

**ARKANSAS REPERTORY THEATRE**



**Study Guide  
Prepared by Robert Neblett  
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Play</b>	<b>4</b>
4    Characters	
5    Synopsis	
<b>About the Writers</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>About the Musical Makers</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>The Phenomenon of ABBA</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Jukebox Musical</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Production History</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>In the Classroom</b>	<b>13</b>
13    Fun Facts and Trivia	
15    Questions and Activities	
18    Vocabulary	
19    About Us	
20    Arkansas Fine Arts Curriculum	



Costumes by Mathew J. LeFebvre

## NOTE FOR EDUCATORS:

Throughout this Study Guide you will find words, names and phrases in **bold type**. These items are key terms and phrases to a better understanding of the world and context of *Mamma Mia!*. These items are suggestions for further research and study among your students, both before and after you attend the performance at The Rep.

# INTRODUCTION

*“I used to sit in my room for hours and listen to ABBA songs. But since I’ve met you and moved to Sydney, I haven’t listened to one ABBA song. That’s because my life is as good as an ABBA song. It’s as good as ‘Dancing Queen.’”*

These words, spoken by the title character from the 1994 film *Muriel’s Wedding*, express the personal, enduring power of the music of 1970s Swedish supergroup ABBA.

When the musical *Mamma Mia!* premiered in London’s West End in 1999, few expected a show that wove together ABBA’s greatest hits to become one of the most popular theatrical productions in recent history.

*Mamma Mia!* also played a major role in legitimizing the idea of the “jukebox musical,” which has inspired hit after hit on Broadway and regional stages across the United States and the world.

Add to that formula the wild box office success of the blockbuster 2008 film starring Meryl Streep, Colin Firth, and Pierce Brosnan, and *Mamma Mia!* seems to be an unstoppable force of feel-good disco-infused pop.

While “Chiquitita” and “Does Your Mother Know?” may inspire deep nostalgia in some teachers, many students might be hearing “The Winner Takes It All” for the very first time. We hope that the Arkansas Rep production of *Mamma Mia!* will inspire you to make your life, in good times and in bad, as good as an ABBA song...



Costumes by Mathew J. LeFebvre

# CHARACTERS

<b>Donna Sheridan</b>	The owner of the Taverna on the Greek island of Kalokairi; Sophie's mother; used to be a member of the singing group Donna and the Dynamos
<b>Rosie</b>	Donna's friend; a former member of the Dynamos; unmarried, free-spirited; publisher of a feminist periodical
<b>Tanya</b>	Donna's friend; a former member of the Dynamos; a professional divorcee; wealthy
<b>Sam Carmichael</b>	New York architect; one of Donna's ex-lovers and Sophie's potential father; his relationship with Donna ended badly, but he still has feelings for her
<b>Bill Austin</b>	Writer and world traveler; one of Donna's ex-lovers and Sophie's potential father
<b>Harry Bright</b>	British banker; one of Donna's ex-lovers and Sophie's potential father; turns out to be gay
<b>Sophie Sheridan</b>	Donna's 20-year-old daughter; engaged to Sky; desperately wants to meet her biological father
<b>Sky</b>	Sophie's fiancé; a former stockbroker who later moved to the island
<b>Pepper</b>	A flirty waiter at the Taverna
<b>Eddie</b>	A waiter, boatman, and handyman at the Taverna
<b>Ali</b>	Sophie's friend; has traveled to the island for the wedding
<b>Lisa</b>	Sophie's friend; has traveled to the island for the wedding
<b>Father Alexandrios</b>	The priest who officiates Sophie's wedding
<b>THE PLACE</b>	The Greek island of Kalokairi.
<b>THE TIME</b>	A twenty-four hour period, during the summer of 1999.



Costumes by Mathew J. LeFebvre

# SYNOPSIS

## ACT ONE

The story opens on the beach of a beautiful Greek island in 1999. A young woman, Sophie, pages through the diary of her mother kept in 1979 ("I HAVE A DREAM").

Suddenly, two of Sophie's old friends, Ali and Lisa, appear. They are there for a very special occasion: Sophie is getting married! But even Sky, Sophie's fiancé, doesn't know the secret she now reveals to her friends: Years ago, Sophie's mother, Donna, knew three men, and one of them is Sophie's father ("HONEY, HONEY"). It is these three men, Sam Carmichael, Bill Austin and Harry Bright, that Sophie has invited to her special day. It's her dream to have her father give her away on her wedding.

Just as Sophie is plotting with her friends, her mother, Donna, is reminiscing with her old pals, Rosie and Tanya, who have also come to the island for Sophie's wedding. Donna, Rosie and Tanya were once a pop singing group called "Donna and the Dynamos." Donna introduces her friends to Sophie's fiancé, Sky, along with Pepper and Eddie, who work at Donna's hotel/bar, the Taverna. After fifteen years of running the place, Donna is ready for some success ("MONEY, MONEY, MONEY").

