MUSICAL

Looking at the collateral and artwork, discuss what you notice about the marketing and branding for the 1994 film *Muriel's Wedding*? What design trends and available marketing channels were available at this time in Australia which may have influenced the final imagery?

Review the film branding and collateral for *Muriel's Wedding*, as well as that for *Muriel's Wedding The Musical*. Identify the themes, messages and imagery in both and compare and contrast the look, feel and impact of each. In addition, identify the effectiveness of the marketing in selling the production, based on the initial film concept and the updated musical production (where the time and place of Muriel's work has been moved to the present day embedding it firmly in the rise of social media).
ACTIVITY SHEET 2: MARKETING A MUSICAL

Identify the challenges you believe would have been overcome in the reinvention of the existing brand for another genre of entertainment, to ensure the most effective marketing and promotion of the musical. Ensure you consider the changes in marketing strategy (how product messaging is designed and work sold) over the last two decades.
ACTIVITY SHEET 2: MARKETING A MUSICAL

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Research who the target audience and potential target audience for the production? How do you would you determine this and what details about them will assist you focusing on meeting their needs and wants?

What messages and imagery does the branding need to contain to appeal to them?

What do these messages and imagery say about the production and how does this assist in you in crafting the marketing strategy in order to appeal to the target and potential target audience?
ACTIVITY SHEET 2: MARKETING A MUSICAL

Using the information, you have derived from these questions, design a logo and branding for the production, which incorporating the messages and imagery which you believe best sells what the musical has to offer; taking into account the design elements need to work in diverse mediums.

Determine what marketing channels you would use for the marketing of the production, such as advertising (radio, television, print, outdoor, electronic and social media) printed collateral, publicity and social media, and create storyboards for these advertising campaigns, design printed collateral and determine appropriate opportunities to promote the musical. Inspiration can be drawn from other contemporary entertainment brand design. Present your branding and marketing campaign to the class and explain the choices you have made.
**ACTIVITY SHEET 1A: FROM STAGE TO SCREEN TO STAGE**

What do you think the biggest differences between the depiction of the story as told in the 1994 film as compared to the 2017 musical? Describe the characteristic of the genre of film, as compared to live musical theatre?

What challenges do they you think were faced when adapting the story of *Muriel’s Wedding* from a film to a stage musical? What techniques or tools were these challenges overcome in the updating the story?

How successfully do you believe the story of the film was translated to the live musical theatre production?
ACTIVITY SHEET 1A: FROM STAGE TO SCREEN TO STAGE

Do you think any element of the story was lost during the transfer from film to the stage? If so, can you suggest how it could have been better incorporated? Was there anything which was done better?

Do you believe transferring another film to the stage possess the same or different challenges?

In films, close-ups are used to create intimacy and wide-shots, landscape and space – how do you think music and lighting may be used to take the place of these elements onstage?
ACTIVITY SHEET 3: FROM KITSCH TO KOOL – AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

What Australian icons, brands and products can you identify in the show? Remember they could be large set items or smaller costume detailing. How effective do you believe the use of these icons were in setting the environment in which the musical takes place?

What Australian imagery could you see in the show and how important was this in the creation of the landscape for Muriel’s journey and transformation throughout the piece?

What is a colloquialism?
ACTIVITY SHEET 3: FROM KITSCH TO KOOL - AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

Below is a list of Australian colloquialisms which are featured in the production. Determine what each of these mean, discuss why they have been used in the script and what effect they have on the flavour of the language and overall tone of the production.

‘no worries’
‘no-hopers’
‘well sorta’
‘Chook’
‘great mate’
‘here’s a slab for you’
‘Bill the Battler’
‘gonna’
‘secret’ry’
‘going mental’
‘I bet you’
‘Surfers’
‘gives ‘em’
‘hang around’
‘dumb scrag’
‘solid gold farkin legend’
‘Those Greenies’
‘cause’
‘you mental case’
‘partaay’
‘crap’
‘fricken bitchery’
‘legit’
‘wanna’
‘shelling out’
ACTIVITY SHEET 3: FROM KITSCH TO KOOL – AUSTRALIAN IDENTITY

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

What other Australian icons can you think of that could have been integrated into the production to reflect Australia culture now and where would you have used them in line with the naturalistic design?

Name the Australian cities and suburbs which are referred to in the show (real or fictitious) and what characteristics are inferred in their portrayal in the musical? How does this reinforce or conflict with you views of these places?

What elements of popular culture and Australian society (personalities, social groups, companies, products) can you identify as being referenced in the show? What impact do you believe they have on the production overall and how effectively would be story be portrayed if they were excluded.
ACTIVITY SHEET 4: YOU’RE TERRIBLE MURIEL - FUNNY, NOT FUNNY?

