

# YOU! The Musical Overview

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## INTRODUCTION

### Description

You! The Musical is a fully improvised musical featuring improvised songs and live piano accompaniment. Even the light design is improvised. The show is inspired by a title that is pitched and voted on by the audience.

### History

YOU! The Musical was founded in 2014 by Brian Crall. Of course, the cast has changed and the show form has evolved over the years. Each new cast/crew member adds new knowledge to the group and helps the show to improve. At first the show was a collection of songs inspired by audience members' suggestions, which is why the show was initially named, "YOU!" the Musical. Over time the cast decided that, while more difficult, the show needed to mirror a real musical and have a story with a beginning, middle, and end- which is the current form of the show.

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## SHOW, CAST, AND CREW INTRODUCTION

### Cast Introduction

The Stage Tech introduces the show with swelling music, "Welcome to the Sacramento Comedy Spot, it's time for you the musical, please put your hands together for the cast of YOU! The Musical."

### Show Introduction

The purpose of the show introduction is to explain the concept of the show, introduce the cast and crew, and get an original title that will inspire the story. One cast member will host the introduction. The host should be energetic and concise.

- "Welcome to YOU! The Musical. Tonight you are going to see a completely improvised musical- the story, lyrics, dance moves, music, and even the light design are created in the moment without any preparation or planning. Please give it up for our orchestra and the light and sound crew. And to our amazing performers on stage tonight"
- "To get started, we would like a couple of YOU to pitch original musical titles, and then all of YOU are going to vote on the musical you want to see.

Keep in mind, it has to be an original title so you can't use HAMILTON, RENT, or CATS, those have been made. Also, we've already done PENIS, VAGINA, and FARTS the musical so you can't pitch those again." [Asking the rest of the cast] "What are some examples of great show titles we've had in the past?"

*"Naughty Karate, The Train in the Rain, You Are My Tomato"*

- “Okay, everyone on board? Who would like to pitch a title for tonight's musical? Raise your hand if you have an idea.” The host will get 3-4 pitches for the musical, reminding each audience member, “Remember what you pitched, we are going to come back to you in a second.”
- “Alright, this is where you are going to vote for tonight’s title. Vote by applause, you get two votes this first round. The host will point to each of the audience members and have them pitch their musical again. If there is a clear winner after the first round then announce the winner, thank everyone who pitched a title, and move on to the Show Opening.
- “Alright, this is the last round of voting, you get one vote. Vote by applause.” Have the audience members pitch their musical title one last time. Announce the winner, thank everyone who pitched a title, and move on to the Show Opening. The show Opening is described below in the YOU! The Musical Form section.
- **Important notes**
  - It is okay to refuse a title because it is already a musical or it is in bad taste. The host is ultimately responsible for rejecting the idea.
  - Try not to let anything distract you or the host until they have had a chance to welcome the audience and explain the show format.
  - Stay positive when talking to the audience- if the audience feels comfortable they will be more willing to pitch a title. We are setting the tone for the entire show in the introduction. If we look and act professional we are already starting to earn their confidence.

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## YOU! THE MUSICAL FORM

YOU! The Musical is a completely improvised musical- the story, lyrics, dance moves, music, and even the light design are created in the moment without any preparation or planning. The story is inspired by an audience member's suggestion of a title.

YOU! The Musical thrives on confident bold choices and dies with timid coy choices. You are responsible for moving the plot of the show forward. If you are bad, be real bad, if you are good, be real good. Whatever you are thinking in your head you should say out loud. We can't support you if we don't know what you are thinking.

There is a style to a musical that is different from most other live theater. The world of a musical is bigger than the world we live in. Character's begin to sing when their emotions are so intense they must sing and/or dance. YOU! The Musical should feel like a musical and incorporate musical theater tropes into the production- jazz hands, counterpoint duets, the full company show stopper, songs before the storm, 'I want' songs, finding inspiration for the right words in the rafters, a dark reprise of an original song, etc.