As Donna and the girls exit, Sam, Harry and Bill arrive at the Taverna and meet Sophie. Sophie wants to keep the reason for their presence on the island a secret from Donna ("THANK YOU FOR THE MUSIC"). Suddenly Donna comes in and sees the three men. All of her old feelings come bubbling to the surface ("MAMMA MIA").

Donna can't hide her feelings from Rosie and Tanya ("CHIQUITITA"). Rosie and Tanya try to comfort Donna, remembering their old days on stage ("DANCING QUEEN").

In the meantime, Sophie, too, is in turmoil at the arrival of her "three Dads." She needs Sky to comfort her ("LAY ALL YOUR LOVE ON ME").

While the boys are at Sky's bachelor party, the girls listen to "Donna and the Dynamos" sing one of their old tunes ("SUPER TROUPER"). Harry, Bill and Sam arrive at the party, only to be welcomed into the dance ("GIMME, GIMME"). Sophie speaks with each of her potential Dads. Bill learns the secret ("NAME OF THE GAME"). He promises to give her away at the wedding the next day.

Sophie and Sky's friends meet in the courtyard to celebrate their upcoming wedding ("VOULEZ-VOUS"). Sam takes Sophie aside to say that he would be proud to be her father. He promises to walk her down the aisle at the wedding. Then Harry meets her and promises the same thing! Sophie is stunned as the curtain falls.

## ACT TWO

As the second act begins, Sophie is having a nightmare ("UNDER ATTACK"). Upon awakening, Sophie is confronted by Donna who thinks she wants to cancel the wedding. But Sophie is determined to not repeat what she sees as her mother's mistake: raising a child without a father. Donna is left with her thoughts ("ONE OF US"), until she meets Sam. They reach out to each other, but are held back by pride ("S.O.S.").

Many of the guests begin to gather at the beach. Tanya flirts with Pepper ("DOES YOUR MOTHER KNOW?").

Sophie finds Sky and confesses that she invited Harry, Bill and Sam, hoping that one of them would be her real father. Sky is upset that she didn't tell him the truth. Sam tells Sophie that she shouldn't get married if she has any doubts ("KNOWING ME, KNOWING YOU").

In Donna's room, Donna and Harry reminisce about their past ("OUR LAST SUMMER"). Sophie comes in, and although there is still tension between them, she asks Donna to help her dress for the wedding ("SLIPPING THROUGH MY FINGERS"). Sophie asks Donna to give her away at the wedding.

As Rosie puts the final touches on the wedding decorations, she asks Bill if there is a chance for their relationship to grow ("TAKE A CHANCE").

The wedding begins. Before Sky and Sophie can take their vows, Donna breaks in, telling everyone that Sophie's real father is there. Sophie reveals that she has read Donna's diary and invited Sam, Harry and Bill. The three men agree to ALL be Sophie's dad. Sophie and Sky decide to postpone the wedding and explore the world together. But before the wedding decorations can be taken down, Sam asks Donna to marry him ("I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO, I DO").

(Source: [www.mamma-mia.com](http://www.mamma-mia.com))

# ABOUT THE WRITERS



**Björn Ulvaeus** (Lyrics) was born in 1945 in Gothenberg on the west coast of Sweden. After a successful local career in Sweden with a folk group in the mid 1960s, he started his collaboration with Benny Andersson. They then went on to form ABBA with Agnetha Faltskog and Anni-Frid Lyngstad. Even during the ABBA years, the idea of writing a musical seemed appealing and, in 1981, Björn and Benny met Tim Rice and co-wrote *Chess* with him, which opened in the West End in 1986. In 1995 Björn and Benny opened a new musical called *Kristina Från Duvemåla*, which played for three years in Sweden. Their most recent musical is the Stockholm production *Hjälп sökes*, which opened in 2013. Björn is one of the producers for *MAMMA MIA! The Party*, which opened in Stockholm in January 2016.



**Benny Andersson** (Music) was born in 1946 in Stockholm, Sweden. From 1964-68, he was a member of the Hep Stars, Sweden's most popular rock band in the 1960's. During this time, he began composing music. "Sunny Girl" and "Wedding" were huge hits for the Hep Stars. Together with Björn Ulvaeus, he formed the music group ABBA in 1972, writing and performing on all of the band's hits. After ABBA disbanded in 1982, he composed the music (together with Björn Ulvaeus) for the musicals *Chess* and *Kristina from Duvemåla*. In 1987, he began collaborating with Orsa Spelmän and recorded three albums deeply rooted in Swedish folk music. In 2001, this collaboration led to the formation of Benny Andersson's Orchestra, a 16-man constellation with vocalists Helen Sjöholm and Tommy Körberg. In 1995, Benny received the title of professor from the Swedish government. He was inducted to the Royal Swedish Academy of Music in 2007 and appointed Honorary Doctor of the College of Humanities at Stockholm University in 2008, and at Luleå University of Technology in 2012.