Discuss the meaning of ‘You’re terrible Muriel’. Is it a harmless comment, even a joke, or something else?

Identify and discuss as a group what you believe constitutes bullying and anti-social behaviour. What leads to this type of behaviour and how are you to recognise it?

What examples of bullying and harassment can you identify in the show, entertainment products (film, television shows, books) or your own lives? Explain why you believe it is unacceptable and identify what impact it may have on individuals such as yourself and social groups.

How can early intervention by you and your friends, prevent this behaviour developing?

How can you avoid repeating such behaviour in your everyday interaction? (Look specifically at how you communicate on social media, texting etc.)
ACTIVITY SHEET 4: YOU’RE TERRIBLE MURIEL - FUNNY, NOT FUNNY?

EXTENSION ACTIVITY
Using the courage and strength shown by Muriel in overcoming the obstacles and learning from her mistakes, determine what bullying looks, sounds and feels like to you.

Design your own strategy for creating an inclusive and supportive environment in the classroom, school, family and other social environment such as a sporting group, drama group and/or online environments.

Begin with an overriding purpose, followed by aims and objectives including a description of acceptable verbal and non-verbal language.

AIM -

OBJECTIVES -

ACCEPTABLE -

Your strategy should also address how you would facilitate a safe and accepting environment, promoting and celebrating the differences of individuals, challenging attitudes and seek to exclude discrimination and harassment. Refer to recent shifts from movements such as #MeToo, #TimesUp, #Instabullying, #antibullying to assist you.
ACTIVITY SHEET 5: THE UGLY DUCKLING - SUCCESS IS THE BEST REVENGE

Instrumental to an effective musical theatre plot are strong, complex characters assisting in both the telling of the story and communication of its themes and concepts. Students should be asked to look at the diversity found in the characters and list the themes and concepts they can identify in the story and select two characters, including but not limited to Muriel, Rhonda, Bill, Betty, Perry, Malcolm, Joanie, Deidre, Tania, Cheryl, Nicole or Janine and provide a character analysis or breakdown for each.

THEMES AND CONCEPTS

1. CHARACTER NAME: ____________________________________________________________
   ANALYSIS: ____________________________________________________________________

2. CHARACTER NAME: ____________________________________________________________
   ANALYSIS: ____________________________________________________________________
ACTIVITY SHEET 5: THE UGLY DUCKLING – SUCCESS IS THE BEST REVENGE

EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Using their two existing character profiles from *Muriel's Wedding The Musical*, compare and contrast them to determine how important their characterisation and relationship is to the development of the plot, exploration of the themes and what impact their relationship has on other characters?

CHARACTER NAMES: ____________________________

____________________________________________

Compare and contrast

Relationship to the plot (protagonist or antagonist)

Impact their relationship has on the other characters
ACTIVITY SHEET 6: MAMMA MIA! – MUSICAL FUSION

_Muriel’s Wedding The Musical_, falls outside the structure of classic musicals, such as a book musical or jukebox musical, and instead fuses existing and familiar music from the 1970’s musical era with new work written for the production with a particular purpose in mind. This musical mix provides infinite opportunities for characterization and as an underscore to the movements of the staging components.

How important do you think the music was to the structure of _Muriel’s Wedding The Musical_?

Discuss how different musical numbers within a musical can range in type, change a mood and alter the speed of the plot.

Identify what other functions the music can play when translating a story from a screenplay/film to a stage musical? Could the music been seen to take the place of the camera through its ability to create intimacy and expanse from scene to scene? If so, how is this done in _Muriel’s Wedding The Musical_?

Select five songs from _Muriel’s Wedding The Musical_ and discuss the following for each of them:

**SONG ONE:**

1) What is the intended meaning for the song?

2) Why do you think this particular song was selected or written for the production?

3) Which character/s, if any, did you learn more about through the use of this song?

4) How valuable was the song to the overall context, themes and plot of the show?
SONG TWO: ____________________________________________________________

1) What is the intended meaning for the song?

2) Why do you they think this particular song was selected or written for the production?

3) Which character/s, if any, did you learn more about through the use of this song?

4) How valuable was the song to the overall context, themes and plot of the show?

SONG THREE: __________________________________________________________

1) What is the intended meaning for the song?

2) Why do you they think this particular song was selected or written for the production?

3) Which character/s, if any, did you learn more about through the use of this song?

4) How valuable was the song to the overall context, themes and plot of the show?

SONG FOUR: __________________________________________________________

1) What is the intended meaning for the song?

2) Why do you they think this particular song was selected or written for the production?

3) Which character/s, if any, did you learn more about through the use of this song?

4) How valuable was the song to the overall context, themes and plot of the show?

SONG FIVE: __________________________________________________________

1) What is the intended meaning for the song?

