

DOMMAR®

Study guide for

**GRAND
HOTEL**

THE MUSICAL

Book by

Luther Davis

Music and lyrics by

Robert Wright and George Forrest

Based on the novel by Vicki Baum

Additional music and lyrics by Maury Yeston

Contents

Introduction	Cast and Creative Team
Section One	GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL - a new interpretation from the Donmar Warehouse
Section Two	GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL - a social, political and cultural context.
Section Three	GRAND HOTEL: from Novel to Musical
Section Four	GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL in rehearsal.
Section Five	The Actor and the Musical.
Appendix	Noël Coward – Master Songwriter

Introduction

Cast:

Sarah Annis
Helen Baker
Hattie Bayton
Gillian Bevan
David Birrell
John Conroy
Elizabeth Cooper-Gee
Martyn Ellis
Daniel Evans
Paul Hazel
David Lucas
Graham Macduff
Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio
Joseph Noble
Julian Ovenden
Gary Raymond
Sévan Stephan

Creative Team:

Director: Michael Grandage
Designer: Christopher Oram
Lighting Designer: Hugh Vanstone
Choreographer: Adam Cooper
Musical Director: Jae Alexander
Sound Designer: Terry Jardine for Autograph

GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL - a new interpretation from the Donmar Warehouse

Grand Hotel: The Musical was first staged on Broadway in 1989 and is based on a novel by the Austrian writer Vicki Baum, published in 1929. The musical and the novel are both set in Berlin in 1928.

Grand Hotel: The Musical on Broadway

The Donmar's production of GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL is only the second production of the 1989 musical to be staged in London. The first production was the Broadway original, directed and choreographed by Tommy Tune, which came to London's Dominion Theatre in 1992. As a professional dancer himself, Tune made his production dance led.

Tune's original version of the musical was staged very much in the traditional Broadway vein of razzmatazz: it cost £1 million to produce, had a 36 strong cast and 20 piece band. In New York, the show won five Tony awards and was credited as having revived the prospects of the mainstream American musical.¹ When it opened at the Dominion Theatre, the British critics acknowledged the Broadway roots of the production. Michael Billington, writing in *The Guardian*, said that it had 'the scented luxury of high class soap.' Charles Spencer, writing in *The Telegraph* said:

'It may be schlock, but it's five star schlock, corn with class. This is a show for all those who occasionally enjoy a couple of mindlessly entertaining hours with a big box of chocolates.... The director/choreographer Tommy Tune brings a Big Apple flair to the proceedings... The set is dominated by lavish chandeliers, fairy lights twinkle, and Tune has come up with some elegant dance routines that are a cut above your average tune and toe show.'

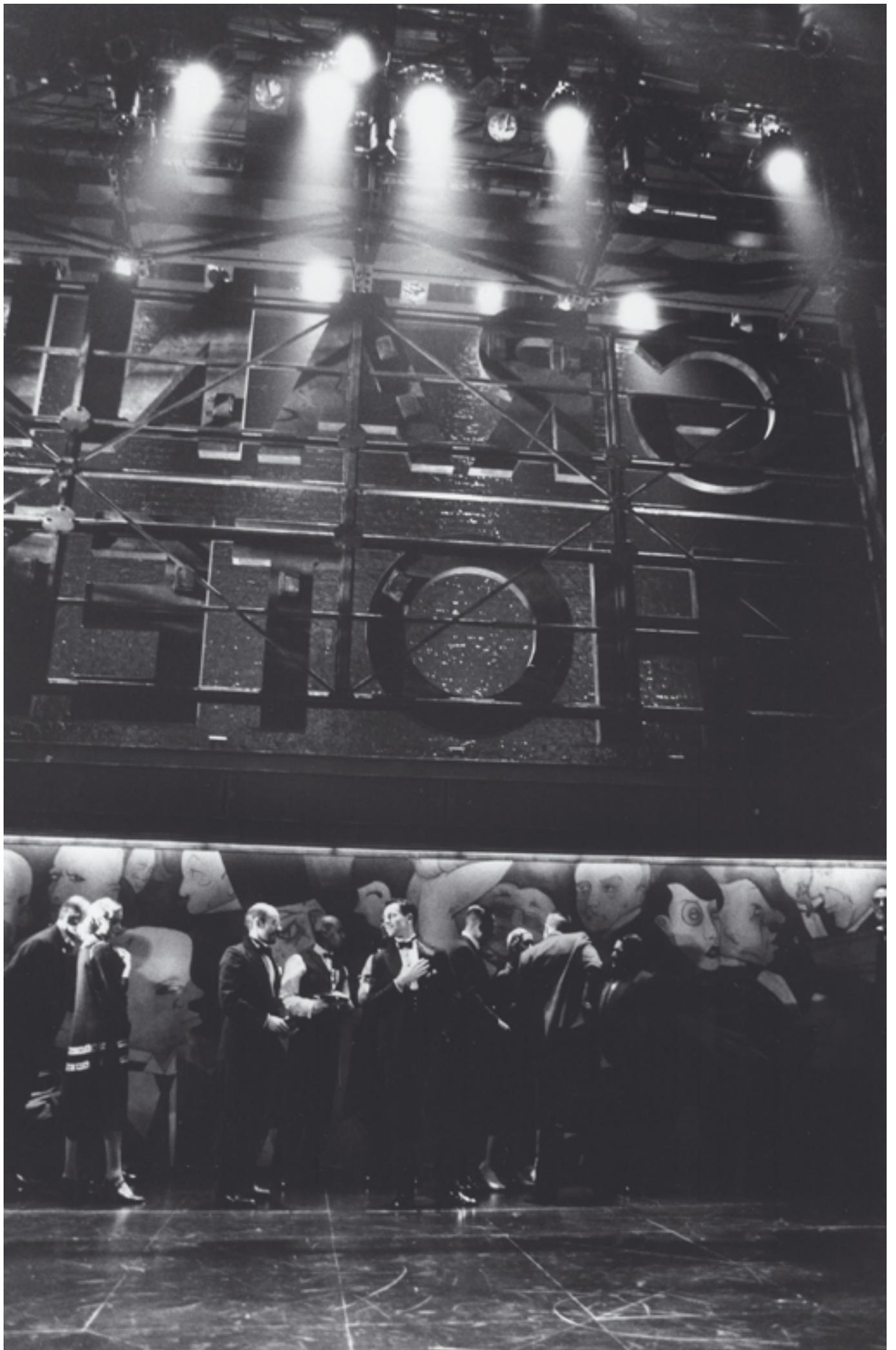
An extract from Charles Spencer's review of Tommy Tune's *Grand Hotel*, Daily Telegraph, July 7, 1992²



Discussion Point

What is your understanding of the term 'traditional Broadway musical'?

Charles Spencer, in his review for the Broadway production of *Grand Hotel: The Musical*, staged at the Dominion, states that Tommy Tune has 'come up with some elegant dance routines that are a cut above your average tune and toe show.' What do you think he means by the term 'average tune and toe show'?



GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL at the Donmar

The Donmar's production of GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL is actor led. It is the actor who shows us the journey of these characters. The choreography is also actor-led, with the movement originating from characterisation.

'It is a new way of presenting GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL, a re-evaluation of the musical with only one production under its wing'

Michael Grandage, Director, GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL

Creating the environment of the Grand Hotel on the Donmar's stage.

KRINGELEIN: Oh, Baron sir – my friend – if it weren't for you I wouldn't be part of this wonderland, this wonderful wonderland!

Grand Hotel: The Musical, Scene vii, page 44

Michael Grandage, Artistic Director of the Donmar and the director of GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL told his cast at the first rehearsal that this production of the musical would be actor-led: it would be the actors who would define how GRAND HOTEL was played in the space. The 'space' was very much theirs to utilise.

To help the actors achieve this, designer Christopher Oram has created an abstract space in his design of the production. He has taken all literal elements of set and furniture away from the design, enabling the ensemble to create the ambience and setting of the Grand Hotel, right down to them recreating the hotel lobby's revolving doors.

The Donmar's stage wraps around on three sides and the musical is staged to accommodate this. It will be viewed by an audience from three different angles. This is both challenging and liberating for the actors, who can use diagonals more liberally than in a traditional proscenium setting.

Below a balcony situated on the back wall and next to the signage for the Grand Hotel is a mural inspired by the German artist Otto Dix. Dix was working in Berlin during the period in which the musical is set and the mural gives the setting a sense of the life during the era. (See Section Two for further autobiographical details about Otto Dix).

The entire cast is on stage throughout the show, which lasts for just under two hours, and at times, up to half a dozen actors make it a 'living' mural as they assemble at the back of the stage.

The hotel staff keep the journey flowing and set up scenes. There is something of a contradiction in the aesthetic they create: at one level the environment is run down, and seedy, yet it is 'grand' at the same time. It is certainly a bleak world where all the characters are dysfunctional at some level.

“There is a dark story at the centre of the novel – a novel that invites actors to examine character at a deep level - and it is a direct journey from the book to the musical”

Michael Grandage, Director, GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL

The design creates both an interior and an exterior space. The stage area represents the interior of the Grand Hotel, the balcony above it represents the exterior, identifiable by neon signs and the effects of falling rain; the cold outside world versus the warm world of the hotel. The sign for the hotel is deliberately shown from the back as opposed to the front, to represent a grand place that is now in decline. None the less, it's still the place people want to go.

‘In the corridor an electrician was kneeling on the floor, busied over some repair to the wires. Ever since they had had those powerful lights to illuminate the hotel frontage there had always been something going wrong with the overworked installation of the hotel’

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 2

These elements of the design create a sense of restlessness and foreboding of what we, the audience, know is to befall Berlin in the following years: the Wall Street crash and the political rise of Hitler. (See Section Two for further details). The Grand Hotel becomes the microcosm of a society being drip -feed the poison of a money-obsessed culture. It is in this place that Flammchen accepts the idea of becoming a prostitute, the Baron becomes a thief and the morally superior Preysing becomes a lair – all decisions made to empower their economic status.

Mirrored panels create the effect of a busy hotel with a constant hubbub – fluid in movement. The floor is black polished parquet with brass square inlay.

A sense of period has been created with short bob hairstyles for the women, and by using period colours -a tonal range of reds, browns and ochres. To keep within budget, many of the costumes have been hired – bearing in mind that they need to be durable enough to be worn for 8 shows a week.

The genesis of this musical was Broadway, therefore the actors in the original production used their native American accents. Staging a piece set in Berlin in another European capital needs a more realistic palette. So, the base accent for the Donmar’s production is a neutral, straightforward British received pronunciation. The characters who come into the world of Grand Hotel from a different place – such as Grushinskaya - have accents to reflect this.



Discussion Point

After you have seen the production, consider the ways in which Christopher Oram’s abstract design has enabled the actors to create the world of the Grand Hotel.



Grushinskaya



Hermann Preysing



Flaemmchen



Otto Kringlein



Baron Felix Amadeus
Benvenuto von
Gaigern

The Guests

DOCTOR: Grand Hotel, Berlin. Always the same. People come. People go. Look at them – living the high life! But time is running out.

(Introducing them.)

The great Grushinskaya – the fabled ballerina making a farewell tour. Her eighth.

Raffaella – her devoted companion.

Hermann Preysing – a businessman reporting to his stockholders.

Miss Frieda Flamm – a typist.

(Adds, as FLAEMMCHEN shows a lot of leg.)

But not for long.

Otto Kringlein – a bookkeeper looking for “Life”!

The famous ladies’ man, Baron Felix Amadeus Benvenuto von Gaigern, heir to a small title – and large debts.

Grand Hotel: The Musical, prologue, page 4

Michael Grandage’s artistic intent was to pare down the musical to get to heart of what he perceives to be a dark and bleak piece. This artistic style lends itself to the intimacy of the Donmar’s stage -which has a capacity of 250 - and is in marked contrast to the Broadway original staged at the Dominion Theatre – which has a capacity of 2 000. There are 17 performers in the ensemble for the Donmar’s production of GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL, as opposed to the 36 performers in the original Broadway production; the musicians number 5, as opposed to the 20-piece band of the original.

The smaller cast size has been carefully calculated through combining some roles. For example, the role of Sandor, the Hungarian Theatre Impresario, has been combined with that of Witt, the company manager of Grushinskaya’s ballet troupe; the performers playing the Two Jimmys also find themselves playing ‘the have nots’ in the scenes involving the hotel staff. Overall, the role of the ensemble has been increased to accommodate playing a range of parts. The challenge for the performers in taking on these multiple roles is to ensure that they have thoroughly investigated the world of each character they are playing. (See Section Four GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL in rehearsal, for more information on this area).

As the production is actor-led, the creative concept is that there is no such thing as ‘dead time’ – all the characters’ objectives have been thoroughly investigated. We need to approach it as if we’re staging Chekhov.

Michael Grandage, Director, GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL, talking in rehearsal

GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL - a social, political and cultural context.

GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL is set in 1928 Berlin during the Weimar Republic, midway between the World Wars and at the height of the stock-market boom – a time when Berlin was regarded as one of the world’s great centres of high life. However, the musical was written in the late 1980s and the Donmar’s production is being performed from November 2004 to February 2005. This means that its author, Luther Davis, and us, its audience – have the foreknowledge of history. We know that the musical depicts a society on the point of collapse – the stock market crash was just around the corner and Hitler was to seize power only five years later. This makes the musical a haunting piece, full of foreboding of financial disaster and racial persecution, whilst at the same time evoking the old times of the Weimar Republic.

Theatre, culture and art in 1928 Berlin

In 1928 Berlin, the generation who had fought in the First World War had either died, or, like the Doctor, had been physically and/or emotionally scarred by its effects. The devastating consequences of war sat uncomfortably with the traditional artifice of illusory theatre. As the Doctor says of Gruyshinskaya’s performance:

DOCTOR: So Grushinskaya doesn’t sell out anymore? I’m not surprised. She’s still doing dances about dying swans in an age when an entire generation of young men was wiped out.

