



LAMDA Examinations

Teacher Support Material Graded Examinations in Musical Theatre: Solo/Duo

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LAMDA
155 Talgarth Road
London W14 9DA

Telephone: +44 (0)208 834 0530
Fax: +44 (0)208 711 2259
Email: exams@lamda.ac.uk
Web: www.lamda.org.uk

Notice to Reader

This document has been written to support Teachers and Learners who are preparing for LAMDA *Graded Examinations in Musical Theatre: Solo/Duo*. It is to be used in conjunction with the LAMDA *Graded Examinations in Musical Theatre: Solo/Duo* Syllabus specification, **valid from 01 August 2021**.

| Contents | Page |
|---|-------------|
| LAMDA Graded Examinations in Musical Theatre: Solo/Duo | |
| Examination Structure | 4 |
| Health and Safety | 4 |
| Accompaniment | 4 |
| Costume | 6 |
| Props/Staging | 6 |
| Use of the Performance Space | 6 |
| Focus | 6 |
| Selecting Songs: General Notes | 7 |
| Selecting Songs: Useful Sources | 7 |
| Selecting Songs: Entry Level | 8 |
| Selecting Songs: Level 1 (Grades 1, 2 and 3) | 9 |
| Selecting Songs: Level 2 (Grades 4 and 5) | 9 |
| Selecting Songs: Level 3 (Grades 6, 7 and 8) | 9 |
| Published or Devised Spoken Dialogue (Grades 4 to 8) | 10 |
| Spoken Song (Grades 4 and 5) | 11 |
| Grade 5 Knowledge: Reasons for the Choice of Staging | 12 |
| Grade 6 Knowledge: The Musical Genre to Which Each Song Belongs | 12 |
| Grade 7 Knowledge: The Work and Influence on Musical Theatre of one of the Composer, Librettist or Lyricist | 13 |
| Grade 8 Knowledge: Selecting a Practitioner | 14 |

LAMDA Graded Examinations in Musical Theatre: Solo/ Duo

Examination Structure

This qualification is available at four levels, in line with the Regulated Qualifications Framework (RQF):

Entry Level (Entry 3)

Level 1: Grades 1, 2 and 3

Level 2: Grades 4 and 5

Level 3: Grade 6 (Bronze Medal), Grade 7 (Silver Medal) and Grade 8 (Gold Medal)

LAMDA examinations in Musical Theatre are offered in the following formats: Solo (one Learner) where the Learner performs alone; Duo (two Learners) where the Learners perform all songs together.

Please note that for Duologue examinations, Learners cannot change partners in the middle of the examination.

Health and Safety

The Learner(s) must take responsibility for their own health and safety when working towards a Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examination. They should:

- organise a personal physical and vocal warm up and cool down
- wear appropriate clothing and footwear that allows for ease of movement
- develop a physicality that does not overly tense the body or restrict the larynx, even in character transformations.
- support breath and release tone without force.
- sing in a comfortable register
- avoid belting unless they have received vocal training on the technique
- avoid singing if there is any discomfort in the throat
- seek specialist medical attention if discomfort persists when singing and/or a husky tone develops.

Accompaniment

All songs for LAMDA Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations must be accompanied. Accompaniment may be live or recorded.

Live accompaniment – a piano, electric keyboard, guitar or other appropriate instrument may be used to accompany the songs. It is the responsibility of the Learner(s) to provide the instrument or equipment required for use in the examination. It is also the responsibility of the Learner(s) to provide an accompanist to support their performance. The accompanist must only remain in the room for the duration of the performance(s). The accompanist must leave for the Knowledge discussion element of the examination.

Recorded accompaniment – if recorded accompaniment is used, the Learner(s) must provide their own technical equipment for use in the examination. A technician is permitted to be present in the room to operate the equipment. The technician must only remain in the room for the duration of the performance(s). The technician must leave for the knowledge discussion element of the examination. Backing tracks which include any vocal performance,

including backing vocals, are not permitted. If an electronic device, such as a mobile phone, Kindle, iPad, e-Reader or laptop is used to play the backing track, it must be placed on airplane mode.

Backing tracks can be sourced from a range of places. Music streaming platforms and online music platforms including Amazon Music, Apple Music, and Spotify, offer a wide range of choices – when searching for a track simply type the name of the song/musical you're looking for followed by the word 'karaoke', 'backing track' or 'instrumental', for example *No Good Deed Wicked Backing Track*.