2) Why do you they think this particular song was selected or written for the production?

3) Which character/s, if any, did you learn more about through the use of this song?

4) How valuable was the song to the overall context, themes and plot of the show?
ACTIVITY SHEET 6:  MAMMA MIA! – MUSICAL FUSION

EXTENSION ACTIVITY
Select two original songs from *Muriel's Wedding The Musical* Original Cast Recording which were written by Kate Miller-Heidke and Keir Nuttall. Examples could include: Amazing, Girls Like Us, Why Can't That Be Me, Shared, Viral, Linked, Liked, My Mother (Eulogy)

**SONG ONE:**
1) Listen to the lyrics of the songs and determine the themes and story being told.

2) What makes this song stand out and how do the lyrics, tempo and instrumentation assist in delivering the story?

3) What role does this song play in the musical? (ie describe a character, describe the cultural circumstances, reveal a plot point, be reflective etc) Do you believe it was effective?

**SONG TWO:**
1) Listen to the lyrics of the songs and determine the themes and story being told.

2) What makes this song stand out and how do the lyrics, tempo and instrumentation assist in delivering the story?

3) What role does this song play in the musical? (ie describe a character, describe the cultural circumstances, reveal a plot point, be reflective etc) Do you believe it was effective?

4) Compare and contrast the two songs and determine what similarities can be found (for musical consistency) and what differences (for musical diversity)?
ACTIVITY SHEET 7: ICONOGRAPHY AND PERFECT WEDDING - SETTING THE SCENE

Identify two pieces of staging or costuming used to create the internal and external environments of Porpoise Spit and Sydney city and suburbs. One of the scenes should be of an interior, the other an exterior.

STAGE SETTING (INTERIOR)

SCENE SELECTED: ___________________________________________

How was this achieved (include all the design elements which contributed to the creation of the scene. Consider icons, colour, shape, materials.

How did the lighting work to enhance this moment in the show, as well as how a sound scape or sound effects contribute to the overall atmosphere?

What contribution was made to the imagery by the costumes, wigs, shoes, hair pieces and properties as part or the scene?
STAGE SETTING (EXTERIOR)

SCENE SELECTED: ____________________________________________________________

How was this achieved (include all the design elements which contributed to the creation of the scene. Consider icons, colour, shape, materials.

How did the lighting work to enhance this moment in the show, as well as how a sound scape or sound effects contribute to the overall atmosphere?

What contribution was made to the imagery by the costumes, wigs, shoes, hair pieces and properties as part of the scene?

Design your own set design or costume design for an existing scene in the production to provide an environment in which the plot can unfold which also incorporates the distinct qualities of the characters who are in the scene (examples include Muriel’s wedding, an ABBA dream sequence, arriving in Sydney, Betty’s funeral or Bill Heslop’s Chinese banquet)
EXTENSION ACTIVITY

Compile a report focusing on the art of stage and special effects using the development of technology over the last 20 years. Automation (the system which controls the set movements and flown scenery), moving lights, computer operated sound desks and projection are now key production elements in live musical theatre design.

As part of this research, explain how at least two technical effects which are featured in the production of Muriel's Wedding The Musical were achieved through the use of such technology.
ACTIVITY SHEET 8: REVIEWING THE PERFORMANCE

Prepare their own review of the production incorporating all the creative elements such as structure, libretto, musical choices, production design, costuming, lighting and sound. You should assess the effectiveness of, but not limited to the following:

**CHARACTERS:** How did they develop throughout the performance? Did they push the narrative forward?

**SETTING:** How effective was the setting in depicting parts of Australia’s cities and towns today?

**STAGING:** Did the staging achieve its aims for so many diverse interior and external environments? Describe how this was done?

**COSTUMES:** How well did the costumes depict the different scenes and each character? Did they succeed in gaining the attention they required in particular scenes? If so, what are some examples?
**MUSIC:** How did the music assist to propel forward the narrative and what was most interesting about the musical choices made? How successfully was the new original music fused with existing ABBA music?

**CHOREOGRAPHY/MOVEMENT:** How did it assist in the creation of the worlds of Porpoise Spit and Sydney and how well did it support the musical choices, characters and storyline for the production?

**THEMES:** How effectively did elements of the production support and portray the story and characters.
ACTIVITY SHEET 8: REVIEWING THE REVIEW

EXTENSION ACTIVITY
Following your personal review of the production, you are encouraged to review an existing published review as follows:


CRITICALLY ANALYSE THESE REVIEW OF THE PRODUCTION
Identify those comments with which you agree, as well as those with which you disagree regarding the structure of the production, the plot, music choices, set and costumes design, choreography, lighting, sound, performances and the adaption of the story from film to stage.

Explain why you agree or disagree with the reviewer’s assessment of the actor’s performances and their characterisation.