Grand Hotel: The Musical, Scene i, page 17

The cultural life of 1928 Berlin reflected a curious mix of truth and raw reality demanded by those who had witnessed the atrocities of war, coupled with the hedonism of a society which found itself liberated from a pre-war imperialist straightjacket. The city became a hotbed of art, politics, entertainment and high living that radiated its influence over the rest of Europe. Cafes, elegant hotels, cabarets, music and concert halls, theatres and cinemas attracted talented entertainers, avant-garde artists, writers and musicians of the age.

Bertolt Brecht and Kurt Weill

Two of the most prominent names working in the theatre of Berlin at this time were the playwright and director Bertolt Brecht and his collaborator, the musician and composer Kurt Weill.

In 1928, the year in which *Grand Hotel: The Musical* is set, Brecht and Weill wrote and composed *The Threepenny Opera*, an adaptation of John Gay's popular eighteenth century musical *The Beggar's Opera*. By reinventing the form of Opera, Brecht and Weill were creating a new type of musical theatre. It was an opera with music that could be sung by actors and accessed by a new audience. Thematically, the piece reflects one of Brecht's main preoccupations as a writer: how human relations are affected or determined by economic forces. In the piece, Brecht presents us with a world of commodities, where morality and loyalty are traded like stocks and shares.

When Hitler came to power in the 1930s, both Brecht and Weill sort refuge from Nazi Germany in America.



Otto Dix

Christopher Oram, the designer of *GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL*, has chosen the style of one of the most prominent German artists working in Berlin at the time, Otto Dix, as his inspiration for the mural created for the back wall of the set.

Otto Dix fought for the German Army in the First World War. He fought on the Western Front in 1915 and was at the Somme during the major allied offensive during the summer of 1916. Dix was wounded several times during the war and, on one occasion, nearly died when a shrapnel splinter hit him in the neck. After the war Dix developed left wing political views reflected in the nature and subject matter of his paintings. Like other German Artists, such as John Heartfield and George Grosz, Dix was angry about the way that wounded and crippled ex-soldiers were treated in Germany. This was reflected in paintings such as *War Cripples* (1920), *Butcher's Shop*, (1920) and *War Wounded* (1922).

When Adolf Hitler came to power in Germany in 1933, the Nazi government had Dix sacked from his post as art tutor at the Dresden Academy, as they disliked his anti-military paintings. Whilst the Nazis were in power, artists could

only practice their craft if they were members of the Imperial Chamber of Fine Arts, membership of which was controlled by the Nazi government. In 1934 Dix was accepted as a member in return for agreeing to paint landscapes instead of political subjects. Although Dix mainly painted landscapes during this period, he still produced the occasional allegorical painting which contained coded attacks on the Nazi regime.³



Discussion Point

Earlier on in this section the Doctor was quoted as saying that he wasn't surprised Grushinskaya didn't sell out anymore because she was 'still doing dances about dying swans in an age when an entire generation of young men was wiped out.' Her art was no longer relevant to her audience.

Why do you think that the Donmar chose to revive GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL at this point in time? In what ways is the production relevant for a contemporary audience?

The Weimar Republic

The society and culture of the Weimar Republic – which lasted for only 14 years – has become legendary as an era steeped in style, sex and hedonism. Its film stars, from Marlene Dietrich to Greta Garbo, have been mythologized; its artists, from Otto Dix to George Grosz, have been constantly celebrated for their jarring originality. It was a society born out of the end of the Victorian-style imperial censorship practiced by the Kaiser's Reich. When the post - First World War Weimar Republic was created, it was dedicated to democracy which meant liberation for a generation who had been destroyed by war. Overnight, women were emancipated politically and sexually. Little did they know that the Nazis were watching and waiting for the opportunity to quash everything the Republic stood for. At times it seems as if the Weimar's artists had a foreboding of what was to come. Mortality and corruption infuses most of the great art of the period. The legendary film which made Marlene Dietrich a star, *Der Blaue Engel* (The Blue Angel), was an adaptation of Heinrich Mann's novel, *Dr Unrat*, a play on the words between wisdom (Rat) and folly (Unrat) – the two stools between which the Weimar Republic fell.⁴

Weimar Germany from 1924 to 1929 is referred to as either the "Golden Age of Weimar" or the "Stresemann Years", referring to the Weimar's President of the period, Gustav Stresemann. This period saw Berlin at its cultural, economic and hedonistic peak. Stresemann died in 1929, just before the event that was to have a devastating economic impact on the Weimar Republic – the Wall Street Crash of 1929. The crash of the American Stock Market caused chaos in the Weimar Republic because its economy had been built up on American loans after the First World War.⁵ This event is foreshadowed in GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL through Preysing's financial struggle to keep his company solvent.

However, in 1928 - the year in which GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL is set - Berlin is still at the height of the "Golden Age of Weimar" and this sets the tone for the piece. As Luther Davis, the Musical's author comments:

In 1928 most people suffered from an excess of hope and optimism (illusions that few retained after the 1929 stock market crash, when the play and movie were produced). Our Baron Felix, at least initially, believes that he'll make a killing in the stock market and pay off all his debts; Flaemmchen has little doubt that she can get the money she needs without prostituting

herself. Preysing believes that a timely merger will save his company; Kringelein hopes that being in the Grand Hotel will make his life of drudgery worth while.⁶

Observation point

When you see the Donmar's production of GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL, consider to what extent the title song introduces a sense of the excesses of the Weimar Republic.

If you are familiar with the musical theatre of Kurt Weill, also consider how the title song is similar to his musical style.

Economics and social status

'Page-boy No. 18, Karl Nispe, crept up the stairs and stopped, crept on, stopped and crept on again. The rings under his eyes were as black as if they had been painted. He swallowed his saliva – for he suffered from those nervous pangs of hunger that afflict most hotel employees. He came from a wretched slum, a backyard, to his duties in the hotel lounge with its pillars, its carpets, its Venetian curtain, and it was to this slum, with its drab poverty, that he disappeared when his time on duty was over.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 275.

Economics as a determining factor of social status is a distinguishing feature in Vicki Baum's novel, which has been carried through into the musical. From the production's opening sequence the 'haves' - the hotel guests- are cheek by jowl on stage with the 'have nots' – the Hotel staff; Kringelein, working class and Jewish, is denied a place at the Grand Hotel until the aristocratic Baron intercedes on his behalf:



Otto Kringelein

KRINGELEIN: Please tell me: I see people leaving with their bags. Why is it you have no room for *me*? It is possible Grand Hotel does not take jews?

ROHNA: Nonsense! I assure you, Baron Rothschild is even now upstairs in the Prince Albert Suite.

KRINGELEIN: Sir, when you have millions of marks you're maybe not so Jewish anymore.

