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Theatre in the UK

West End Shows

For many people the **highlight** of a visit to London is the chance to see a West End show. The West End of London, situated a **stone's throw** from Piccadilly Circus and Chinatown, is home to dozens of beautiful theatres.

London's West End theatres are currently enjoying a **boom** in popularity and ticket sales. According to the Society of London Theatres, nearly 12 million people attended a West End show last year, whilst audience numbers in 2005 look set to **outstrip** that impressive figure.

One possible reason for the success of contemporary theatrical productions is the **casting** of **A-list** Hollywood actors in **lead roles**. Val Kilmer, star of films like Top Gun and Batman Forever, is currently appearing in The Postman Always Rings Twice.

And he is not alone - other American movie stars performing in London include Oscar winner, Kevin Spacey, and David Schwimmer, who found international fame in the hit TV sitcom, Friends.

British screen stars are also **treading the boards** in West End shows. Scottish actor, Ewan McGregor, is appearing in the classic 1950s musical Guys and Dolls – an experience very different to making movies. McGregor says 'The actual process of making films is **extraordinarily tedious**. It is very difficult to keep your energy and focus. Whereas what is wonderful about this is we have to create it together.'

Ironically, it is not just that film stars are acting in **plays** nowadays but films themselves are being adapted for the stage. Amongst the films that can now be seen as plays or musicals are The Lion King, A Few Good Men, and Billy Elliot.

The **longest-running** shows in the West End are usually musicals. The Andrew Lloyd Webber show, Cats, ran for 21 years and 7000 performances, making its composer a multi-millionaire.

However, not all musicals do so well. Oscar Wilde: The Musical ran for only one night, closing after terrible reviews and poor **bookings**. It was quite possibly the biggest **flop** in London theatrical history.



Glossary

the highlight - a moment of vivid interest, an outstanding feature	a stone's throw - very near
a boom - a period of prosperity or sudden activity	to outstrip - to be bigger than
casting - allocation of roles	A-list - most popular
lead roles - main characters in a play	sitcom - short for situational comedy
treading the boards - being an actor, appear on the stage	musical - a theatrical piece where music is an essential element
extraordinarily tedious - long and taking a lot of effort	ironically - in the nature of irony
plays - theatrical pieces	longest-running - that has been performed for the longest time
ran for - was on the stage	bookings – reservations of seats
flop - failure	

1. Reading Quiz

Are these sentences true or false? Circle the correct answer.

1. London's West End is located not very far from Chinatown. True / False
2. Ticket sales for West End shows have been very poor in recent years due to high prices. True / False
3. The actor, Ewan McGregor, feels that the process of shooting a film is actually very boring. True / False
4. Many successful West End shows are adapted for the big screen and made into movies. True / False
5. Some West End musical can have a run lasting decades. True / False



2. Error Correction

Each of these sentences has a mistake in it. Find the mistake and rewrite the sentence correctly.

1. My girlfriend said me that she wanted to see a musical in London.

2. Tonight's performance of The Lion King has been called up because the lead actor is ill. Tickets can be exchanged for another performance.

3. Every weak there are ten performances of the show.

4. 'I think the song "Memory" from the musical Cats is a really beautiful song.'

'I am agree. It's a lovely ballad.'

5. The ticket sales for Oscar Wilde: The Musical were very disappointed. Nobody wanted to see the show.

6. If I will go to London, I will certainly try to catch a show.

3. Idioms

Look at the idioms below. Each one is connected to the theatre

Match the idiom to its definition.

- | | |
|-------------------------|---|
| 1. waiting in the wings | a. Good luck! (said to somebody who is about to perform or speak in public) |
| 2. the show must go on | b. to perform better than another person |
| 3. break a leg! | c. being ready and prepared to step into the action |
| 4. to upstage somebody | d. it's necessary to continue despite problems or difficulties |

Now complete the sentences below by using one of the idioms above.

1. 'I have to go now and deliver my presentation to the board of managers.'
' _____ . I hope it all goes well.'
2. 'We are having problems with our staff at the moment. Nearly half of them are off work with the flu.'
'Well, I know it's difficult but _____. We can't just give up.'
3. My boss is very angry with me because I _____ him at the meeting. My ideas were much better received than his.
4. You should always do your best in your job because there are always people _____ to take your job if you don't do it well.



4. Wordsearch

Try to find the words associated with the theatre in the puzzle below.

There are ten words to find. Words can be written horizontally (g), vertically (i) or diagonally (m)

s	t	p	r	o	d	u	c	t	i	o	n
t	e	t	n	g	h	y	k	l	i	m	p
h	d	j	i	n	t	e	r	d	d	f	y
e	s	s	e	c	r	d	f	a	b	l	g
a	a	d	i	b	k	y	j	n	r	o	t
t	e	g	j	n	y	e	n	c	u	p	t
r	e	b	y	n	g	e	t	e	d	f	u
e	l	o	i	v	n	s	d	g	h	w	r
a	b	m	u	s	i	c	a	l	f	e	o
n	e	b	t	k	l	c	v	r	e	h	l
n	e	s	v	d	r	a	m	a	b	r	e
p	l	a	y	f	q	u	l	a	n	m	t

theatre	flop	role	cast	ticket	play
musical	drama	production	sing	dance	

Answers

1. Reading Quiz

Are these sentences true or false? Circle the correct answer.

- London's West End is located not very far from Chinatown. **True**
- Ticket sales for West End shows have been very poor in recent years due to high prices. **False**
- The actor, Ewan McGregor, feels that the process of shooting a film is actually very boring. **True**
- Many successful West End shows are adapted for the big screen and made into movies. **False**
- Some West End musical can have a run lasting decades. **True**

3. Idioms

- c 3. a
- d 4. b

- 'I have to go now and deliver my presentation to the board of managers.'
' **Break a leg** . I hope it all goes well.'
- 'We are having problems with our staff at the moment. Nearly half of them are off work with the flu.'
'Well, I know it's difficult but **the show must go on**. We can't just give up.'
- My boss is very angry with me because I **upstaged** him at the meeting. My ideas were much better received than his.
- You should always do your best in your job because there are always people **waiting in the wings** to take your job if you don't do it well.

2. Error Correction

Each of these sentences has a mistake in it. Find the mistake and rewrite the sentence correctly.

- My girlfriend said to me that she wanted to see a musical in London.
- Tonight's performance of The Lion King has been called off because the lead actor is ill. Tickets can be exchanged for another performance.
- Every week there are ten performances of the show.
- 'I think the song "Memory" from the musical Cats is a really beautiful song.'
'I agree. It's a lovely ballad.'
- The ticket sales for Oscar Wilde: The Musical were very disappointing. Nobody wanted to see the show.
- If I go to London, I will certainly try to catch a show.

4. Wordsearch

		p	r	o	d	u	c	t	i	o	n
t		t									
h			i					d	f		
e	s		c					a	l		
a			i		k			n	o		
t				n		e		c	p		
r					g		t	e			
e											r
		m	u	s	i	c	a	l			o
											l
					d	r	a	m	a		e
p	l	a	y								