Most tracks will either be available to stream or download as part of a subscription or be available to purchase and download. Most tracks will not cost more than £1.00. Please note that it is your responsibility to adhere to copyright laws when downloading material. Some other useful sites for sourcing backing tracks are as follows:

- www.musicroom.com
- www.pianotrax.com
- www.musicaltheatrebackingtracks.co.uk
- www.pianotracksformusicals.com
- www.ameritz.co.uk
- www.karaoke-version.co.uk – this site also offers you the chance to change the key of the song you are buying. This may be at an extra cost.

If you are struggling to find a backing track, www.online-md.co.uk offers a service where you can send the score of your music to them via their online service and they will record a piano version for you which they will then email to you within 72 hours. Prices start from £12.00 per track, depending on the length and arrangement request.

Score music can be bought from:

- www.amazon.co.uk
- www.musicnotes.co.uk
- www.sheetmusicdirect.com
- www.musicroom.com
- www.onlinesheetmusic.com

Some of these websites allow you to purchase the sheet music and have it posted out to you, and some allow you to purchase the music online which you can then print from your computer. Please note that you may be charged by the website for each score you print out.

Most major towns and cities will have a music shop selling a selection of printed sheet music, anthologies, and musical scores. Music shops can also order sheet music for you. Leading stores provide online services, such as Chappell's Music Store or Foyle's Music Department, who will post printed copies of scores out to you. Chappell's Music Store's website also offers an annual subscription service which allows you to download unlimited PDF Music Sheet files - www.chappell-bond-st.com/. Sheet music can also be ordered from Foyle's online shop - www.foyles.co.uk/.

Please note that only a few minutes are allocated within the examination to the setting up of equipment required for both live and recorded accompaniment.

Costume

There is no specific dress code for LAMDA Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations. Full costume is not permitted, but long practice skirts which help to indicate/suggest period may be worn together with small costume items such as scarves, hats, shawls, gloves, or canes. Clothing and footwear should be suitable for the work presented and comfortable where possible, allowing freedom of movement. The Learner(s) should not go barefoot unless the part demands it. Nudity is not permitted.

Props/Staging

Hand props are permitted but must be kept to a minimum so as to not overburden the Learner(s). Stage sets should not be overly complicated as only a small amount of time is available in the examination for setting up scenes.

Use of the Performance Space

The Learner(s) should try to avoid playing in profile for too long, especially in duo examinations, as this masks facial expression.

The Learner(s) should try not to place themselves too near the Examiner's table for the duration of the song as this limits their overall use of the performance space.

The Learner(s) should carefully consider the Assessment Criteria and whether they are required to use appropriate or effective use of the performance space. The content and context of the song should inform the Learner's use of movement within the performance space. The Learner(s) should bear in mind the mood of the song, the character's feelings and their situation, and the character's movement (or lack thereof).

Depending on the Learner's level of understanding, Teachers may find Stanislavski's given circumstances and Uta Hagen's nine questions useful to help Learner's understand a character's given circumstances.

Focus

The Learner(s) should ensure that they perform their song(s) with appropriate focus.

When performing a song that is direct address to audience, the Learner(s) should focus on the imagined wider audience of which the Examiner is a part, and not directly on the Examiner.

When performing a duet, both Learners should be focussed within the world of their characters and, for each individual, on their duo partner where appropriate, as the other character in the song. Learners should also stay in character throughout their performance, listening and responding to their partner where appropriate.

When a solo Learner performs a solo song with an unseen character present, their focus should be within the world of their character and on the unseen character(s), who should be acknowledged, where appropriate.

When a solo Learner performs a solo song that is not a direct address to audience and doesn't have an unseen character present, the Learner's focus should be within the world of

their character. (Third Circle) Where the Learner should focus specifically within the world of their character will depend on what the Learner feels is appropriate for the song.

Depending on the Learner's level of understanding, Teachers may find Stanislavski's *circles of attention* and Declan Donnellan's *the actor and the target* helpful references.

Selecting Songs: General Notes

All songs must be performed in English and presented in a clearly defined dramatic context. The Learner(s) can perform their songs either in the original context of the musical or in a context devised by the Learner(s) Before performing a song, it is recommended that the Learner(s) clarifies with the Examiner whether they are performing in the original context of a musical or in a context of their own devising.