**Catherine Johnson** (Book) is a British playwright and television writer, best known for her book for the musical *Mamma Mia!* and screenplay for the film of the same name. After a tumultuous youth, including school expulsion and a marriage and divorce at an early age, her first break as a playwright came when she answered an advertisement for a playwriting competition in a local Bristol newspaper. She wrote a script about child abuse and incest called *Rag Doll* using a **pseudonym**. The play won the competition and was staged by the Bristol Old Vic. She has also written for the television series *Casualty*, *Love Hurts* and *Byker Grove*. In 2007, Johnson instituted The Catherine Johnson Award for Best Play.

# BENNY AND BJÖRN: MUSICAL MAKERS



Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber

After ABBA disbanded in 1982, Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus continued their songwriting work together and decided to move into a new field – musical theatre. They began writing an ambitious musical with English lyricist **Tim Rice**. Rice is best known for his collaborations with **Andrew Lloyd Webber** (*Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Evita*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*), as well as his work on Disney musical films such as *The Lion King*, *Aladdin*, and *Beauty and the Beast* (and the stage musicals based on those films), as well as the musical *Aida* (with Elton John).

## Chess

The new musical, **Chess**, began as a **concept album**, much in the same way as rock operas *Jesus Christ Superstar* and The Who's *Tommy*. In 1984, the album was released and spawned two hit singles, "One Night in Bangkok" and "I Know Him So Well." The full staging of *Chess* premiered in London's **West End** in 1986.



Chess on Broadway 1988

The musical centers on a **love triangle** between Florence, a Hungarian-born Englishwoman, and the two chess world champions who love her, one Russian and the other American. The politics of the **Cold War** in the 1980s, as well as a loose biographical character study of 1970s chess "bad boy" **Bobby Fischer**, lay the foundation for the musical's setting and themes. In this context, the game of chess becomes a potent **metaphor** for the political rancor between the United States and the former **Soviet Union**, as well as the romantic tension between the three romantic leads. The show's **climax** involves the Russian player choosing between throwing the final match of the world championship and losing Florence; in the end, he wins the chess match but loses his love.

*Chess*' musical style is very similar to the later songs that Andersson and Ulvaeus wrote for ABBA, incorporating heavy use of synthesizers and tightly layered vocals. Thematically, it recalls the **Eastern bloc** paranoia that colors their final album, "The Visitors." But the musical does not lack innovation – "One Night in Bangkok" transforms the standard **"patter song"** found in musical comedies such as *The Music Man* and the **operettas** of **Gilbert and Sullivan** through an incorporation of the emerging rap and hip-hop scene in pop music of the 1980s.

In 1988, *Chess* premiered on **Broadway** to mixed reviews, primarily because this production abandoned the "sung-through" operatic structure of its London incarnation and adopted a book by American playwright Richard Nelson. Most notably, the end of the second act was changed, resulting in the Russian Anatoly and the American Freddie being matched once more, but in the US version, Anatoly throws the match in order for Florence to be reunited with her father, who had been imprisoned by the Soviets since the overthrow of Budapest in 1956. In a period of **glasnost** ("openness") and **perestroika** ("restructuring") that led to the end of the Cold War and the establishment of the **Russian Federation** in place of the **USSR**, the new "pro-America" ending was unsatisfying dramatically and seemed to resemble **propaganda**. The Broadway production of *Chess* closed after only two months, much to Andersson and Ulvaeus's disbelief.



Over the past two decades, lyricist Rice and the composers have reshaped *Chess* through a series of concerts and European productions, and the newly rewritten production will be opening in two different versions in 2018, most notably a revamped Broadway revival with a preliminary cast that includes Raúl Esparza, Ramin Karimloo, and Karen Olivo.

# BENNY AND BJÖRN: MUSICAL MAKERS

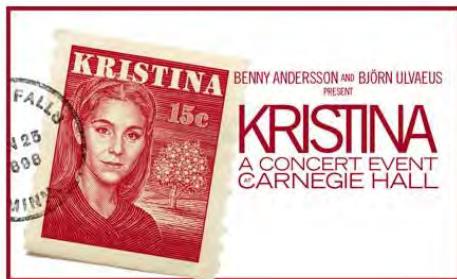
## Mamma Mia!

The original production of *Chess* played a significant role in the incubation of the idea that led to the creation of *Mamma Mia!* Producer Judy Craymer met Andersson and Ulvaeus during the 1986 London run and began suggesting to them that their songs might contain the theatrical DNA to support a full musical. In 1997, she collaborated with playwright Catherine Johnson to flesh out her ideas, and soon after, the global phenomenon was born (see “Production History” section of this Study Guide for further details).



Director Phyllida Lloyd, Björn Ulvaeus, Judy Craymer, Benny Andersson and Catherine Johnson attend the Laurence Olivier Awards

## Kristina från Duvemåla



In the early 1990s, Andersson and Ulvaeus collaborated on a new musical based upon a bestselling quartet of novels by Swedish author Vilhelm Moberg (1898-1973) entitled *Kristina från Duvemåla*. These novels follow a family of 19<sup>th</sup> century Swedish immigrants as they venture to the United States after numerous misfortunes in their homeland, only to be plagued by similar trials in America during the Civil War and the Gold Rush.

