



Graduate Research School

RP

Research Proposal Coversheet for Candidates in

Research Higher Degrees

EXAMPLE OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL SUBMISSION

RESEARCH AREA: MUSIC

DEGREE: PhD

Please note that all identifying information has been removed from this research proposal and replaced with XXX.

Research Proposal

Doctor of Philosophy

THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
SCHOOL OF XXX
Candidate: XXX

A. PROPOSED STUDY

1. TITLE

Dramatic underpinnings in the musical theatre books of Peter H. Stone

CONTRIBUTION TO SCHOLARSHIP

Peter H. Stone (1930-2003) retains the distinction of becoming the first dramatist to hold each of the three prestigious American performing arts awards, the Emmy, the Oscar and the Tony.¹ Stone was an active member of the Dramatists Guild of America, holding the office of President for 17 years (1981-1998). In addition to his books for musical theatre shows, he wrote original plays and screenplays and was well regarded as a 'show doctor' brought in to resolve problems in musicals prior to their arrival on Broadway. Yet his significance in the development of the musical theatre 'book' has not been subject to scholarly attention. This study aims to fill that gap.

Two key terms in this study require clarification; 'musical theatre', and 'the book'.

¹ Stone won an Emmy Award (1962) for *The Defenders*, an Oscar Award (1964) for *Father Goose*, and three Antoinette Perry (Tony) Awards in 1969, 1981 and 1997 respectively for *1776*, *Woman of the Year*, and *Titanic*. The most detailed exploration of Stone's career can be found in the biographical article in *Contemporary Authors Online* (Accessed 13 October 2009)

The term musical theatre is current coin for works which grew out of earlier forms named as 'musical comedies', 'musical plays' or just 'musicals'. In their excellent historiographies, both Koger (1992) and Borroff (1984) note the shifting terrain of nomenclature, and suggest this is related to the roots of the form. Borroff cites no less than twenty-nine different scholarly claims as to the form's beginnings and subsequent variant names, while Koger (p.69) notes that the range of dates claimed for the beginnings of musical theatre traverse 1735 (the musical play *Flora, or, Hob in the well*) to 1927 (*Show Boat*). Musical theatre is the umbrella-term now widely used in scholarship to describe the genre and will be used in this study.

The word 'book' is often used interchangeably with the operatic 'libretto'. *Grove Music Online* gives a broad definition of *libretto* as the 'printed or manuscript book giving the literary text, both sung and spoken, of an opera (or other musical work).' In musical theatre, the two kinds of text referred to here - sung and spoken - are often handled by different writers. The sung text is referred to as the 'lyric' and is the responsibility of a 'lyricist' who works closely with the composer. The spoken text, or dialogue, is handled by a 'book writer'. For the purposes of this study book will be used in preference to libretto.

One of the key aims of this study is to show that the book is far more than just spoken dialogue. In describing the object of his work, Stone himself preferred to be called a book writer and argued for the significance of a book in terms of overall structure:

"A musical is all structure. When the structure works the show works ... That's what book writing really is. It's not dialogue, it's structure" (Bell 1993, 141)

This study will investigate the structures employed by Stone in giving purpose and meaning to his musical theatre books.

At the 1981 Musical Theatre in America Conference, the significance of the book was highlighted through the division of the history of musical theatre in the twentieth century into two categories: 'Variety and Revue Formats' and 'The Book Musical' (Loney 1984). This neat division confirmed earlier scholarship which had already drawn a distinction between the 'variety and revue formats' of the early days, with their prime interest in entertainment, and the mature 'book musical' (post-*Oklahoma!* [1943]) with its desire to integrate music, lyrics, dialogue and dancing into a show with a primary concern for storytelling. Engel argues that the earlier period lacked 'a satisfactory dramatic form: a workable book or libretto'. He acknowledges the dowry of 'miraculous songs' that its creators left behind, but maintains that without a book of any substance its shows are 'all but dead' (Engel 1971, 7).²

The book musical emerged in the 1940s when Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) and Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960) created a new theatrical form which they termed 'musical plays' in which 'the spoken play was also meant to work its way into the fabric of the songs and dances' (Stempel 1992, 136). The popularity of musicals such as *Oklahoma!*, *Carousel*, *South Pacific*, *The King and I*, and *The Sound of Music* saw them produce five of the ten longest running shows in the 1940s and '50s (Block 1997, 14). This integration of drama, music and dance influenced generations of creative teams to follow and generated a unique form of American theatre.