The Knowledge questions must be answered in relation to the original context of the musical.

All songs must be accompanied. Accompaniment may be live or recorded.

The Learner(s) must only play one character in their selected song(s). Where the sung lines of other characters are omitted, you must ensure coherence so that the emotional fluency of the song is maintained.

Songs which are a direct address to audience should not be focussed solely on the Examiner. The Examiner should be included in a wider imagined audience.

In duo examinations, you should ensure that the chosen song(s) are shared equally between both Learners and that there is some degree of interaction between them, giving them both the opportunity to develop the characters they portray, and the opportunity to demonstrate their performance skills to Examiner

Cuts or edits are permitted, providing the coherence, fluency and dramatic development of the song is maintained. Please note that you are not permitted to add your own lyrics to a song.

The Learner(s) should bring legible copies of the lyrics for all songs into the examination for the Examiner. This is for prompting purposes if it is required.

Selecting Songs: Useful Sources

It is a good idea, when selecting own choice songs, to put together a portfolio of songs that you can use over time with different Learners and at different grades.

To put together a portfolio of songs, you should consider the following:

- progression between grades
- suitability for different age groups
- variety and balance of characters, for example boys, girls, duets, solos
- variety of situations
- vocal range
- appropriate length
- appropriate use of language
- variety of period

- equal balance and contrast between characters in duets
- variety of tempos and music genres
- available accompaniment.

You should assist your Learner(s) in choosing songs that are appropriate for their ability and for the level/grade of examination being taken. Chosen songs must also meet the repertoire requirements of the grade, as detailed in the syllabus. Songs sung by children in musicals or film musicals will provide a useful guide for finding suitable repertoire for younger voices. However, it is worth noting that in animated films the singers are often trained mature singers. Learners may be drawn to these songs, but they can be quite technically difficult and could be over-ambitious for younger singers.

Suggested books:

- *Singer's Musical Theatre Anthology*, published by Hal Leonard – this is a series of books and each has a collection of songs from the musical stage, categorised by voice type.
- *So You Want to Tread the Boards*, by Jennifer Reischel, published by JR Books – this has a very useful song list giving an indication of suitable vocal range, musical style and age appropriate advice.
- *Thank You: That's All We Need for Today*, by Mary Hammond – this book includes a CD with vocal warm ups and a list of audition songs for male and female voices.

Suggested video streaming services:

- Many musicals are now widely available to watch online through various subscription based streaming services including Amazon Prime, Netflix, Disney+, Sky Movies, Digital Theatre+, and NT at Home.
- Videos of standalone performances of songs can also often be found for free on YouTube.

Selecting Songs: Entry Level

For Entry Level Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations the Learner(s) must perform from memory **one** song of their own choice.

The song must be selected from a published work of musical theatre or from a film musical.

The content of the song should be simple and accessible, conveying meaning clearly and unambiguously and within the emotional understanding of the Learner(s). The melody of the song should be simple and well within the vocal range of the Learner(s). Dance may be incorporated where appropriate and relevant to enhance the overall performance.

The abilities, vocal range, emotional understanding, and past experience of the Learner(s) should always be taken into consideration before making a final decision on repertoire selection.

Selecting Songs: Level 1 (Grades 1, 2 and 3)

For Level 1 Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations the Learner(s) must perform **two** songs of their own choice from memory.

Both songs must be taken from a published work of musical theatre or from a film musical.

The selected songs should differ in theme, setting, type of character and/or mood, enabling the Learner(s) to display some contrast. The content of the two songs should offer some opportunity for interpretative choices within the emotional understanding of the Learner(s). The melodic line of the songs should offer some challenge but remain within the vocal range of the Learner(s). Dance may be incorporated where appropriate and relevant to enhance the overall performance.

The abilities, vocal range, emotional understanding, and past experience of the Learner(s) should always be taken into consideration before making a decision on repertoire selection.

It should also be noted that it is a requirement in the Knowledge section at Grade 2 and Grade 3 to discuss the plot of the musicals or film musicals from which the chosen songs have been taken. The content, themes and main characters of the musicals or film musicals should therefore be considered suitable for the Learner(s) in question before making a final decision.