Grand Hotel: The Musical, Scene i, pages 19 to 20

The acquisition or retention of financial security is a concern to all the guests – and indeed staff – at the Grand Hotel. In keeping with the climate of the time, morality and conscience appear to be wrestling with economic need, from Flaemmchen’s decision to prostitute herself to secure her financial position, and the Baron’s attempt to steal Grushinskaya’s jewels to secure his, to Preysing’s endeavours to save his company from financial ruin.

ZINNOWITZ: We’ve got to buy time. At the meeting today you’ll have to tell them the merger is on.

PREYSING: You mean lie to them? My God, I couldn’t do that!

ZINNOWITZ: Don’t be a fool....

PREYSING: You shouldn’t even suggest such a thing! You, a lawyer –

ZINNOWITZ: Oh, I forgot. You’re the model of an honest businessman.

PREYSING: Yes, I am!

ZINNOWITZ: Well, wake up, for God’s sake! You’ve been living in the dark ages! This is 1928!

Grand Hotel, Scene ii, pages 37-8

The stock exchange was the principal route for the acquisition of money. The wealth of the Weimar Republic was built on American money and by trading in stocks and shares – which is why the Wall Street Crash in 1929 devastated the republic’s economy.

KRINGELEIN: Hello, could I offer you two beautiful people a cocktail? The barman just recommended something called a Louisiana Flip. I wonder, is it Kosher?

BARON: I’m afraid I can’t, Old Socks, the New York Stock Exchange will be opening in minutes. Are you interested in the stock market, Mister Kringelein?

KRINGELEIN: Oh no, I never gamble.

BARON: Pity.

KRINGELEIN: Pity?

BARON: That’s how these people can afford to spend their days “making pleasure,” as you put it.

Grand Hotel, Scene ii, page 46

As previously mentioned, by approaching a production of the musical today, both the audience and the creative team have the knowledge of what was to beset these characters in terms of the 1929 crash and the shadow of Nazism and the Second World War. In rehearsal for the Donmar’s production, it was decided that Flaammchen didn’t get to Hollywood and achieve her theatrical ambitions; her life was overtaken by the events of the Second World War.



Practical Exercise

After you have seen GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL, use the background material printed here about the social, cultural and economic context of the period, to decide what happens to a chosen character after the events depicted in the production.



GRAND HOTEL: from Novel to Musical

‘The show has no songs in the conventional sense. It is a continuous flow of music. Do you know the key sentence in the opening chapter of the original novel? “At the Grand Hotel the music never stopped.” ’

Tommy Tune, director and choreographer of the original Broadway production of *Grand Hotel The Musical*

Grand Hotel: The Musical is based on the book, MENSCHEN IM HOTEL (People in a Hotel, 1929) written by the Austrian popular novelist, Vicki Baum (1880 – 1960). The book is usually translated into English as *Grand Hotel*. It was the novel that started Baum’s career as one of the most widely-read authors of her time. Baum’s novel was made into an Oscar winning film in Hollywood in 1932 under the title *Grand Hotel*, starring Greta Garbo, Joan Crawford, Wallace Beery, and Lionel Barrymore. The film has become synonymous with one of Garbo’s most legendary lines:

“I want to be alone...I think I have never been so tired in my life.”

Greta Garbo as Grusinskaya in the MGM film of *Grand Hotel*, 1932.

In his introduction to the libretto of *Grand Hotel: The Musical*, the author, Luther Davis states that when writing the musical, he worked from Vicki Baum’s 1928 novel, not the 1931 play or the 1933 MGM movie. The distinction is important to Davis as he has used the tone and ages of the characters in the novel as the guide to recreating them for the musical. Unlike in the novel though, his characters are ‘morally virgins’⁸ at the outset:

*Felix owes but hasn’t stolen; Preysing has never defrauded his stockholders. Flaemmchen knows in her heart that there is a good chance she’s not pregnant – and why shouldn’t she hope for a film career? In actuality only two years earlier, Marlene Dietrich was spotted for her first theatre job while sipping tea in one of the restaurants in the Adlon – Ms. Baum’s model for her *Grand Hotel*.⁹*

As already mentioned, the novel is imbued with a sense of the class structure of 1928 Berlin, which is transposed into the ‘haves’ and ‘have nots’ in the musical:

‘The rain had stopped. White and yellow lights were reflected in the wet surface of Kantstrasse; policemen were regulating the traffic; the destitute were eagerly opening the doors of motor cars for those in fur coats to step in.’

***Grand Hotel*, Vicki Baum, page 32**

Christopher Oram drew out elements of the novel to incorporate into his design concept for the production:

'The novel is quite salacious; Baum is obsessed with the world it is set in – the cigars, cars and the smell of petrol – a world beautiful and elegant – but dirty.'

'Outside the window there was a chill March rain, a smell of petrol and the sound of motor traffic. Opposite, an electric sign in red, blue and white letters occupied the whole façade.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 15

As cited earlier, Michael Grandage believes that there is a dark story at the centre of the novel – a novel that invites actors to examine character at a deep level - and it is a direct journey from book to the musical. The novel was important to the cast and creative team in creating an authentic setting for the production and as the basis for creating the back-story for their characters. Characterisation was the starting point for choreographer Adam Cooper in establishing the movement for the piece. He approached the piece as if he was choreographing a play – looking at movement in terms of how the character would move.





Practical Exercise: movement and choreography

- Read the descriptions of the characters quoted directly from Vicki Baum's novel listed below.
- Use the descriptions to create a vocabulary of movements ranging from one opposite to another, for your interpretation of a chosen character. For example, Grusinskaya's movement vocabulary could range from 'light flower' to the oppositional 'wounded animal.'
- Once you have created a vocabulary of movement for your chosen character, find a partner who has worked on a contrasting character. Create a sequence which shows your two characters interacting, and, in so doing, illustrating a 'story' for moving from one end of their movement range to the other. The sequence should be non verbal and rely solely on movement.
- Present your movement sequence to the rest of the group.
- As a group, discuss how this exercise furthers your understanding of the character, both from the perspective of a performer and an audience.
- Finally, use what you have discovered about your character to create a group improvisation to show the characters arriving in the lobby of the Grand Hotel. You may add dialogue in this exercise.



The Doctor

'A tall gentleman in the lounge got up stiffly out of an easy chair and came with bent head towards the porter's desk. He loitered for a bit round the Lounge before approaching the entrance hall. The impression he made was emphatically one of listlessness and boredom as he glanced at the magazines displayed on the little bookstall and lit a cigarette.....His face, it must be said, consisted of one-half only...The other half was not there. In place of it was a confused medley of seams and scars, crossing and overlapping, and among them was set a glass eye. "A Souvenir from Flanders," Doctor Otternschlag was accustomed to call it when talking to himself.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 3

'Doctor Otternschlag roused himself from his dreams as strenuously as any much-occupied man, and then he lay where he was and wondered at himself. "What's up?" ...then for a minute or two he lay still and thought hard, with the disfigured side of his face pressed into the rough linen of the hotel pillow. Wait a bit, he thought – it's that Kringelein, poor fellow. We have to show him a bit of life. He's waiting for us. He's sitting waiting for us in the breakfast-room.