After several successful productions in Sweden and bestselling recordings from 1995-2006, featuring popular singers Helen Sjöholm and Peter Jöback, the musical was translated into English by Ulvaeus and *Les Misérables* lyricist Herbert Kretzmer. This version was performed as a series of concerts at **Carnegie Hall** in 2009 (retitled as simply *Kristina*), as an attempt to attract American interest after a failed attempt to bring it to Broadway. However, despite the praise for Andersson's operatic score, the lack of familiarity with the source material and several lukewarm reviews have relegated it to the theatrical sidelines, and its future as a Broadway property is highly doubtful.



Peter Jöback and Helen Sjöholm

# THE PHENOMENON KNOWN AS ABBA



In 1974, a quartet of young singers qualified as Sweden's entry for the **Eurovision Song Contest**, performing a song about a defeated love affair called "Waterloo." The song and the group, known as ABBA (an **acronym** made from the first letter of each of their first names – Anna-Frid, Benny, Björn, and Agnetha) soon shot to the top of the music charts around the world, and a phenomenon was born.

In 1966, Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus were members of two other popular music groups, The Hep Stars and The Hootenanny Singers, respectively. After a chance meeting at a bus stop, Benny and Björn decided to begin writing music together and ultimately left their bands to work exclusively with one another. Three years later, the two men met Anni-Frid (Frida) Lyngstad and Agnetha Fältskog, who would not only become their fiancées but also the missing pieces to the group that would become ABBA.

After their 1974 success with "Waterloo," it took another year and a half before ABBA would place on the record charts again with the single "S.O.S." By 1977, the group had cemented its place as a force to be reckoned with, after the global success of classic songs such as "Dancing Queen" and "Take a Chance on Me."

In 1978, ABBA concentrated its efforts on increasing its visibility in the United States, following the release of their concert film "ABBA: The Movie." Even though their popularity turned them into a household name, in 1979, Björn and Agnetha divorced, causing a rift in the band's image and working dynamic.

One distinctive aspect of ABBA's success was the group's belief in the power of the emerging field of **music videos**. Most of their hits were shot as promotional videos directed by Lars Sven "Lasse" Hallström, who would go on to receive Academy Award recognition with "My Life as a Dog," "What's Eating Gilbert Grape," "Chocolat," and "The Cider House Rules." Hallström's distinctive minimalist style in these videos has been parodied in many tributes to the band, but even these imitations recognize Hallström's vision as an iconic contribution to the ABBA legacy.

Soon after, in 1982, ABBA decided to take a temporary break from working together as Frida and Agnetha focused on their solo careers and Benny and Björn ventured into the world of musical theatre with their project, *Chess*. Unfortunately, ABBA never reunited and has sworn never to perform together again, although the original four members do occasionally reunite for appearances at charity events and red carpet celebrations, such as the 2008 premiere of the film version of the musical *Mamma Mia!*

In 2004, 30 years after they had won the Eurovision competition, ABBA appeared in a comedy tribute video featuring puppet versions of themselves created by Jim Henson's Creature Shop, aired for Eurovision audiences in celebration of their victory three decades before.

Although the group disbanded in 1982, ABBA was never far from the public consciousness.

In 1988, an Australian parody music group calling itself "Björn Again" began performing and releasing recordings of both ABBA covers and covers of other pop songs (such as "Flashdance (What A Feeling)" and "Will You Still Love Me Tomorrow?") performed in the distinctive ABBA sound of layered instrumentals and tight harmonies.



In 1992, the album "ABBA Gold" was released, selling more than 28 million copies since its release. This recording was followed up by several other compilations, including a pair of albums of their hits sung in Spanish.



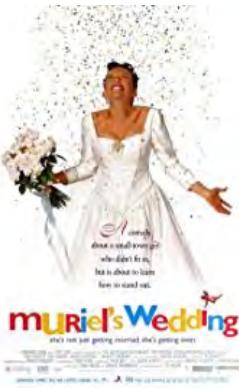
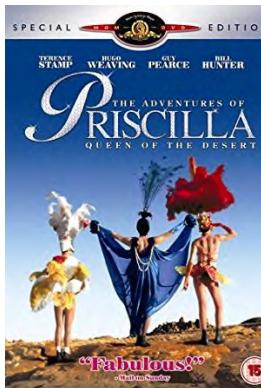
That same year, British pop duo Erasure released an EP of ABBA covers entitled "Abba-esque" that resulted in "Take a Chance On Me" becoming a worldwide hit again, accompanied by a music video featuring Andy Bell and Vince Clarke in drag, in a studio resembling the setting for Hallström's video for "Mamma Mia."



ABBA's video for "Mamma Mia."

# THE PHENOMENON KNOWN AS ABBA

Then, in 1994, two Australian films were released that created a worldwide demand for ABBA, catapulting the group's recordings into the charts once again.



*The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* told the epic story of a trio of drag queens attempting to travel across the Outback to perform at a casino. Its soundtrack was filled with disco hits, which spawned a disco revival in the 1990s, but the film's triumphant climax is accompanied by the ABBA single "Mamma Mia!" While ABBA's presence in *Priscilla* is not central to the plot, the film *Muriel's Wedding* (which launched the careers of Toni Collette and Rachel Griffiths) focuses upon an unpopular high school dropout whose only joy comes from listening to ABBA songs, wishing that her life could be as good as "Dancing Queen."