Selecting Songs: Level 2 (Grades 4 and 5)

For Level 2 Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations the Learner(s) must perform from memory **two** sung songs and **one** spoken song.

Both sung songs and the spoken song are own choice and must be taken from a published work of musical theatre or from a film musical.

The selected songs should differ in theme, setting, type of character and/or mood, enabling the Learner(s) to display some contrast. The content of the selected songs should offer opportunities for a variety of approaches and interpretative choices. Dance may be incorporated where appropriate and relevant to enhance the overall performance.

For more information on how to select a song to perform as a monologue or duologue, please refer to the section 'Spoken Song (Grades 4 and 5)' on page 11.

The abilities, vocal range, emotional understanding, and past experience of the Learner(s) should always be taken into consideration before making a decision on repertoire selection.

It should also be noted that it is a requirement in the Knowledge section at Level 2 to discuss the plot of the musicals or film musicals from which the chosen songs have been taken. The content, themes and main characters of the musicals or film musicals should therefore be considered suitable for the Learner(s) in question before making a final decision.

Selecting Songs: Level 3 (Grades 6, 7 and 8)

For **Grade 6** the Learner(s) must perform **three** songs of their own choice from memory: one song written before 1990 (the music and lyrics of the song must have been written on or before 31 December 1989), one song written in or after 1990 (the music and lyrics of the

song must have been written on or after 01 January 1990), and one song written during any period. Each song must be taken from a published work of musical theatre or from a film musical.

For **Grade 7** the Learner(s) must perform **three** songs of their own choice from memory: one song written before 1960 (the music and lyrics of the song must have been written on or before 31 December 1959), one song written during the period 1960 to 1990 (the music and lyrics of the song must have been written between 01 January 1960 and 31 December 1989), and one song written in or after 1990 (the music and lyrics of the song must have been written on or after 01 January 1990). Each song must be taken from a published work of musical theatre or from a film musical.

For **Grade 8** the Learner(s) must perform **three** songs of their own choice from memory: one song written before 1960 (the music and lyrics of the song must have been written on or before 31 December 1959), one song written during the period 1960 to 1990 (the music and lyrics of the song must have been written between 01 January 1960 and 31 December 1989), and one song written in or after 1990 (the music and lyrics of the song must have been written on or after 01 January 1990). Each song must be taken from a published work of musical theatre or from a film musical.

The selected songs should differ in theme, setting, type of character and/or mood, enabling the Learner(s) to display some contrast. They should enable the Learner(s) to engage with complex emotions and universal themes. The content of the songs should be technically appropriate for the level. Dance may be incorporated where appropriate and relevant to enhance the overall performance.

The abilities, vocal range, emotional understanding, and past experience of the Learner(s) should always be taken into consideration before deciding on repertoire selection.

It should also be noted that it is a requirement in the Knowledge section at Level 3 to discuss character's role within the musicals or film musicals from which the chosen songs have been taken. The content, themes and characters of the musicals or film musicals should therefore be considered suitable for the Learner(s) in question before making a final decision.

Published or Devised Spoken Dialogue (Grades 4 to 8)

For Grade 4 and 5 Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations, for Song 1 and Song 2, the Learner(s) must present published or devised spoken dialogue *in character* within the song.

For Grade 6, 7 and 8 Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations, for Song 1, Song 2 and Song 3, the Learner(s) must present published or devised spoken dialogue *in character* within the song.

The published or devised spoken dialogue must be a minimum of 30 seconds and no more than one minute in length and must be included in the overall performance time of the song(s).

As detailed in the syllabus, the spoken dialogue may be devised by the Learner(s) or taken from a published text. It should enhance the overall performance of the song, giving the imagined audience some insight into why the character is singing, thereby setting the mood of the piece.

If you would like to use published spoken dialogue, some musicals or film musicals will have dialogue within the script that can be used for this element of the exam. Alternatively, you could find suitable spoken dialogue by looking at other songs within the same musical or film musical, especially those sung by the same character, to see if they have any lyrics that could be spoken as dialogue. If you choose to use published spoken dialogue, please note it is permitted to edit it so that it is the right length, as long as the sense of the words is maintained.

If you cannot find any suitable spoken dialogue within the musical or film musical from which the chosen song has been taken, you can devise your own spoken dialogue. If you choose to do this, consider hot seating the character by asking the Learner questions in character, for example 'how are you feeling right now?' Then write the answer down.