² To illustrate his point, he refers to American master songwriters of the early twentieth century whose canon of songs is frequently performed but whose shows aren't, including George and Ira Gershwin, Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart, Cole Porter, Vincent Youmans, Jerome Kern, Rudolf Friml and Sigmund Romberg.

This influence has been noted by many commentators starting with Engel (1971) through to Banfield (1993), Block (1993 and 2004), Swain (2002) and Jones (2003). Block (1993) takes the matter further and compiles a Broadway canon spanning shows across thirty years from 1927 to 1957. He observes (1993, 534) how the ‘creators of these musicals are also connected through cross-collaboration, both simultaneous and successive’, and proceeds to demonstrate the intricate web that links a ‘who’s who’ in the history of musical theatre.³ Had Block’s survey not concluded at 1957, it would have shown an even more extensive family tree flowing out of the Hammerstein/Rodgers legacy. This study will extend the theory of inter-connection and demonstrate a post-Hammerstein pedigree that has dominated the scholarship on musical theatre. Peter Stone is one of the few major figures in the field who had no long-standing association with any of the post-Hammerstein creative teams and whose work has been omitted from scholarship.⁴ By investigating a major-figure outside of the usual coterie, this study will broaden the field of scholarship.

A further question addressed in this thesis is whether Stone’s work in film and television influenced his style and may suggest the emergence of a new aesthetic for musical theatre. Stone has the distinction of being a Broadway book writer who also consistently made a living away from the musical stage, writing for film and television as well as stage plays (Bell 1993, 135). While Hammerstein and Alan Jay Lerner (1918-1986) contributed screenplays to the Hollywood versions of their more successful shows, their involvement in film and other forms of media was significantly less varied than Stone’s. This study will also explore the influence of cinematic techniques on Stone’s books. Central to this thesis

³ Block draws out key relationships: Hammerstein with Rodgers, and Sondheim; Rodgers with Sondheim, and Hart; Sondheim with Bernstein; Bernstein with Lerner and Loewe.

⁴ Although he worked once with Richard Rodgers in 1968, he was never associated with a particular set of Hammerstein’ian collaborators. The list of personnel he worked with is remarkable in its breadth: Robert Wright and George Forrest (1961, *Kean*), James van Heusen (1965, *Skyscraper*), Richard Rodgers (1968, *Androcles and the Lion*, for television), Sherman Edwards (1969, *1776*), Jule Styne (1972, *Sugar*), John Kander and Fred Ebb (1981, *Woman of the Year*), Cy Coleman (1991, *The Will Rogers Follies*) and Maury Yeston (1997, *Titanic*). Although he was never to collaborate and produce material a second time with any of these teams, at the time of his death he was engaged in work with Kander and Ebb as well as Yeston.

is the notion that Stone's much-awarded but generally conservative Broadway books are informed by his work in the film industry to such an extent that they promote serious consideration for a new aesthetic to describe American musical theatre.

Finally, Stone's work as a book writer who does not contribute to the lyrics of a show is of major interest to this study. Many of the major book writers were also lyricists and as such maintained a keen interest in the form and function of songs and other musical material.⁵ Given that a principal conundrum for musical theatre is implicit in its name - is it theatre that is musical, or music that is theatrical? - the question of how the balance between these two powerful forms of expression is maintained when they are brought together is a significant issue of aesthetics. While most of the studies have discussed the role of the composer and lyricist in preparing musical material for a show, there have been no studies dedicated to the art of the book writer. This study will investigate how Stone develops his books and resolves the perceived tensions between music and text. Significantly, it will explore whether Stone adheres to the aesthetic principles of the integrated musical or points the way toward alternatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a vast quantity of literature available on musical theatre but surprisingly little of it on the book, and even less on Stone himself.

This literature review is based on the very valuable surveys of literature on musical theatre undertaken by Wildbuhler and Völklein (1986) and Everett (2004) as well as my own

⁵ Aside from Hammerstein, other major figures to write book and lyrics for musical theatre include Alan Jay Lerner (1918-1986), Noel Coward (1899-1973), the team of Adolph Green (1914-2002) and Betty Comden (1917-2006), and Sir Tim Rice (1944-).

literature search using library catalogues, databases and reference works cited by other authors .

