

Unit 801

Musicals

Developing ensemble vocal performance



Key Vocabulary

Choir - an organised group of singers, especially one that takes part in church services or performs in public.

Ensemble - a group of *musicians*, actors, or dancers who perform together.

Blend - the seamless integration of multiple voices to create a single sound.

Articulation - the way a note is played – for example, smooth (legato) or detached (staccato).

Pitch - how high or low a note sounds.

Timbre - the unique sound or tone quality of an instrument or voice – what makes them sound different.

Dynamics - How loudly or softly the music is played

Tempo - How fast or slow the music is played

Staccato - notes that are short and detached.

Legato - notes that are played smoothly and connected.

Harmony - the sound of two or more notes sung or played together

You will learn to:

1. Sing in time and in tune
2. Sing with expression appropriate to the story
3. Perform in three parts



Musical theatre is a form of theatrical performance that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting, and dance to tell a story and convey a range of emotions. From humorous and joyful moments to anger and sadness, these performances use a unique blend of drama and music to bring a narrative to life.

Key features

Book: The story, characters, and spoken text of the musical. Sometimes called the libretto.

Songs: The musical numbers in a show, including ballads, upbeat numbers, and ensemble pieces, are used to express characters' feelings, advance the plot, and create atmosphere.

Choreography: The planned dance sequences and movements that add visual excitement and help to tell the story.

Dialogue: The spoken parts of the show that connect the musical numbers.

Staging and spectacle: The use of elaborate sets, costumes, lighting, and special effects to create a powerful and immersive theatrical experience.

Origin and influence

The origins of musical theatre can be traced back to ancient Greece, but modern musicals evolved from various 19th-century forms of entertainment, including vaudeville, burlesque, and comic opera.

19th Century: Early forms of American musical theatre evolved from variety shows that featured a mixture of songs, comedy, and dancing.

Early 20th Century: The "book musical," which has a strong, integrated plot, gained popularity. A key milestone was the show *Show Boat* (1927), which demonstrated that musicals could tackle serious subjects.

The Golden Age (1940s–1950s): This era produced iconic shows with high-quality, memorable songs and cohesive plots. Notable examples include Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* (1943) and Leonard Bernstein's *West Side Story* (1957).

Mega-Musicals (1970s–1980s): Large-scale, high-budget productions became popular, with notable examples like Andrew Lloyd Webber's *Cats* (1981) and Claude-Michel Schönberg's *Les Misérables* (1985).

Modern Musicals: Today, the genre is a mix of original works like *Hamilton* and film adaptations like *The Lion King* and *Matilda: The Musical*.