The published or devised spoken dialogue should inform the imagined audience of the character's situation and provide a context for the listener that enables them to appreciate the circumstances and emotions within the song. The spoken dialogue must be a cohesive part of the performance, either leading naturally into the song and/or linking two sections of the song together and/or concluding the song— try to avoid a long pause between the end of the spoken dialogue and the start of the music. The spoken dialogue could be spoken over the musical introduction to the song, during the song performance or after the Learner has finished sing the song to conclude the performance.

Teachers and Learners should carefully consider where to integrate the spoken dialogue into the performance and whether it allows the Learner(s) to meet the assessment criteria to their best potential.

If the Learner is adopting an accent this should be sustained from speech into song.

Spoken Song (Grades 4 and 5)

For Grade 4 and Grade 5 Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations, the Learner(s) must perform from memory one solo/duo spoken song of their own choice, **performed as a spoken dramatic monologue/duologue, without melody and rhythm**. The song must be taken from a published work of musical theatre or from a film musical.

The most important element of choosing a song to perform as a spoken song is to find a song with lyrics that are not repetitive and that tell a story. Always avoid choosing a song that has a repetitive chorus (such as the song Mamma Mia) as this is very difficult to speak believably as dialogue. Look for songs that change their tempo or rhythm pattern, as this will help the Learner(s) to avoid using a linear rhythm when speaking the words. Songs written by Stephen Sondheim work well as spoken songs, as many of them tell stories without seeming repetitive or linear.

Songs from the following musicals also transfer well into drama:

- *Ghost the Musical*
- *Gypsy*
- *Fame*
- *The King and I*
- *Calamity Jane*
- *Urinetown*
- *The Book of Mormon*

- *Blood Brothers*
- *Seussical*
- *Avenue Q*
- *My Fair Lady*
- *Merrily We Roll Along*
- *High Society*

To prepare for this element of the examination, the Learner(s) should begin by writing down the lyrics of their chosen song in prose, as a monologue or duologue. They should study the grammar and change it to suit how they wish to tell the story. Encourage the Learner(s) to experiment with the mood and layout of the song, to find an interpretation that suits them.

Remember, this is an acting exercise. The aim of the spoken song is to convey the meaning of the text by removing the original rhythm and musical phrasing of the song.

Grade 5 Knowledge: Reasons for the Choice of Staging

For the Knowledge section of Grade 5 Musical Theatre Solo/ Duo examinations the Learner(s) must discuss the reasons for the chosen staging in one of the three chosen songs (Examiner's choice), using the technical terminology of the working stage areas. To answer this question, the Learner(s) should be able to identify what staging they have used for each song, and the rationale for choosing to stage the song performance in this particular way. For example, if their choice of staging related to the mood of the song, to (reflect) the character's feelings and their situation, or to the character's movement (or lack thereof).

Answers should also consider whether there is another character present in the song (this could be an unseen character or a Learner's Duologue partner) and the Learner's awareness of their imagined audience. It is acceptable for a Learner to use a song that requires only simple staging, as long as they can discuss not just what staging has been used but the rationale behind their choices. Staging should not be confused with the character's movement. Staging is the positioning of the performance within the space provided. For example, the song could be performed upstage, downstage, or centre stage, or the staging could vary throughout the performance. It is not a requirement to have a stage set, such as tables, chairs or other items, in order to discuss staging.

Grade 6 Knowledge: The Musical Genre to Which Each Song Belongs

For the Knowledge section of Grade 6 Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations, the Learner(s) must give a description of the musical genre to which each of their songs belongs.

There are many resources online and in books which offer detailed definitions of a variety of musical theatre genres which we would encourage Teachers and Learners to access. As a starting point, we have created a glossary of some Musical Theatre genres:

Book Musical

A musical that has a narrative journey and is usually based upon a book, screenplay, or historical event. Examples include *Oklahoma!* and *Guys and Dolls*.

Concept Musical

A musical whose book and score are structured around conveying a theme or message, rather than emphasizing a narrative plot. Examples include *Assassins* and *Avenue Q*.

Golden Age Musical

A 'golden age' musical is one that was popular during the golden age of musical theatre, between the years of 1943 and 1959. Many golden age musicals were written by the duo of Rodgers & Hammerstein. Examples include *Carousel* and *The King and I*.