The first and ‘most thorough and acute description of musical libretti’ (Wildbuhler 1986, 96) was written not by a scholar but by noted Broadway conductor and educator Lehman Engel (1910-1982). In his book *Words and music* (1971), Engel focuses on the content of the musical book, and cites romance and sub-plot as its responsibility. Although Engel’s study tackles neither the form nor function of a book, it has remained influential and in 2006 it was updated and revised by Howard Kissel. Even in this revised version, it is surprising to note there are only three references to Peter Stone.⁶

Hischak’s *Boy loses girl: Broadway’s librettists* (2002) is the only other significant study of the book. It consists mostly of a ‘rather selective, frequently critical, and highly personal look at the major librettists’ (Hischak 2002, ix), and by the end of it one longs for something a little less personal and frequently more analytical.⁷ Chapter Sixteen, ‘Carnival on the roof: Michael Stewart, Joseph Stein, and Peter Stone’ provides a useful summary of Stone’s career as well as plot outlines and comments on Stone’s technique and style.

McMillin (2006) includes the book in his discussion of the aesthetic of integration in musical theatre, and raises significant issues relating to form and function, but he makes no reference to Stone or his works. As with most scholars, his study is rooted in the canon that emerged from the musical plays of Rodgers and Hammerstein, leaving room for

⁶ Engel makes uncredited reference to three of Stone’s early works and is highly critical of two describing *Kean* as “bereft of laughter” (p286) and *Skyscraper* “a flop that everybody in the world could have foreseen could not be made to work because of its predictability and the dullsville which surrounded a nothing triangle”. (p.61)

⁷ The quality of the research can be illustrated by the entries in a section of the Bibliography titled *Works on Theatre Librettists and Songwriters*. Of the 100 entries cited, less than 25% relate to the works and lives of librettists, the majority referring to composers and lyricists.

exploration of other shows and a deeper understanding of structures that inhabit the genre more broadly.

Relating to Peter Stone himself, the most detailed biography and works list can be found in the entry for him in *Contemporary Authors Online*. It includes a list of the awards he won, his works for stage and screen, and references to further reading about him in newspapers and magazines.

Bell's book *Broadway stories: a backstage journey through musical theatre* (1993) includes a chapter on Stone's work as a book writer. It includes transcriptions from a series of interviews that provide anecdotal evidence of Stone's work practices and his creative theories. This is the only documented transcription of the many interviews Stone gave throughout his career. ⁸

Leve's recent *Kander and Ebb* study (2009) includes significant detail on Stone's collaboration with the team on the Tony Award winning *Woman of the Year* (1981) and the incomplete *Curtains*. ⁹ The section on *Curtains* is particularly helpful as it outlines the many twists and turns in the development of Stone's book as it changed over time, and includes some useful notes written by Stone.

From the survey it is evident that what is notably lacking in the writings today is a sustained study of the work of Peter Stone. This project will address that gap.

⁸ The New York Public Library contains a number of oral histories and video-recording interviews with Stone, and the American Theatre Wing includes at least two sessions with Stone in its *Working in the theatre* series of podcasts.

⁹ As Leve notes, Stone worked on *Curtains* up until its semi-staged reading in 2002. After Stone's death in 2003 Rupert Holmes became book writer, and the show opened on Broadway in 2007.

B. RESEARCH DIRECTION

1. AIMS

The following is a short summary of the specific aims of the proposed study:

1. To determine the structures employed by Peter Stone to give purpose and meaning to his books for musical theatre
2. To describe the extent to which film techniques informed the stage works of Peter Stone and how they might promote serious consideration of a new aesthetic for the form
3. To broaden the field of scholarship relating to musical theatre by investigating a major-figure outside of the usual coterie of creative personnel

2. METHODOLOGY

The methodology for this study involves:

1. survey of existing literature (secondary sources)
2. research on archival materials (primary sources)
3. interviews