If you are going to create a musical you have to become a connoisseur of musicals- watch and listen to them. What are some of musical topos, types of songs or characters, or different stylistic choices in this clip: <https://youtu.be/mKuauz9tqKg>

YOU! The Musical is a show in three acts with an opening song that serves as a brainstorming session for the rest of the show.

### **ACT ONE (10-12 Minutes)**

By the end of Act One we should know who the protagonist and antagonist are, and what they want most of all. The “wants” are opposite from each other. We will also have met most of the other characters who are allies to the protagonist and antagonist. The Protagonist is the leading character in our musical. The Antagonist is a character who actively opposes or is hostile toward our protagonist.

### **Show Opening**

After the *Show, Cast, and Crew Introduction* (See the section above.) The cast should be standing in a straight line evenly spaced across the stage with the host near the middle. The host should say, “YOU! The Musical is proud to present, [NAME OF THE MUSICAL], the Musical!” Lights will blackout, each of the cast members will turn to face their back to the audience- cast members stage right will turn clockwise, cast members stage left will turn counter clockwise. The symphony should swell and flare until one of the cast members turns to the audience and starts the Opening Song by singing or speaking the first line of the song. The lights will come up, the symphony will support, and the rest of the cast members exit the stage.

### **Opening Song**

The opening song of each YOU! The musical show is a way of brainstorming ideas for the rest of the show. This brainstorming is achieved by the majority of the cast singing about, exploring, and expanding on a particular world inspired by the suggestion of the title of the musical. The open song is a way to explore potential characters, concepts, and/or themes for the rest of the show.

The cast member that starts the opening song establishes a world all of the cast members can explore, and is the first person to start to explore that world.

**Example:** The title of a show is *Surf Shop Superstar*. The cast member that starts the opening song may sing about “surfing the waves” and how “waves are not big enough” and how they only want to “surf the largest wave”

The cast member has established a potential character and the beach or ocean as the world. The rest of the cast should then think of all the people, animals, and inanimate objects that might exist in that world. (If this is true, what else is true?)

Sing about who you are and the way you feel. Again, you are not making specific character choices, you are exploring which groups potentially exist in that world.

**Example:** The second cast member may sing about “being grateful for escaping the big city, taking a beach vacation, and the things on the beach that are better than the city.” The third cast member might sing about “being a misunderstood shark in the ocean and just wants to be understood by the people” And another cast member might sing about their “magical beach side resort and all the fun things people can do.” Another cast member might sing as a surfboard that “feels disrespected.” After 2-3 cast members sing, establish the chorus of the song. In this example it could be, “Beach life, is the best life, for me.”

Characters and concepts introduced in the opening song **do not** have to be used in the rest of the musical- it is just a way to gather ideas.

### **Other Opening Song Notes**

- The Opening should be upbeat and dynamic.
- No one cast member should be “in control” of the opening song, everyone should participate.
- Even though the cast leaves the stage at the beginning of the Opening Song, cast members should immediately support by dancing behind them, coming on to establish a chorus, or, most importantly, signing the next verse of the song.
- All cast members should be *eager* to be involved in the Opening Song, almost to the point of interrupting each other. We should strive to have a seamless handoff from one cast member to another. Drive toward an ending. Repeat the chorus at the end. The symphony can also drive toward an ending. Listen. Make eye contact with the other cast members and end the song clean.

### **The Set-up**

This part of Act One establishes our protagonist, the world they live in, the “before” snapshot. We also start to understand what the protagonist wants. Other characters, including the antagonist and allies can be introduced in the set-up. By the end of Act One most of the characters in the show should be introduced.

**Note:** Remember, you can play multiple characters in the show. There can be many different allies. We don’t have to “pair off” early and stick to the same characters the entire show.

In every section of the show we learn our characters wants, justifications, thoughts, and conflict, through scenes and songs. Let scenes set up ideas, and explore and expand on those ideas in your songs. If we talk too long, it’s time to sing.