During the height of the 1970s ABBA craze, the group's popularity in Australia always outshone that in other countries around the world, so it's only fitting that the 1990s ABBA revival was sparked by two iconic films originating "Down Under."

These two films, along with the release of the group's greatest hits compilations, inspired a major revival of interest in all things ABBA in the mid- to late-1990s. All-star charity albums and television concerts were released in celebration of the group's 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

Boosted by this newly discovered "ABBAmania," Scandinavian musical acts such as Ace of Base, Robyn, Aqua, and Toy-Box topped the charts in the 1990s and 2000s.

In 1997, a Swedish group A\*Teens released an album of 90s synthpop-infused covers called "The ABBA Generation." British teen stars S-Club 7 also released a cover of "Dancing Queen," which was included on the "ABBAmania" charity recording.

Later that same year, work began in London on the musical that would eventually become *Mamma Mia!*

In 2010, ABBA were inducted into the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.



# JUKEBOX MUSICALS

*Mamma Mia!* is one of the most famous titles within a genre of musical theatre that has emerged within the past 20-30 years referred to as “jukebox musicals.” This name has been used as both a term of affection and of derision, as the form has attracted great criticism for its formulaic writing and for taking attention (and box office income) away from original musicals.

Unlike a traditional musical play, which draws its musical inspiration from a collaboration between a book writer and a composer and lyricist, “jukebox musicals” use existing works of music, often popular music from a single artist’s **discography**, to tie together a plot inspired by the songs themselves.

Some critics consider “jukebox musicals” to be little more than musical **revues** with a plot tacked on, while others consider the rationale behind their creation to be more commercial than artistic. But box office receipts don’t lie: they are immensely popular, with little evidence that they will lose their attraction in the near future.

There are many impulses that drive producers to seek out these types of shows for major productions, such as those on Broadway. The primary appeal to back a “jukebox musical” is name recognition/familiarity with the material. Audiences are more likely to trust a new show if it contains songs they already know, or by an artist they already like.

The appeal of this genre has bled into other media as well, as witnessed by the success of television programs like *Glee* or the UK series *Beautiful People*, which incorporate popular songs into their structure.

Some of the most popular jukebox musicals in recent memory include:



*We Will Rock You* (2002): a **dystopian** science fiction tale of the power of rock and roll music (and love) to overthrow an authoritarian government, using the music of British rock supergroup Queen



*Movin' Out* (2002): a collaboration between **Billy Joel** and director/choreographer **Twyla Tharp**, the musical uses Joel’s extensive catalog of music to provide the background to a “rock ballet”



*Jersey Boys* (2005): a biographical account of the rise to success of the Four Seasons, including a soundtrack featuring the best known hits of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons



*American Idiot* (2009): a theatrical staging of the bestselling 2004 Green Day album of the same name, this punk musical follows a rag-tag group of disillusioned young Americans through the period leading up to and following the Iraq War

*Rock of Ages* (2009): uses classic rock and glam metal hits of the 1980s to tell the story of two young kids in love trying to make it in the big city (the original New York production starred *American Idol* favorite Constantine Maroulis in the lead role)

*Beautiful* (2014): a biographical journey through the life and music of songwriter Carole King

*Million Dollar Quartet* (2010): a theatrical imaging of the events of December 4, 1956, when Elvis Presley, Carl Perkins, Johnny Cash, and Jerry Lee Lewis engaged in a historical jam session at the studios of Sun Records in Memphis, TN

# PRODUCTION HISTORY



The creative team, from left, Catherine Johnson, Phyllida Lloyd and Judy Craymer.

After the disbanding of ABBA in 1982, Benny and Björn collaborated with noted musical theatre **lyricist** Tim Rice to write a rock musical about the political and romantic intrigues situated within the world of international competitive chess called *Chess*. The show opened in London in 1984, executive produced by Judy Craymer.

Craymer recognized that the ABBA catalog of songs contained impressive dramatic potential and, over the next 13 years, crafted the concept of a musical drawn from these songs. In 1997, she enlisted playwright Catherine Johnson and director Phyllida Lloyd to bring her vision to life.

In 1999, on the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of ABBA's Eurovision victory, *Mamma Mia!* opened at the Prince Edward Theatre in London's West End. Audiences went wild, and box office sales went through the roof.

Soon after, in 2001, *Mamma Mia!* opened at the Winter Garden Theatre on Broadway (the former home to Andrew Lloyd Webber's blockbuster musical *Cats*). By the time it closed in 2015, the New York run of *Mamma Mia!* had played over 5700 performances and become the ninth highest grossing musical in Broadway history.

Since its premiere, the show has been performed in over 50 countries and seen by over 60 million people, grossing over \$2 billion in sales worldwide. On any given night, 17,000 people are watching *Mamma Mia!* live on stage across the globe.