Archival research and oral interviews will be the cornerstone of the primary research. The early papers of Peter Stone are held at the University of California, Los Angeles, and the Dramatists Guild of America holds correspondence from the time of Stone's presidency (1981-1998). The later papers of Stone are referred to in the monograph by James Level and will be a valuable source. Contact with Leve is underway to determine the suitability and arrange access to them. Interviews with Stone conducted by the American Theatre Wing are available as podcasts through its *Working in the theatre* series, and the New York Public Library contains a number of oral histories and video-recording interviews. In

addition, oral history interviews will be conducted with a broad range of theatre personnel Stone collaborated with, including book writers, composers, and directors. Provisional interviewees include:

- Maury Yeston (composer, *Titanic*)
- Tommy Tune (director, *My one and only*, and *The Will Rogers Follies*)
- John Kander (composer, *Woman of the year*, and *Curtains*)
- Rupert Holmes (composer and subsequent book writer to Stone on *Curtains*)
- Richard Jones (director, *Titanic*)
- Graciela Daniel (director, *Annie get your gun*)
- John Weidman (book writer and successor to Stone as President, Dramatists Guild of America)

3. EFFORTS TO ENSURE ORIGINALITY

To ensure that the proposed study represents original work, a thorough literature search was conducted on secondary sources relating music and theatre. The search utilised the research outlined in the two published bibliographies on musical theatre (Wildbihler 1986, and Everett 2002). It included extensive searches of leading library catalogues such as WorldCat, the Library of Congress, and Libraries Australia. The investigation also included UWA Library's *SuperSearch* (a UWA facility interrogating multiple databases simultaneously, including *Jstor*, *EBSCOhost*, *SocIndex*, and *Informaworld*). No study on Stone or his work for musical theatre was located.

In addition, extensive searches using library-based resources have uncovered no projects similar to the proposed study. The theses and journal databases consulted were *Dissertations and Theses (ProQuest)*, *Doctoral dissertations in musicology-online*, *RILM abstracts of musical literature*, *Archive of dissertation abstracts in music*, *Music theory*

online: dissertation index, Index to theses: a comprehensive listing of theses with abstracts accepted for higher degrees by universities in Great Britain and Ireland in 1716.

4. BIBLIOGRAPHY

A bibliography is provided at the end of this document.

C. CANDIDATURE PLAN

1. RESEARCH TIME FRAME

To ensure the proposed study meets the deadlines required for a three-year framework, a general timeframe has been prepared for the completion of the various phases as well as a detailed timeframe for the next twelve months.

Timeplan - General (3-year framework)

Phase	Timeframe
Research proposal, ACE module, ethics approval	Months 1 - 6
Contextual literature, analyses of works, USA research visit, literature review	Months 7 - 22
Drafting dissertation	Months 23 - 32
Proofing and revising dissertation	Months 33 - 35
Printing, binding and submission of dissertation	Month 36

Timeplan - next 12 months

Month	Activity	Significant Milestones Due
1	Contextual literature	
2	Contextual literature	
3	Contextual literature + select works for analysis	
4	Contextual literature + establish USA research component (including interview appointments)	
5	Contextual literature + select works for analysis	
6	Contextual literature + Draft Literature Review chapter of thesis	Annual Progress Review + Confirmation of Candidature due
7	Analysis of works	
8	Analysis of works + preparation of publications plan	
9	Analysis of works	
10	Analysis of works	

Month	Activity	Significant Milestones Due
11	Analysis of works	
12	USA research visit	

2. CONFIRMATION OF CANDIDATURE TASKS

Agreed Task/Milestone (for the first 12 months of candidature ONLY)	Date to be completed by
Completion of AACE7000 (Academic Conduct Essentials Unit) for those enrolled at UWA for the first time from 1 January 2008	May 29 2009
A substantial piece of writing at the appropriate conceptual level - please give details 1. Submission of research proposal	October 16 2009
Draft Literature Review	March 1 2010
Detailed activity plan for USA research visit	March 1 2010
Ethics approval confirmed	March 1 2010

3. SKILLS AUDIT

An audit of my professional and research skills has been conducted with my supervisors and demonstrated I have the generic skills necessary. No special skills have been identified for this project.

4. RESEARCH HOURS PER WEEK

While every endeavour has been made to ensure that 30 hours per week will be dedicated to the research, in the first year I am attached to an ARC-funded research project (*Communicative Human Musicality*) and required to work 15 hours per week. Research hours per week during this time may vary.