"Shall we get up and dress?" he asked himself. "Yes, so we will," he replied after an effort, for he had a good sleeping draft of morphine in his veins. Nevertheless, there was a certain alacrity about him as he hurried here and there over his dressing. Somebody was waiting for him. Somebody was grateful to him. With one sock in his hand, he sat on the edge of his bed and fell into considering plans. He made a programme for the day. ...He was important and sought after. The chamber-maid as she took a broom and pail out of a closet next door to Room No. 218 was astonished to hear Doctor Otternschlag humming a song after a fashion while he brushed his teeth...'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 179



The Baron

'There was a smell of lavender and expensive cigarettes, immediately followed by a man whose appearance was so striking that many heads were turned to look at him. He was unusually tall and extremely well dressed and his step was as elastic as a cat's or a tennis champion's.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 5

'The great thing was to keep calm. The Baron moved cautiously to the edge of the balcony and looked over. His craving for a cigarette reached the pitch of disease. He opened his mouth wide and took in a gulp of damp petrol-laden air.'

The Baron on his mission to steal Grusinskaya's jewels from her room, Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 5



Grusinskaya

'That's Grusinskaya,' says the Hall Porter, and began to sort the letters with his right hand. "That's the dancer. We know her – for eighteen years past. She gets a fit of nerves every night before she goes on the stage, and then she makes a row.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, pages 2 - 3

'The curtain came down. It met the stage with the dull thud of heavy iron. Grusinskaya, who but a moment before circled as light as a flower among her troupe of girls, crept panting into the nearest wing, utterly dazed, she grasped the brawny arm of a sceneshifter. Her hand shook and she grasped for breath like a wounded animal.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 23

'Do you know, you are so light. As light as anything. No more than a little foam in a glass of champagne.' (the Baron addressing Grusinskaya).'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 132



Kringelein

...the revolving door discharged an extraordinary individual into the entrance hall. "Heaven help us, here he comes again!" the Hall Porter said to little Georgi and turned his best N.C.O.s gaze upon the new arrival. He was certainly not the sort of person you would expect to see in the hall of the Grand Hotel. He wore a cheap new bowler hat that was too large for him and only prevented by his projecting ears from coming even farther down his face. His face was yellowish, and he had a thin and timid nose which was retrieved by an aggressive moustache. He was clothed in a tight, much worn and sadly unfashionable overcoat of a grey-green shade, blacked boots that looked too large for his small stature and showed too much of their tops below his short black trousers. He wore grey cotton gloves and grasped a suitcase. It was much too heavy for him and he held it against his stomach with both hands. Besides this he had a bulky brown –paper parcel clapped under one arm. His whole appearance was comic and pitiful.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 9

'Kringelein was by no means stupid; he was very willing to learn; and it had not taken him long to see that he had been badly brought up and did not know how to make proper use of the array of knives and forks before him. During the whole evening he could not rid himself of a horrible nervous tremor. Embarrassment over tips, and wrong doors and puzzled inquiries kept him in a constant state of painful confusion.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, pages 40 to 41

'There is a sweet, a bitter, and triumphant sense of freedom in those for whom death is decreed. Kringelein could find no word for it; but, whenever it came over him, he was forced to catch his breath in a heavy sigh.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 41



General Director Preysing

'General Director Preysing, a large heavy man, rather too stout, arrived at the hotel at the impossible hour of 6.20 a.m.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 53

'General Director Preysing was an excellent fellow, correct, straightforward, of irreproachable character. But he was not a business genius. He lacked imagination, persuasiveness and push. Whenever he was asked to come up with an important decision, he floundered on slippery ice. He could not even tell a lie with any power of conviction in it. He produced only little feeble abortions of business lies. He soon began to stammer and beads of sweat appeared on his upper lip beneath his moustache.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 58

'"I refuse," he shouted, "I refuse to have this affair with England mixed up with the business before us. ...I reckon with facts, with actualities, with figures..."', he cried, as he smote three times with his flat of hand on the file of papers before him. ...

He pulled himself up in alarm. He had galloped off like a runaway horse over a bog. I'll end up scaring them off with my noise, he thought in horror.'

Preysing addressing his shareholders, Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 58

Flaemmchen



In the lounge sat Flaemmchen...She was leaning back in an arm-chair as though she was quite at home in such surroundings; she swung one foot in a neat shoe of light blue leather, and looked as if she was out to have a jolly good time...When she stood up she showed that she was taller than the General Director. Her legs were long and her figure from head to foot was magnificent. She wore a tight leather belt round her remarkably slender waist.'

Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 76

'She ran from the room, through doors and door, pulled herself together from the verge of collapse and ran on stumbling. She saw doors, nothing but doors. "Help," she cried faintly, "Help". All the doors swayed before her eyes and all were shut.'

Flaemmchen on discovering the dead body of the Baron, Grand Hotel, Vicki Baum, page 282

Vicki Baum, author of the novel, *Grand Hotel*

Vicki Baum was born in Vienna into a Jewish family. Music became her profession and, as a young woman she moved to Germany after a failed marriage. During World War I Baum worked for a short time as a nurse, and married conductor Richard Lert in 1916, who had been her best friend since childhood. In 1926 her and her husband went to Berlin, where she worked as an editor for the publishing company Ullstein-Verlag.

It was here that her literary breakthrough novel, *People in a Hotel*, was published in 1929. The story about a fading prima ballerina, shady nobleman, and other types who in one weekend pass through an elegant hotel was told with an acute perception of minor detail. Baum had taken a job as a parlour maid in a hotel for six weeks to gather material for her novel. She dramatized the text for the Berlin stage in the same year. The play turned into a sensation and its English language adaptation gained huge success in New York in the early 1930s. Irving Thalberg, the famous MGM producer, got the synopsis of Baum's play in 1930 and by 1932 it was made into a film.

In the 1930s Baum emigrated with her family to the United States and became a screenwriter in Hollywood. Her popular books were banned in Hitler's Germany. The rise of Nazism and the subsequent outbreak of the Second World War influenced Baum's writing during this period. These later novels often depicted powerful, self-reliant women caught up the social and economic turbulence of the 20th-century Europe or the US. Starting in 1941 with *The Ship and the Shore* she wrote all her books in English, and produced a novel every two or three years. Baum died of leukaemia in Hollywood on August 29, 1960.

section 4

GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL in rehearsal.



The first week of rehearsal was pre-occupied with learning the songs and the steps to the period dances, such as the Charleston and the fox trot. A lot of the work took place in groups.

Every scene of the piece - bar two - is underscored, so a priority during rehearsal was to work on how the human voice dominated the textual elements of the production.