In 2008, the musical's worldwide appeal skyrocketed with the release of the major motion picture adaptation starring Meryl Streep, Amanda Seyfried, Pierce Brosnan, and Christine Baranski. At the Stockholm premiere of the film, the four members of ABBA reunited publicly for the first time since 1986.

The film has grossed over \$600 million worldwide, plus an additional \$150 million in home video sales of DVDs and Blu-rays.

In July 2018, the film's sequel, *Mamma Mia! Here We Go Again*, will be released in cinemas, featuring Lily James as a young Donna and Cher as Donna's mother (and Sophie's grandmother) Ruby.



# FUN FACTS AND TRIVIA - ABBA



A “**Super Trouper**” is a very large electric spotlight used primarily in concert arenas.

Most of ABBA’s hits in English (and other languages like Spanish) were recorded by learning the lyrics phonetically.

ABBA was one of the first groups to create regular **music videos** for their singles. The majority of these videos were directed by Academy Award-winning director Lasse Hallström (*The Cider House Rules*, *Chocolat*, *What’s Eating Gilbert Grape*).

Anna-Frid (Frida) Lyngstad was not Swedish. Her mother was Norwegian, and her father was German.

Only Elvis and The Beatles have sold more records than ABBA worldwide. “ABBA Gold” is surpassed in sales in the UK only by The Beatles’ “Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.”

The 1983 single “Thank You For the Music” is part of a “mini-musical” about American actress **Doris Day** called “The Girl with the Golden Hair.”



In 1972, Agnetha played the role of Mary Magdalene in the Swedish premiere of the Andrew Lloyd Webber-Tim Rice **rock opera** *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

The role of Judas Iscariot was sung by Murray Head on the original English concept album of *Jesus Christ Superstar*. Head would later play the role of The American on the 1984 concept album and in the 1986 London staging of *Chess*, a musical written by Benny, Björn, and Tim Rice.

Agnetha in *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

Before winning the 1974 **Eurovision Song Contest** with “Waterloo,” their single “Ring Ring” failed to qualify in the 1973 competition.

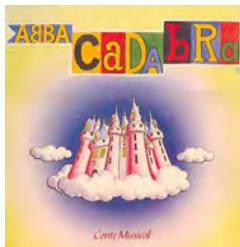
Genesis member Phil Collins produced and played drums on Frida’s 1982 **one-hit-wonder**, “I Know There’s Something Going On.”

In 2016 Björn opened an ABBA-themed restaurant in Stockholm, Sweden, named “Mamma Mia! The Party.”

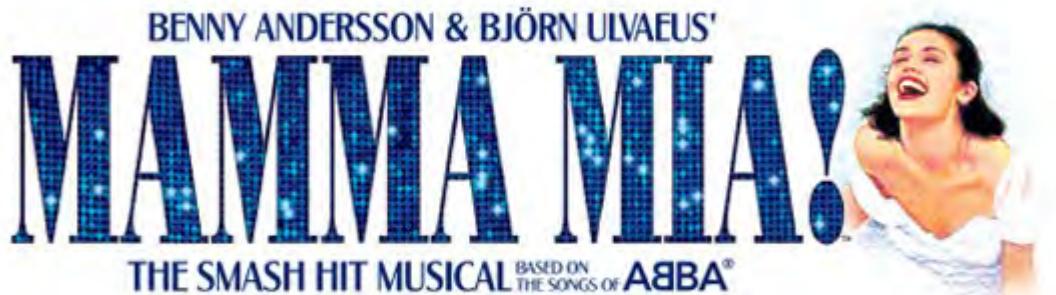


Back in 1974, ABBA won the annual Eurovision Song Contest. That success launched the group’s popularity.

# FUN FACTS AND TRIVIA - MAMMA MIA!



*Mamma Mia!* is not the first musical based on ABBA's songs. In 1983, a French children's television program called *ABBAcadabra*, co-written by Alain Boublil (the lyricist for *Les Misérables*), premiered.



When it closed in 2015, *Mamma Mia!* was the ninth-longest running show in Broadway history.

Over 60 million people have seen the stage version of *Mamma Mia!* in over 50 countries worldwide.

The play and film are structured like a classical Greek comedy (based on the model of *Aristophanes*). In Greek comedies, the world gets turned upside-down by misunderstandings or divine intervention, and order must be restored by the end of the play.

Pierce Brosnan had no idea what the movie was about when he signed on to play Sam. He just wanted to film in Greece and work with Meryl Streep.

In December 2008, the film became the highest-grossing motion picture in UK history, surpassing both *Titanic* and *Avatar*.

Meryl Streep beat out Olivia Newton-John and Michelle Pfeiffer for the role of Donna in the film, and Mandy Moore, Rachel McAdams, and Emmy Rossum were all considered for the role of Sophie.



Benny and Björn appear in **cameos** in the film.



Cher was originally offered the role of Tanya in the 2008 film. She will play Sophie's grandmother in the 2018 sequel to the movie.

# QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

## QUESTIONS FOR WRITING AND DISCUSSION

1. If someone were to make a musical based on your life using songs from a musical artist or group, whose songs would they choose and why? What would you want the title of your musical to be?
2. Does Sophie do the right thing when she invites her three potential fathers to her wedding? Why or why not? Does she consider the consequences of her actions?
3. After seeing the play, discuss who you think is Sophie's biological father with your classmates. Provide evidence for your opinion. Think of this as a detective collecting clues from the play. Do any of your peers make compelling cases for their choice that you had not considered?
4. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, families take on many shapes and sizes. Sophie longs for a traditional family at the beginning of the play but realizes how special her extended "chosen" family is. What is your definition of a family? Who makes up your family? Are there "chosen" members of your family with whom you share no biological bond, but instead share a strong emotional bond?
5. If you were to invite a surprise guest to your wedding, who would it be and why would you want their attendance to be a surprise? Is there anyone in your family who would be upset at this person's presence, and why?



Costumes by Mathew J. LeFebvre

# QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

## ACTIVITIES

1. Divide students into groups. Assign each group an ABBA song (suggestions below), with a YouTube link to the official music video and printouts of the lyrics.

Money! Money! Money!

Chiquitita

The Day Before You Came

Knowing Me, Knowing You

One of Us

Under Attack

The Winner Takes It All

Cassandra

As a group, discuss the story of the song. Who do you imagine is the person singing? To whom are they singing? When and where does the song occur? Does the character change his/her mind during the song? What is the emotional tone of the song?

Then, work together to write a dramatic scene (no music) based on the lyrics of the song you have been assigned.

Who are the characters? What do they want? What is the setting (time/place)? What happens in the scene? How does it relate to the ABBA song?

Read/act out your scenes for the class. Then play the song the scene is based on and ask the rest of the class to discuss what elements from the song they witnessed in your scene.

2. Write a letter to a family member you have never met, but wish you had. Who is it? Why do you want to write them/find out more about them? Are they alive or dead? What do you know about them from conversations with other family members, photographs, etc.?

Choose a song that you love that you would like to share with this person, to explain who you are, deep down in your soul. What song, based on what you know about them, best describes your idea of who they are/were?

Imagine the response letter you would receive from this person.

3. Later this year, the sequel to the 2008 film version of *Mamma Mia!* is being released. What would your sequel be like? What would be the plot? Would there be any new characters? Would there be any characters missing, whom we got to know in the first film?

Draft a short outline for the movie's plot and structure.

Research ABBA songs that were not included in the first film and decide which ones would need to be included in the sequel's soundtrack, who sings them, and at what point in the story.

4. Collect and study local, regional, and national theatre reviews. Identify what are the primary elements that all of these reviews have in common. By doing so, make a list of the types of things a theatre critic looks for when s/he reviews a play or musical. Share this list with the class and make a master list that you all agree upon as the core components of a successful theatre review. Then, use this list to help you write your own theatre review of *Mamma Mia!* at The Rep.

# QUESTIONS AND ACTIVITIES

## CREATE YOUR OWN JUKEBOX MUSICAL

Using the songs of a single musical artist or music group, propose a “**jukebox musical**” that weaves that music into a new **plot** with new characters, imagined by you. Your source material can be from any musical **genre** (pop, country, rap, dubstep, etc.); the only condition is that the songs must possess lyrics.

In order to successfully complete this activity, you must determine the artist you will be sourcing for the music and **lyrics**; create a **cast of characters** who will be central to the musical’s action; plot a storyline that has a beginning, middle, and end; and determine a song order for the action (along with which characters sing which numbers).

### Things to Consider:

What is the name of your musical? Be original and imaginative. How does it relate to the musical artist/group and/or the plot of your show?

What is the name of the artist or group upon whose **canon** your musical is based?

Name the **albums** from which you pulled the songs.

Draft a statement (2-3 sentences) explaining why you chose this artist or group as the inspiration for your musical.

What do these songs mean to you personally? How have they changed your life? Why do you want to share them with an audience in a theatrical format?

Draft a statement (2-3 sentences) describing how this music influences the story and style of the musical. Why MUST it be told this way, and why are THESE songs essential to the storytelling?

Write a list of the cast of characters, with a short description of each character. Is there a chorus? If so, what is its identity?

What is the **setting** of the plot, including time and place, as well as the timeframe within which the entire musical takes place?

Write out a summary of the plot, including any division of **act structure**.

Create a list of songs, in the order they will be performed, including the names of the characters that will sing each number. Use these songs as the spine of the play’s action. Make sure there is a logical reason for the order in which they appear and who sings them, and when. Are they **solos**, **duets**, **chorus numbers**, performed by the whole cast, etc.?

Write out the complete lyrics for a single song that will be performed at an important moment in the play’s action, using standard **theatrical dialogue** format. Indicate which character(s) is/are singing this song and if there are specific lyrics they sing alone or together. Describe the point in the action that the song takes place and explain why it is essential that it occur specifically at that point. How does this song express the emotions of the character(s)? How does this song advance the plot forward? Does this song feature any **foreshadowing** of things to come in the play, is it a **flashback**, does it resonate from an earlier moment in the action, etc.? If possible, include a URL for a YouTube version of the song.