Some people also use the term 'golden age musical' to refer to musical movies which were released between the 1930s and 1950s, such as *The Wizard of Oz* and *Singin' in the Rain*.

Jukebox Musical

A musical that uses previously released popular songs as a musical score; the songs often have a common connection with a musician or group, either written by them or for them. Examples include *Mamma Mia!* and *We Will Rock You*.

Revue

A musical which combines singing, dancing, music, and sketches. The contents of a revue are normally linked together by a common theme. The storyline is basic and normally secondary to the content of the songs and performances. Examples include *Side by Side* and *Tom Foolery*.

Pop/ Rock Musical

A musical featuring original (non-jukebox, non-compilation) scores in the musical style of contemporary pop, rock 'n roll, rap, hip-hop, etc.. Examples include *Hairspray* and *Rent*.

These definitions should only be used as an initial starting point for the Learners preparation for the examination and wider reading and research is encouraged.

Grade 7 Knowledge: The Work and Influence on Musical Theatre of one of the Composer, Librettist or Lyricist

For the Knowledge section of Grade 7 Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations, the Learner(s) must discuss the work and influence of **one** of the composers, librettists or lyricists of their chosen songs (selected by the Examiner at the time of the examination).

Discussion about the chosen composer, librettist or lyricist should focus on the nature of their work, their influence on musical theatre and the Learner's personal response to it, rather than on memorised lists of biographical facts and dates. Answers should be analytical rather than factual. When the Learner is researching the composers, librettists and lyricists, they should consider the following questions:

- Is there something that springs to mind when they hear their name?
- Is there a piece of work that is synonymous with their name? Did it define them or hinder them?
- What is their influence on musical theatre?
- Who inspired them?
- Do they have a definitive style of work, or a theme that they prefer to show?
- Do they write to entertain or educate their audience?
- Have they inspired other composers, librettists or lyricists? If so, who?
- What legacy do they have today?
- Where is the future of their work?
- Why has the learner chosen to sing the work of this particular composer, librettist or lyricist for their examination?

It will help if the Learner(s) have a general knowledge of the composer's, librettist's or lyricist's biography, as it usually gives an insight into the inspiration for their work. For

example, is their work based on their life or on events that happened to them? Are their characters based on people they knew? The Learner(s) should also aim to know one or two other works by the same composer, librettist or lyricist, in addition to the musical/film musical they have chosen for their examination, to inform their answer.

Grade 8 Knowledge: Selecting a Practitioner

For the Knowledge section of Grade 8 Solo/Duo Musical Theatre examinations, the Learner(s) must discuss the influences on musical theatre of **one** of the following practitioners: Bob Fosse, Sonia Friedman, George Gershwin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lin Manuel Miranda, Stephen Sondheim, Andrew Lloyd Webber.

Bob Fosse

- Bob Fosse was born in Chicago on 23 June 1927 and died on 23 September 1987. Fosse was an Actor, choreographer, dancer, director, and screenwriter.

Sonia Friedman

- Sonia Friedman was born in April 1965. Friedman is a theatre director.

George Gershwin

- George Gershwin was born in New York on 26 September 1898 and died on 11 July 1937. Gershwin was a composer and pianist.

Rodgers and Hammerstein

- Richard Rodgers was born in New York on 28 June 1902 and died on 30 December 1979. Rodgers was a composer and playwright.
- Oscar Hammerstein II was born in New York on 12 July 1895 and died on 23 August 1960. Hammerstein was a lyricist, playwright, director, and theatre producer.

Lin Manuel Miranda

- Lin Manuel Miranda was born in New York on 16 January 1980. Miranda is a lyricist, composer, musician, playwright, singer, and actor.

Stephen Sondheim

- Stephen Sondheim was born in New York on 22 March 1930 and died on 26 November 2021. Sondheim was both a lyricist and composer.

Andrew Lloyd Webber

- Andrew Lloyd Webber was born in Kensington in England. He was born on 22 March 1948. Lloyd Webber is a composer, lyricist, and theatre director.

There are a range of primary and secondary sources available in hard copy (books etc.) and digital formats (websites, videos, etc.). Learners are encouraged to read widely and to keep their answers concise, detailed and relevant to the questions.