A morning in week three of rehearsal

'What is GRAND HOTEL all about? It is about life in a hotel, but only for 48/72 hours. Tomorrow there will be another set of people coming through the hotels' revolving doors. The rhythm set in this opening sequence is constantly broken, highlighting that the piece is all about different lives with different energies. The piece is very well constructed to do this.'

Michael Grandage working with the cast during rehearsals for GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL

GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL opens with a 15 minute sequence involving the entire cast. The sequence creates the setting for the hotel and introduces the audience to the guests and staff we will encounter during our visit. Creating this scene was the first undertaking for the ensemble. They had to learn the musical numbers, weave in choreography and incorporate the dialogue with precision over the underscored music.

The opening sequence establishes the conventions of how the ensemble will be using the space, in particular the all too crucial lobby area where a lot of the action will take place.

The first phase of today's rehearsal focused on this task. The second phase concentrated on 'animating' the lobby. Whenever the performers are in their lobby, they need to work on the creating its 'hub-bub' and set up the language of the production which will be returned to later on. As Michael Grandage told the ensemble, 'you will need to get your character based improvising heads on. If the audience tune in on you they will see a 1920's character led improvisation.'

Observation point

When you see the Donmar's production of GRAND HOTEL, consider the following questions:

What is the level of energy created by the ensemble during the production's opening sequence?

How are the location and the atmosphere of the Grand Hotel created?

How are the main characters introduced to the audience in this sequence?

Can you identify the establishing of distinct social groups in the sequence?

Were there any 'character led improvisations' that you were specifically drawn to and can you say why they held your attention?

'GRAND HOTEL is peculiar in its linear route. It is not a piece of theatre where we wait for the story. It starts straight away and is disparate - it gives you something and then takes it away.'

**Michael Grandage working with the cast during rehearsals
for GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL**

The ensemble then went on to rehearse Scene viii, where General Director Preysing confronts the shareholders of his company at a difficult business meeting.

Below are extracts taken from the scene, with acting notes given by Michael Grandage during the rehearsal, documenting the creation of the 'characters' of the shareholders.

FLAMMCHEN: Let's fox trot! *to Kringelein and they join other dancing couples from the ensemble who fill the stage.*

DOCTOR: Look at him – dancing! Dancing as if his body were sound, as if his life would go on for ever! How we cling to this nonsense! *Doctor moves amongst the dancing couples as he says this line, as the music becomes darker.*

Seamless transition into Scene viii: *A Meeting Room in the Hotel* – the dancing couples become a line of shareholders to whom Flammchen distributes news of the stocks on sheets of paper to the shareholders as they sing a verse from ‘What’s the news from Massachusetts?’

Acting note: Remember – you are all cigar-smoking hardened stockbrokers – take the paper and know how your character would respond.

1st STOCKHOLDER: If you don’t have Boston, are there any other American companies showing interest?

PREYSING: I did not say we don’t have Boston! A merger is not important to us!

Acting note: The shareholders will react to this line – because a merger is what they want.

PREYSING: What should matter to you shareholders is our past record of profit – profits which will come again! Of course they’ll come again!

SHAREHOLDERS: When...?? Yes, when, Preysing...? Boston merger or liquidate, I say...! Let’s vote...! Yes, vote! Vote! Vote (etc)

2nd SHAREHOLDER: Point of order. Read the motion before us!

SHAREHOLDERS: Read the motion.

Acting note: I don’t mind the ad-libs ‘fizzing’ here. Your intention should be to listen to Preysing and want Zinnowitz to read the motion.

PREYSING: Mister Zinnowitz, read the damn thing.

ZINNOWITZ The motion is – (Reads from notes)

“In the absence of a firm offer from Boston, and in view of the heavy operating losses incurred, the employment of the General Director Preysing is terminated.”

(SHAREHOLDERS: Moans and jeers etc.)

Acting note: This news prompts Preysing to face the audience and consider its implications

PREYSING: Terminated –

The entire company form a line at the back of the stage singing the refrain ‘What’s the news from Massachusetts? Is the Boston Merger on?’

Acting note: You want to hear that it is on. Remember, you are the company that have raised the motion to get rid of the Managing Director, Preysing.

You know that Zinnowitz has this motion in his pocket – you need to take affirmative action to save your money and your own skins.

At the same time, Zinnowitz sings to Preysing, encouraging him to 'Take the crooked path boy/ give yourself a break./No one ever made a living giving when he had the chance to take!'

DOCTOR: Take the crooked path boy...CAW! CAW! CAW!

PREYSING *goes upstage to face the shareholders and takes from his pocket the radiogram he received earlier.*

PREYSING: Ladies and gentlemen – I have just received a radiogram – from America – The Boston merger is definitely – on!

Acting note: Shareholders, you need to respond to this with a big exhalation, 'Yes', so you are not just 'a chorus in a musical'. You need to listen to Jae (the Musical Director) like hawks –so you add this before your cue to continue singing.

Observation point

When you see this scene in production, consider the following points:

Michael Grandage states that the action of GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL should flow continuously from scene to scene. How is this achieved in this section of the production?

How do the performers create individual characters for the shareholders? Describe the characterisation of one of the shareholders whose performance you were drawn to during the scene.



Practical Exercise

Printed below is the close of Scene viii, the two short scenes that follow it, and the start of Scene xi. Working as an ensemble, explore creative ways of moving swiftly between each scene's transition to the next scene, paying particular attention the role played by the chorus.

The SHAREHOLDERS sing

THE BOSTON MERGER,
THE BOSTON MERGER,
THE BOSTON MERGER,
THE BOSTON MERGER IS
ON!

As PREYSING, (to himself, exultantly.)

My God – I did it! I did it!

(SEVERAL STOCKHOLDERS lift PREYSING and carry him out in triumph.)

CAW,
CAW,
CAW,
CAW.
CAW!

Scene ix

Far upstage we see what seems to be the stage of a theatre where Grushinskaya is dancing. GRUNHINSKAYA is facing her audience Off Up. As GRUSHINSKAYA, back to us, dances part of her "Giselle," we hear:

COMPANY FIRE AND ICE,
PASSION AND SHEER PERFECTION.
ON THE STAGE FEARLESSLY FLYING!"
FIRE AND ICE! FIRE AND ICE"
FIRE AND ICE! FIRE AND ICE"

Scene x: The Financial Corner of the lobby

The BARON and KRINGELEIN approach a period stock ticker. The BARON picks up a long tape, finds a quote, hands it to KRINGELEIN.

BARON: Here! Look! Radio Corporation of America – hot, hot stock! Hot! If one had bought a couple of hundred shares last week – well, one would be able to afford many new suits! And evening clothes?

KRINGELEIN: Baron, what do I need with evening clothes? Except to be buried in.

BARON: It's crazy not to own stocks today. A famous American broker is in the hotel right now. Why not meet him? Why not take a little flyer in the market, Old Socks?

(Starts to lead KRINGELEIN off.)

KRINGELEIN: My God, "Old Socks," me buy stocks? Me? Now that would be a meshugana thing to do!

