

Have you tried?



Musicals

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the musical	casting	plot and issues	description	great for	watch out for	licensing	notes
<p>Beggars' Opera John Gay</p> <p>Book with melodies: Kessinger Publications, ISBN 1-4191-2000-X, around £14</p>	<p>Large cast, numerous solos. Some non-gender and race-specific casting. Easy to sing, straightforward to stage.</p>	<p>Main themes are money, sex and corruption. The thief MacHeath steals and seduces his way into and out of jail while the fence Peachum double-crosses his clients for personal gain.</p>	<p>Satirical play from 1728, comprising 60 short songs. An acting piece, reasonable for untrained singing voices, with simple melodies – music can be harmonised. Folksong used in an operatic style.</p>	<p>Flexible musical according to resources (roles can be doubled). Songs can be cut as necessary. Easy to learn. Lots of leeway with production – can be colourful or gritty.</p>	<p>Working with the language: the text and songs use archaic phrases. Moving comfortably between speaking and singing. Making suitable cuts.</p>	<p>As far as I know, Beggars Opera is not in copyright. There may be issues with using particular arrangements, so it may be easier to create a new version yourself.</p>	<p>Great show for historical research topics – working class life in London, crime, modern parallels (<i>Eastenders?</i>), music of the time, language and phraseology.</p>
<p>Pirates of Penzance (Broadway) Gilbert and Sullivan</p> <p>Vocal score: Music Sales, ISBN 0793525861, around £9</p>	<p>Male 5, female 3, female chorus (6+), male chorus (8+). Some tricky songs with wide ranges (using original operetta writing); mix of styles from lyric opera through fast patter to Elvis impersonation.</p>	<p>Boy meets girl (after years at sea with ugly nurse for company) but, being born in a leap year, he won't complete his apprenticeship for more than 60 years. Currently working as a pirate, future bride hates piracy.</p>	<p>Knockabout comedy based on operetta style, with pop overtones. Requires actors who sing with masses of energy, and two charismatic male leads.</p>	<p>Huge fun for both cast and audience, opportunities for individual character work in small parts and chorus. Mix of casting types including good character parts.</p>	<p>Precision movement from male chorus. Big choreographed routines (think keystone cops and cheerleaders). Female lead needs good soprano technique up to high D♭ (or E♭).</p>	<p>For UK performing rights, apply to www.josef-weinberger.com</p>	<p>Broadway version includes 'Sorry her lot' for Mabel, taken from <i>HMS Pinafore</i> (Gilbert and Sullivan). See www.mtshows.com or www.stageagent.com for excellent casting information and synopsis. Based on the G&S original, with contemporary orchestrations and singing styles.</p>
<p>Guys and Dolls Frank Loesser</p> <p>Vocal score: Hal Leonard, ISBN 0881482089 (H), 4479216, around £25</p>	<p>2 leading men, 4 supporting characters, plus male chorus (including at least 6 small roles); 3 leading women, plus female chorus. Moderate sing except for 'Nicely-Nicely', Johnson's showstopper 'Sit Down You're Rocking the Boat'.</p>	<p>Two plot lines: renowned gambler falls in love for real after betting that he can seduce a Salvation Army girl. A 14 year on-off relationship finally gets to the altar.</p>	<p>One of the great book musicals, popular, a cohesive story. Good plot and great songs. A relationship comedy with a light touch. Lots of detail in the small parts, recreating an entire underworld with believable characters.</p>	<p>Exploring male group dynamics, men versus women, gambling, relationships, small-time criminals, religion versus love.</p>	<p>American accents (standard and Brooklyn); dance routines (can mostly be staged rather than choreographed). Show length is 160 minutes (can be cut). Concert script version is also available.</p>	<p>For UK performing rights, apply to www.josef-weinberger.com. Due to current West End production, amateur performing rights are restricted within a 50-mile radius of London but amateur companies outside this area can still apply to stage the show.</p>	<p>A new Junior edition (80 minutes) is available from Weinberger for £395 (inc VAT) per year. Includes two scores, 20 libretti, CD backing tracks for performance, songs transposed for young voices, suggested choreography video, and a cross-curricular resources pack (www.broadwayjr.com).</p>
<p>Into the Woods Stephen Sondheim</p> <p>Vocal score: Warner Bros Publications, ISBN 0897343284, around £50</p>	<p>Ensemble piece: 7 men (mostly leading), 12 women (varying sizes from leading to small part), star vehicle for the Witch. Moderately tricky to sing, wide range, somewhat off-putting accompaniments.</p>	<p>Complex and entertaining. Set in the land of (slightly twisted) fairy tales, act one ends happily ever after, act two shows what actually happens after the 'happily ever after' ending – the outcomes you don't get to read about.</p>	<p>Contemporary music drama. Family, relationships, desires, general sanity, taking responsibility for your actions, and what really happens when wishes come true.</p>	<p>Large ensemble cast, a great mix of fun stuff and darker themes, juxtaposing fantasy with reality. Some complex characters, a few stereotypes. Rhythmically challenging.</p>	<p>Musically tricky, particularly the ensemble numbers. Mix of actors who sing and pure singers required for this, some complex female writing. Will need inventive staging.</p>	<p>For UK performing rights, apply to www.josef-weinberger.com. Transposition on-demand parts for vocal and full score are also available. See www.mtshows.com for more details.</p>	<p>A new Junior edition (80 minutes) is available from Weinberger for £395 (inc VAT). Resources same as <i>Guys and Dolls</i>. Although the music is simplified, it is still challenging (www.broadwayjr.com).</p>
<p>Ragtime Terrence McNally, Lynn Ahrens, Stephen Flaherty</p> <p>Vocal selections: Warner Bros Publications, ISBN 1576239531, around £10</p>	<p>4 leading men plus 7 supporting characters, 4 leading women, and male-female chorus. Tuneful and tricky music to sing, complex harmonies, some epic songs. Low writing for leading lady (low Gs).</p>	<p>Three families in 1900s America. Middle-class young mother finds black baby (and his mother) in her garden. Also meets talented Jewish immigrant. Baby's father suffers in the hands of bigoted government officials and dies for his truth.</p>	<p>Powerful music and subject matter. Mixed race casting, classic opera-musical feel using ragtime and contemporary musical styles. Real people mixed with created characters; stories include the first mass-produced car and the beginnings of the film industry.</p>	<p>Strong, thoughtful drama that deals with powerful issues. Immigration in the land of opportunity, racial tension, the breakdown of social structure, industrial changes. Big cast, good music.</p>	<p>American accents, requires some powerful acting roles; strong singer-actors required, able to cope with demanding vocal music. Band needs good pianist for ragtime solos.</p>	<p>For UK performing rights, apply to www.josef-weinberger.com</p>	<p>Three versions of this musical exist including one for schools, according to the Music Theatre International website (www.mtshows.com).</p>