

Let's Sing! Let's Dance! Teacher's Notes **A2**

This A2 article about musicals and the tradition of high school performances in the USA should be of particular interest to those among your students who may have seen the exhibition in Paris, but also to any student with a taste for films or music. As usual, the document is but a starting point for personal expression and should lead students to formulate their own ideas and opinions.

The exhibition *Comédies musicales* is on at the Philharmonie in Paris until 27 January. <https://philharmoniedeparis.fr/fr/exposition-comedies-musicales>

Grammar

- the superlative + in (the most popular in the world ; the biggest in the world)
- present simple vs preterite
- relative pronouns (who, which)
- the passive

Vocabulary

- film and theatre related

Culture

- Hollywood and Broadway
- Some famous musicals and performers.

Pronunciation

- stress and liaisons.

Interaction

In **Step 1**, we suggest starting by videoprojecting the *La La Land* photo where some pupils will recognise Ryan Gosling and Emma Stone. Have them describe the situation briefly. Then half the class will describe the *West Side Story* poster and the other half the *Singing in the Rain* one.

Writing

- Your pupils are now ready to find the

common points and differences between the three films, which will lead them to the conclusion that they are all musicals. If you want to go further you can ask them to write a definition for “a musical” (A *musical* is a show with dance, songs and dialogue that tells a story).

■ **Step 2** starts with a skimming activity centred on other types of shows which all have common characteristics with musicals. After finding “ancient Greek theatre, Shakespeare’s plays and opera” in the text, pupils will try to guess which type the proposed titles belong to. Have them discuss what they think in groups and share their opinions with the class. This activity should prove quite entertaining, *Porgy and Bess* could well become one of Shakespeare’s plays. To finish, you can ask them to check their answers on the Internet. The aim of these activities is of course to make pupils find that musicals have a long history but also to expand their culture.

■ The matching activity is based both on the article and on the pupil’s personal knowledge. It is followed by a short writing activity. This will introduce the pair work game.

■ **Step 3** will help pupils understand the information in the article (Activity 1) and use it to produce a speech (Activity 2). They will first write a draft of their speech before doing the language practice activities which will help them check that their grammar

and pronunciation are right before practising orally. The speeches can then be recorded and the recordings finally handed out to a committee in charge of selecting the most convincing speech.

Going Further

Pupils would no doubt enjoy learning and performing a song from a musical.

Keys.

STEP 1.

The following are examples of what some pupils might say.

This is a photo of a man and a woman. They're dancing. They look happy. They're actors. I think he's Ryan Gosling and she's Emma Stone. They're American. The film is called *La La Land*.

This is a poster. There are two couples dancing. There are stairs and balconies. It looks like a building/an apartment building. This is a famous American film. There are three actors, two men and a woman. They're singing and dancing. Maybe they like the rain. They all look happy.

Common points: The actors are dancing and singing. They look happy. They're smiling.
Differences: *Royal Wedding* and *Singing in the Rain* are old films, *La La Land* is a recent film.

In *La La Land*, *West Side Story* and *Singin' in the Rain*, the performers sing and dance.

These films are musicals.

STEP 2.

Activity 1.a. and b.

Types of shows Examples

Ancient Greek theatre: *Oedipus Rex*; *The Persians*; *Antigone*

Shakespeare's plays: *Hamlet*; *Romeo and Juliet*; *Macbeth*

Opera: *Porgy and Bess*; *Carmen*; *The Barber*

of Seville

Information for teachers:

Oedipus Rex (Sophocles around 429 BC.);
The Persians (Aeschylus 472 BC); *Antigone* (Sophocles 441BC)

Hamlet (1600); *Romeo and Juliet* (1594);
Macbeth (1605)

Porgy and Bess (George Gershwin, 1935);
Carmen (Georges Bizet, 1875); *The Barber of Seville* (Gioachino Rossini, 1816)

c. They all have dialogue, a story, songs and dances.

Activity 2.

■ *The Phantom of the Opera* is based on a book by French writer Gaston Leroux.

■ *Les Misérables* is based on a book by French writer Victor Hugo.

■ *Cats* is based on poems by American-born British writer TS Eliot.

■ In *The Jazz Singer* the hero performs on stage in a cabaret. It was released in 1928.

■ *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves* was first released in 1937. It's a Disney film.

■ *The Lion King* tells the story of Simba, who is to succeed his father as king. It's a Disney film.

■ *The Phantom of the Opera* is a musical which is based on a book by French writer Gaston Leroux.

■ *The Lion King* is an animated film which was turned into a musical show on Broadway.

Here is an example of a possible pair work production.

- It's a Disney film which was released in 1937. It tells the story of a beautiful princess who lived in the forest with seven dwarves.

What is it?

-It's *Snow White and the Seven Dwarves*.

-That's right.

STEP 3.

Activity 1

Musicals are a tradition in the USA because a lot of high schools create productions of musicals.

Activity 2

Here is an example.

We think musicals can be very motivating for pupils because everybody in the class can participate. There are lots of roles, so lots of pupils can dance and sing. The most talented and the most popular can be the heroes, but everybody can do something. Some can play the music, we have some good musicians in the class. Maybe the PE teacher can help with the choreography. The parents can help make the costumes. We could work and have fun at the same time. It's a wonderful idea, isn't it?

Language practice

Pronunciation.

1: popular / interesting / talented / singer / dancer

2: participate / musician

3: popularity / choreography

4: participation

Grammar.

a. Do you know the actor who plays the main part in La La Land? It's the film which begins with a traffic jam.

Yes, it's Ryan Gosling, who also played in Drive.

b. The Indian film industry is one of the biggest but American actors are the most famous in the world. I think drama is the most interesting subject in British and American schools.