(KRINGELEIN exits. CHAUFFEUR enters and holds the BARON back for a moment to confide.)

CHAUFFEUR: That necklace belongs to the ballerina in room 510. This is her big opening night – get it while she's busy at the theatre.

Scene xi: Backstage at Ballet Theatre, and the façade or roof of Grand Hotel

(GRUSHINSKAYA is finishing GISELLE, SHE drops to the floor in a low, grand bow. From her audience comes a sibilant hiss, a few chuckles, a scatter of insultingly light applause. GRUSHINSKAYA bolts and runs off the ballet stage and into Raffaella's arms.

BARON appears elsewhere onstage, climbing up portal or edge of set.)

GRUSHINSKAYA: Did you hear? Did you hear? Oh, my God, they hated me!

RAFFAELA: No, no, Madame, they loved you.

(BARON makes his way along a grid or ladder at considerable risk to life and limb.)

GRUSHINSKAYA: Loved? No applause! No encore!

RAFFAELA: Madame, you must change for the swan –

GRUSHINSKAYA: (Hands Raffaella some article of costuming.) Get understudy ready. I am never going back on a stage

(BARON reaches what seems to be Grushinska's terrace.)

(GRUSHINSKAYA starts off; RAFFAELA holds her back.)

(BARON GETS INTO HER ROOM.)

RAFFAELA: Madame, no! – Where are you going?

GRUSHINSKAYA: Go back to the hotel! No encore! No encore!

(RAFFAELA, torn, starts to follow, but then hurries in opposite direction, calling.)

(BARON finds a handful of her clothes – holds them up admiringly – goes on rummaging, but not finding necklace...)

RAFFAELA: Get Madame's understudy ready! Madame is ill!

(GRUSHINSKAYA is seen running frantically, perhaps pushing passersbys aside.)

GRUSHINSKAYA: No encore! No encore!

COMPANY: "FIRE AND ICE! FIRE AND ICE
FIRE AND ICE! FIRE AND ICE"

GRUSHINSKAYA: NO ENCORE!

COMPANY: NO ENCORE!

The Actor and the Musical.

FLAEMMCHEN: *(Into telephone)* Hello! It's me! Frieda...when did you get back? Listen, remember how you used to call me your "little flame"? Well, I'm going to steal that for a stage name: FLAEMMCHEN! That's going to be me! Just Flaemmchen, no last name. There's something so modern, so 1928 about it! Yes, it's for when I become a movie star! Garbo is just Garbo – never Greta!

Grand Hotel: The Musical, opening, page 11.

Embarking on a career as a performer requires more than a romantic imagination that can conjure up a stage name, particularly when that career is in Musical Theatre.

Talent and training in all the three disciplines that make up the genre – acting, dancing and singing – are essential qualities for the actor working in this medium. Most post-16 and higher education establishments running theatre training courses will offer courses that integrate these three areas. The breadth of elements that make up a performer's initial training are crucial: the greater the range of skills a performer possesses, the more employable they are likely to be.

Working on a piece on Musical Theatre requires the actor to work closely with the other members of the company to create the production, under the guidance of the director, choreographer and musical director. The performance company for GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL worked very much as an ensemble, ie, a collaborative team, devising and constructing a world for the piece beyond that indicated by the libretto.

Here are some comments from members of the cast on how they became involved in working in professional musical theatre and the challenges it brings.

'I started dancing at the age of 10 and went to drama school when I was 17. I got my first job in musical theatre on leaving drama school. The challenge of working on a musical such as GRAND HOTEL is staying in tip-top condition for the demands of the job, so as to be able to deliver 8 shows a week. You also need to keep an awareness of the rhythm of the piece, which in musicals is usually more prominent than plays because of the music.'

'The key discoveries that I've made about my character during the rehearsal process have been Eric's extreme sensitivity to his surroundings of the hotel and the people in it; his total professionalism when in the midst of chaos and his desire to provide for his family in a way that wasn't available to him when he was growing up.'

David Lucas (Eric Litnaur, the Grand Hotel's assistant concierge)



'I've always had an interest in musical theatre. Towards the end of my school years I started going to dance classes. Then I took a degree in performing arts followed by a term at dance college. I am used to working on musicals such as GRAND HOTEL, where you are required to combine all your skills in

singing, dancing and acting. But being in a small space like the Donmar is a newish challenge.

The key discovery that I've made about my character during the rehearsal process has been the background to the times in which black performers worked: the restrictions and expectations on my character for having left the US to find work in Europe.'

Joseph Noble (Jimmy 1, a Black American Entertainer)

'I became involved in musicals through a singing teacher who got me my first audition – and I got the job. Because I could 'sing a bit', 'dance a bit', and 'act a bit', I have always managed to find unusual, funny audition songs. This is a ploy to cover up an 'average' vocal range!

Huge concentration is required for working on a musical such as GRAND HOTEL. I had an Hungarian Interpreter – who is a friend – help me with the accent.'

John Conroy (Sandor, an Hungarian Theatre impresario and Grushinskaya's company manger)



'Having never thought I would do musicals, I was asked to audition by Trevor Nunn and John Caird for the part of 'Candide' at the National Theatre. I got the part! I immediately took lessons in singing. Personally, the challenge of working on a musical is always to make the three disciplines – acting, singing and dancing- flow seamlessly into one another. Characters are driven to sing when what they're expressing cannot be contained in the spoken word. I have specific challenges in GRAND HOTEL as I play a dying man who has to be able to do high kicks! Correlating the two extremes of life and death has been a

difficult balancing act.'

Daniel Evans (Otto Kringelein)

Appendix

Berlin radiated its cultural influence over the rest of Europe during the 1920s, and this included London. In England, the decade became known as the 'roaring twenties', a term which encapsulates the social, cultural and economic freedom that liberated the populace from the shadows of the First World War.

One of the most celebrated figures of the English theatre of the time is Noel Coward, accomplished actor, playwright, composer and director. This appendix examines the extensive influence of Coward both during this period and throughout his lifetime.

Noël Coward – Master Songwriter



Mention the name Noël Coward and most people will think of PRIVATE LIVES, BLITHE SPIRIT and HAY FEVER and conjure up the image of a well-dressed, stylish English gentleman, elegantly-placed cigarette in hand. But what is perhaps not quite so well-known is that Coward also wrote nearly 500 songs. Some were written for musicals, others for revues or for his legendary cabaret acts or for television or film and some for the plays themselves. Many are now classics, recorded by today's artists and appearing on numerous CD releases of Coward's own recordings. Coward was a rarity amongst songwriters because he wrote both the words and the music. Cole Porter, Irving Berlin and Frank Loesser joined him in this elite club but very few others either then or today have done both successfully. His songs covered just about every style, from the up-tempo comic MAD DOGS AND ENGLISHMEN to the heart-rending, reflective IF LOVE WERE ALL to the torch MAD ABOUT THE BOY to the gentle A ROOM WITH A VIEW to the melodic waltz I'LL SEE YOU AGAIN to the patriotic LONDON PRIDE. And there are many, many more, displaying the highest qualities of songwriting.