Also consider “**mash-ups**” or **medleys** of more than one song, sung together in the same musical number.

Most importantly... **HAVE FUN!!!**

# VOCABULARY

Following are a series of important terms, including names, places, and historical events, that will assist you in your understanding of *Mamma Mia!* Many of these terms can be found in **bold** in the Study Guide. Others are taken directly from the text of the play and can be found using basic research strategies.

acronym	foreshadowing	Rock and Roll Hall of Fame
act structure	Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons	rock opera
album	genre	Russian Federation
allegory	Gilbert and Sullivan	sequel
Andrew Lloyd Webber	<i>glasnost</i>	setting
Aristophanes	Greek comedy	solo
Billboard charts	immigrant	Soviet Union
Billy Joel	jukebox	Stockholm
Bobby Fischer	jukebox musical	supergroup
Broadway	Lasse Hallström	Super Trouper
cameo	<i>Les Misérables</i>	taverna
canon	love triangle	Tim Rice
Carnegie Hall	lyricist	<i>Tommy</i>
Carole King	lyrics	tribute
cast of characters	mash-up	Twyla Tharp
<i>Chess</i>	medley	USSR
chorus	metaphor	West End
chorus number	music video	
climax	one-hit-wonder	
Cold War	operatic	
composer	operetta	
concept album	parody	
dialogue	patter song	
discography	<i>perestroika</i>	
Doris Day	phonetic	
duet	playwright	
dystopian	plot	
Eastern bloc	propaganda	
ensemble	Queen	
Eurovision Song Contest	revue	
flashback		



Costumes by Mathew J. LeFebvre

# Our Story

Founded in 1976, Arkansas Repertory Theatre is the state's largest not-for-profit professional resident theatre company. A member of the League of Resident Theatres, The Rep has produced more than 350 productions including 45 world premieres in its 377-seat venue located in the historic Galloway building in downtown Little Rock. The Rep relies on income from season subscriptions, single ticket sales, special events, foundation support, corporate and individual donations, and national grants, including grants from The Shubert Foundation and the National Endowment for the Arts.

# Our Mission

The mission of The Rep's Education Department is to engage Arkansas students of all ages, encouraging expression, collaboration, creative problem-solving, reflection, and a deeper community connection through involvement in theatre arts. Our mission is realized through student matinees, year-round classes and camps led by our professional faculty, master classes and workshops with guest artists, outreach education, scholarship opportunities and more.

# Contact Information

For questions or comments concerning this production of *Mamma Mia!* or Arkansas Repertory Theatre, contact our offices at (501) 378-0445.

Additional information may also be found at [TheRep.org](http://TheRep.org).

The Box Office may be reached at (501) 378-0405.

# Education Donors

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# ARKANSAS FINE ARTS CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK 2014

Students will perceive and analyze artistic work. R.7.THI.1-5, R.7.THII.1-5, R.7.THIII.1-5:

Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. R.8.THI.1-2, R.8.THII.1-2, R.8.THIII.1-2

Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. R.9.THI.1-2, R.9.THII.1-2, R.9.THIII.1-2

Students will perceive and analyze artistic work. R.7.TA.1-4

Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. R.8.TA.1-2

Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. R.9.TA.1-2

Students will relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding. CN.11.TA.2-9

Students will perceive and analyze artistic work. R.7.SCI.1-2, R.7.SCII.1-2, R.7.SCIII.1-2

Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. R.8.SCI.1, R.8.SCII.1, R.8.SCIII.1

Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. R.9.SCI.1-2, R.9.SCII.1-2, R.9.SCIII.1-2

Students will relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding. CN.11.SCI.1-9, CN.11.SCII.1-9, CN.11.SCIII.1-9

Students will perceive and analyze artistic work. R.7.2.1, R.7.3.1, R.7.4.1

Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. R.8.2.1-3, R.8.3.1-3, R.8.4.1-3

Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. R.9.2.1, R.9.1.1, R.9.2.1-3, R.9.3.1-3, R.9.4.1-3

Students will perceive and analyze artistic work. R.7.5.1, R.7.6.1, R.7.7.1, R.7.8.1

Students will interpret intent and meaning in artistic work. R.8.5.1-3, R.8.6.1-3, R.8.7.1-3, R.8.8.1-3

Students will apply criteria to evaluate artistic work. R.9.5.1-3, R.9.6.1-3, R.9.7.1-3, R.9.8.1-3

Students will synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art. CN.10.5.1, CN.10.6.1, CN.10.7.1, CN.10.8.1

Students will relate artistic ideas and works to societal, cultural and historical context to deepen understanding. CN.11.5.2-3, CN.11.6.2-3, CN.11.7.2-3, CN.11.7.2-3, CN.10.8.2-3

# ARKANSAS DRAMATIC LITERATURE CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK 2012

Students will demonstrate understanding of the elements of drama through the study of a variety of dramatic texts. DE.1.DL.1-11