D. FACILITIES

Supervision is available from the School of XXX, and while there is no special equipment needed, there are special requirements for access to documents unique to the project.

The principal documents required for this project are published libretti of the musicals of Peter Stone, personal papers of Peter Stone, and interviews and archival footage. Materials that cannot be acquired (such as out-of-print libretti) or accessed via the Internet (such as archival video footage) will be sourced by visiting institutions that hold the material. Central to this will be the personal papers of Stone (at the University of California, Los Angeles), correspondence held in the archives of the Dramatists Guild of America (New York), and oral histories, video-recordings of interviews and archival footage of performances (New York). These unique documents are not available on interlibrary loan and must be consulted in-person.

E. ESTIMATED COSTS

EXPENSES

The principal costs associated with the project involve travel to the United States of America to view primary sources in libraries and archives as well as conducting oral interviews.

FUNDING

The School of XXX provides \$1750 toward research expenses. The Graduate Research School provides \$1750 to go toward conference participation. Additional funding will be sought from ad hoc scholarships.

DETAILS

ITEM	EXPENSE	FUNDING
Airfare (return, economy) Perth - New York, Sept 2010	3,500	
Travel expenses (28 days @ \$100 per day) NB The Australia Taxation Office <i>Tax Determination</i> , allows a per diem of \$190 for travel in the US.	2,800	
Sundry expenses (Communications - phone, internet, postage; stationery; journal subscriptions)	500	
SUBTOTAL (EXPENSES)	\$6,800	
School of XXX funding for sundries		500
Graduate Research School Travel Allowance		1750
School of XXX Travel Allowance		1750
School of XXX Fieldwork Allowance		2000
SUBTOTAL (FUNDING)		\$6,000

The shortfall of \$800 will be addressed by applying for the Dean's Postgraduate Award, Convocation Awards and others

F. FIELDWORK

As part of my research I am familiar with The University's *Fieldwork and Insurance Policy*.

G. SUPERVISORS

Supervision is available and provided by the following UWA School of XXX staff.

W/Prof XXXX (50%)

Winthrop Professor XXX is the <position description XXX>. With a career spanning the university sector, conservatory education and the music profession, XXX interests are in music psychology, music education, musicology, music theatre, vocal performance and contemporary dance. XXX has written more than 100 scholarly publications and secured a range of research grants. XXX has worked as an opera singer and a music theatre

director, collaborating with performance groups such as Andrew Lawrence-King's Harp Consort, Opera North, and the Portuguese Company, Drama per musica. After thirteen years at University of Sheffield, W/Prof XXX began working full-time at the School of XXX, University of Western Australia in January 2008.

Associate Professor XXX (50%)

XXX is a graduate of The University of Western Australia, having being awarded a BA, Dip. Ed., M.Phil. and PhD. As an undergraduate, XXX was the recipient of University Choral Society prizes for Music 20 and Music 30; XXX was also awarded a Hackett scholarship, which XXX declined in favour of a fifteen-year career as a professional cellist. This career led XXX to full-time appointments in the WA Symphony Orchestra and the State Orchestra of Victoria (the latter as co-principal cellist), and to casual appointments in the Sydney, Queensland and Tasmanian Symphony Orchestras. In 1996 XXX won an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) for doctoral study, which she completed in 2000. XXX joined the staff of the School of XXX upon completion of her PhD, first as Manager then as Director of the Callaway Centre, a research centre based in the School of XXX. She established a state-of-the-art archival facility and procured over half a million dollars of Australian Research Council (ARC) funding for the development of the Callaway Centre's archival collections. Since 2006 XXX has held the positions of Lecturer, then Associate Professor, in Musicology in the School of XXX.

H. CONFIDENTIALITY AND INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

The proposed research respects participant privacy and confidentiality. Every endeavour will be made to ensure the privacy of all participants. Data will be reported anonymously and coded systems of identification will be used where appropriate.

I. APPROVALS

The research involves oral history interviews and an application to undertake research involving human subjects is in preparation for the Human Research Ethics Committee Research Services at The University of Western Australia.

J. SUBMISSION OF THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Two copies of this proposal, including a Research Proposal Coversheet signed by my supervisors, the Head of School and myself, are attached.

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