Classic songs, or "standards" as they are called, are defined by the way they stand the test of time and continue to appeal to succeeding generations. Many of Coward's songs can be so defined. In years gone by his material was recorded by Frank Sinatra, Doris Day, Dinah Washington, Judy Garland and Tony Bennett. More recently, Elton John, Sting, Robbie Williams, Neil Tennant and Lesley Garrett have delved into his song catalogue. Feature films and television commercials provide another outlet for his material to be heard. The use of MAD ABOUT THE BOY for a certain well-known jeans brand a few years ago re-introduced the song to a new generation. As a result, Dinah Washington's now instantly-recognisable recording is included on compilation albums on a regular basis and the song is the most

active in the Coward catalogue. More recently, Stephen Fry's film BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS made use of four Coward standards. To come right up to date, look out for MAD ABOUT THE BOY in the new Annette Bening/Jeremy Irons film BEING JULIA.

So where did Coward's songwriting talents come from? His parents had some musical abilities but nothing out of the ordinary. As a child, he had a few piano lessons from his mother. However, he seems to have had a natural talent for picking up a tune and playing it although what is extraordinary is that, even as an adult, he was never able to read or write music. This lack of a formal musical education though doesn't seem to have stood in his way. He wrote his first complete song in 1916 and his first published song – THE BASEBALL RAG (with music by Doris Doris, one of the few times that he did work with another songwriter) – came three years later. Then in 1923 he had his first songwriting success when he wrote PARISIAN PIERROT for the revue LONDON CALLING! The next musical landmark came in 1929 with BITTER SWEET which is probably his most well-known musical theatre work. There were many other musicals and revues, notably SAIL AWAY which was produced on Broadway in 1961 starring Elaine Stritch. Most aren't so familiar now – THE GIRL WHO CAME TO SUPPER, ACE OF CLUBS, AFTER THE BALL and more – but they made their mark at the time and are still performed from time to time today.

One can't write a piece on Coward as a songwriter without making reference to his own performances. In spite of the many other artists who have performed and recorded his songs, it is his own performances which are still considered as definitive. Coward was unique amongst his fellow songwriters in carving out such a successful performing career. This probably reached its peak with his cabaret performances in the 1950s at the Café de Paris in London followed by the legendary concerts at the Desert Inn in Las Vegas. The latter was recorded and there is no shortage of available audio product demonstrating Coward's unforgettable performances of his own material.

So how do Noël Coward's songs sit in today's musical world? Well, it's clear that interest in his song catalogue shows no sign of abating. Film and advertising use have already been mentioned and we know that contemporary artists draw upon his songs for new interpretation in their own style. In addition to this, the original cast albums of his shows are gradually being re-issued on CD – the last twelve months have seen SAIL AWAY and ACE OF CLUBS made available and AFTER THE BALL will be released early in 2005. Coward's Las Vegas cabaret act and a New York studio recording are now available on CD and the rest of his large recording output is regularly re-packaged for new CD compilations. There is a flourishing appreciation society (The Noël Coward Society) and rarely a year goes by without one of Coward's plays appearing either in the West End or on tour. A new revue of his work – continuing in the tradition of OH COWARD! and COWARDY CUSTARD – is due in 2005.

All in all, Noël Coward's words and music are thriving. Long may that continue.

Recommended reading and listening:

- “Noël Coward Rediscovered” (Warner Bros Publications, 2001) – sheet music songbook which contains many of the standards, available from good sheet music retailers
- “Noël Coward: The Complete Lyrics”, edited and annotated by Barry Day (Methuen, 1998)
- “The Compact Coward” (EMI) – a good CD introduction to the best-known Coward songs performed by Coward
- “Noël Coward: A Biography” by Philip Hoare (Sinclair-Stevenson, 1995)
- The Noël Coward Society – www.noelcoward.net - promotes the life and work of Noël Coward

Caroline Underwood
Warner/Chappell Music Ltd
November 2004

NOËL COWARD – a biography

Noël Coward was born in Teddington on 16th December 1899. A writer, composer, actor, director, cabaret artist, his plays, musicals and revues include: *I'll Leave It To You* (1920), *The Young Idea* (1921), *The Vortex and The Rat Trap* (1924), *Fallen Angels*, *Hay Fever and Easy Virtue* (1925), *The Queen Was In The Parlour and This Was A Man* (1926), *The Marquise*, *Home Chat and Sirocco* (1927), *This Year Of Grace!* (1928), *Bitter Sweet* (1929), *Private Lives* (1928), *Charles B Cochran's 1931 Revue*, *Cavalcade* (1931), *Words and Music and Design For Living* (1932), *Conversation Piece and Point Valaine* (1934), *Tonight At 8:30* (1935), *Operette and Set To Music* (1938), *Blithe Spirit* (1941), *Present Laughter and This Happy Breed* (1942), *Sigh No More* (1945), *Pacific 1860* (1946), *Peace In Our Time* (1947) *Ace Of Clubs* (1950), *Island Fling and Relative Values* (1951), *Quadrille* (1952), *After The Ball* (1954), *South Sea Bubble and Nude With Violin* (1956), *Look After Lulu* (1959), *Waiting In The Wings* (1960), *Sail Away* (1962), *The Sleeping Prince* (1963), *Suite In Three Keys* (1966). His plays are regularly revived, recent productions include *Waiting In The Wings* on Broadway starring Lauren Bacall and *Private Lives* starring Alan Rickman and Lindsay Duncan. Currently running at the Savoy Theatre is *Blithe Spirit* starring Penelope Keith.

Coward wrote a number of feature films, the most famous of which are *In Which We Serve* and *Brief Encounter*.

Among his most famous songs are 'The Stately Homes of England', 'Mad Dogs And Englishmen', 'Don't Put Your Daughter On The Stage, Mrs Worthington', 'A Room With A View', 'I'll See You Again', 'Some Day I'll Find You' and 'I Went to a Marvelous Party'.

Noel Coward was knighted in 1970 and died in Jamaica in March 1973.

For further information go to www.noelcoward.net

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Attendance by Sophie Watkiss at rehearsals for GRAND HOTEL: THE MUSICAL, November 2004.

Credits

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About the Donmar Warehouse –

a special insight into the theatre

The Donmar Warehouse is an intimate (not for profit) 251 seat theatre located in the heart of London's West End. The theatre attracts almost 100,000 people to its productions a year. Since 1992, under the Artistic Direction of Michael Grandage and his predecessor, Sam Mendes, the theatre has presented some of London's most memorable theatrical experiences as well as garnered critical acclaim at home and abroad. With a diverse artistic policy that includes new writing, contemporary reappraising of European classics, British and American drama and music theatre, the Donmar has created a reputation for artistic excellence over the last 12 years and has won 25 Olivier Awards, 12 Critics' Circle Awards, 10 Evening Standard Awards and 10 Tony Awards for Broadway transfers.

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