

Poppies: a new musical

music box theatre

POPPIES



TOURING AUTUMN 2018

POPPIES

A new musical by Music Box Theatre



Commemorating the final year of the
WWI centenary



VISITING COMPANY
OF THE YEAR 2016



GARRICK THEATRE
FINALIST 2015

SHOW COPY

August, 1914

The world unknowingly enters the biggest conflict it has ever witnessed.

As men answer the call to fight, three young women decide they too must find their place on the front line.

Based on a true story of Lena Ashwell and her concert parties, Poppies shines a light on the women who risked their lives to bring music and drama to the battle-scarred men of the First World War.

COMPANY COPY

Music Box Theatre is a London based company dedicated to creating and developing new musical theatre. Founded in 2015 by Laura Kaye Thomson, our vision is to create interesting, relevant and entertaining pieces of theatre with music. We believe that music plays an integral role in our lives and therefore always aim to incorporate it into our storytelling. We are passionate about new writing and love creating new work and attempting to push the boundaries of music theatre.

Poppies was first performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in 2015. It then transferred to The Space theatre in London in May 2016. The song 'Love Me' from the 2015 production was chosen as a finalist in the Stiles and Drewe Best New Song prize and was performed at the Garrick Theatre in the West End. As a company, Music Box Theatre has performed at Park Theatre, the St James Theatre (now The Other Palace), Theatre Royal Stratford East, the Cockpit theatre and opened The Space's 20th Anniversary celebrations which starred Sir Ian McKellen.

Poppies was written and composed by Laura Kaye Thomson with the help of the Music Box Theatre ensemble. Laura is working on a range of other musical theatre projects and also recently had her first play staged. She studied History at Nottingham University and then trained as a musical theatre performer at Mountview Academy.

We also deliver musical theatre workshops and have worked in schools and universities across the UK developing performance and writing skills.

SYNOPSIS

Poppies is a new musical set in the First World War. It is based on the true story of the women who risked their lives and ventured to the front lines of the trenches to

entertain the Allied troops. Faced with strong government opposition, the huge restrictions of war and the constant threat of attack, these actors, musicians and comedians performed under fire to 'fight for the souls of men'; boosting vital morale and providing life saving solace in the darkest of times.

Poppies follows the story of May, Elsie and Ada who head to France in early 1915 to set up the first 'concert party' for the British soldiers. May is the leader and based on Lena Ashwell - an actor and producer who became a pioneer of women's rights in the war effort and later in the theatre industry. May is equally as resilient, proactive and unrelenting. Ada is May's younger sister known for her performing talents in London. Seemingly frivolous and sweet, she soon realises their purpose and with her sister's headstrong nature, she challenges May's more conservative artistic programme. Elsie is a young would-be mother with a talent for writing poetry asked by May to join the programme when struggles to find willing volunteers for the first concerts. Elsie's journey of self discovery is supported by the sisterhood of May and Ada as we see her coping with her grief and regaining her strength as the show progresses. Elsie is our main narrator.

Along the way we're introduced to a nurse and a doctor working tirelessly in the hospitals. We also meet a German prisoner of war who has been left in the camp to die. And we also meet some of our British soldiers struggling to understand how the world is changing, overwhelmed by their emotions and desperate for home. Through the show we see how all of our characters response and interact with music, poetry, scripts and how each of them come back to life through them.



REVIEWS

'A rousing new First World War music with fine songs and winning performances'
- *The Stage*



'I can only exhort you to see this company and this show...stunningly original'
- *Broadway Baby*



'A formidable company...immensely skilled and talented actor-musicians'
- *Female Arts*



'Musical theatre at its best, a real gem. Unmissable!'
- *Act Drop*



'Absolutely beautiful... this could be another 'Once'
- *One 4 Review*

'A beautiful musical complemented by a strong ensemble of great actors and powerful folk musicians'
- *Musical Theatre Review*

'The best constructed and written book for a new musical I've seen anywhere in London this year'
- *Plays to See*

'It's great to see a new company forging its own path, creating work rather than just falling back on established hits or Broadway favourites. Amid a welter of jukebox musicals, this deserves to be recognised and applauded'
- *Fest*

KEY INFO

Running Time: 2 hours 15 mins

Tour: Autumn 2018 (potentially Spring 2019)

Key Tech info: Minimal set. Instruments on stage including piano keyboard.
Flats on wheels change our scenes from hospitals to trenches.

Company: Cast (4F / 3M) Production Manager and Stage technician

Contact details:

- Laura Kaye Thomson
Artistic Director: laura@musicboxtheatre.co.uk
- Alex Walker
Associate Producer: alex@musicboxtheatre.co.uk

- Alys Woodhead
Production Manager: alys.woodhead@gmail.com
- Nicole Kay
Marketing manager: nicole@chloenelkinconsulting.com

Marketing:

Musical Theatre, Theatre and Live music audience.
Interest in WW1 audience
Interest in women / feminism audience
School groups - English, Drama, Music and History courses.
Older groups

Music Box Theatre will provide flyers, posters, production images, press release, rehearsal images, videos and trailer. They will have their own marketing strategy in place as well as being able to support any preexisting strategies provided by the venues.

PR: Chloe Nelkin Consulting (subject to funding)

Resources: Live music recordings: www.musicboxtheatre.co.uk/resources
Production images: www.musicboxtheatre.co.uk/resources
Critics reviews: www.musicboxtheatre.co.uk/critics
Audience reviews: www.musicboxtheatre.co.uk/audience

Website: www.musicboxtheatre.co.uk

EDUCATION

Engaging with our audiences is at the heart of what we do. Lena Ashwell, who the story of Poppies is based on, was a champion of theatre outreach and began some of the first examples of it post war.
We offer a range of theatre workshops covering English, Drama, Music and History and would be happy to discuss how we could incorporate education and outreach work to accompany performances.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: www.facebook.com/mbtheatre

Twitter: @mb_theatre and @poppiesmusical

Instagram: @mb_theatre