### **The Catalyst**

The singular moment where the world you have set up is knocked down and all of our dramatic conflict starts. We are certain what our protagonist and antagonist want, and why they want it.

### **ACT TWO (20 Minutes)**

Every time the protagonist or antagonist gets closer to their goal the opposite character, or allies of that character, come along to block their progress. This beat of the show is a tug of war between our two forces. We should know which characters are allied with the protagonist and which characters are allied with the antagonist. If we haven't used the title of the musical yet we should start to think about how we can incorporate it.

Each time the pendulum swings the opposite direction the tactic we use to get closer to our character's goal, and the method used to block it, need to heighten.

We can also see a "B" story develop between other characters in the musical. Remember, every character, no matter how "insignificant," should have a want and reason for wanting it. In Act Two, the cast should strive to resolve every character's "want," no matter how insignificant the character or the want.

At the end of Act Two it will appear that the Antagonist finally has the upper hand, and all is lost for our protagonist and their allies.

**Notes:** The protagonist and antagonist do not have to be in every scene.

### **ACT THREE (5-8 Minutes)**

At the beginning of Act Three we will see the lead up, and then the resolution of our conflict between the protagonist and antagonist. This is what everything has been leading to. We should also try to resolve the "B" story conflicts. stories.

Once we see the resolution of the major dramatic conflict there should be a blackout. This blackout is a line between the world established at the beginning of the musical and our new world.

All cast members will exit the stage during this blackout. The lights will stay out and the orchestra will play until the protagonist returns to the stage.

After the blackout, we will see a scene where the protagonist is in their new world. This can be a couple of days, months, or even years into the future. This scene should quickly turn into a final song celebrating this new world. This is also a good place to resolve the "wants" of minor characters, if they haven't been resolved already.

We might also see how this new world affects the antagonist but it is not required.

Like the opening song, this closing song should be supported by the entire cast, be upbeat, energetic, have a ton of movement, and be very loose and fun. Like the opening song the closing song can feel like a brainstorming session of all the possibilities in this new world.

Avoid closing songs that are just a review of everything that happened during the musical and also avoid closing songs that are about the lessons we learned through the dramatic conflict. We will never be standing in a line in this final song.

The closing song is a celebration of everything that is, now.

Again, this should be an upbeat song, dynamic, with tons of energy, and a simple chorus.

One cast member, usually the protagonist, should signal the end of the show, with a gesture, which will be supported by the rest of the cast, a blackout, and the end of singing and music. Create an interesting final stage picture to end the show.

**Note:** This is our last chance to use the title of the musical. It better be good, the audience has been waiting the entire show to hear it. The longer the wait, the more creatively placed the title of the musical needs to be.

### **Curtain Call**

After the final blackout the orchestra will start to play again, the lights will come up, and the cast will thank the audience by applauding for them, then the cast will applaud the orchestra and the Tech, and then applaud the audience one last time. Then the cast will exit the stage. The lights will fade to black, and the orchestra will continue to play until the conclusion of their song.

Make a point of having at least 2-3 cast members go to the lobby and thank people as they leave the Comedy Spot.

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## **SONGS**

Musicals have solos, duets, and group numbers. Most songs in YOU! The Musical will have a similar structure.

### **Songs Structure**

Each song we sing should move the plot forward and expand and explore our characters' thoughts and feelings. Scenes are just a set up to sing songs where we reveal more information about our characters and the story. Each song has a chorus and verses. Even though this is an improv show that follows plot instead of pattern don't worry, you are still going to use all of your previous improv skills. Think of each chorus of a song as stating the pattern of the song and each verse is a hit on the pattern. Our scenes are just a way of setting up patterns (choruses) to be explored in songs. It's important that choruses are established early in the song, just like it is

important to say or find the pattern at the beginning of an improv scene. Clear patterns (choruses) will give the performers focus. Remember, just like an improv scene, improvised songs should start more grounded and move toward crazy town throughout the song- each new verse is heightened. Heightening can come through more unusual ideas, dance breaks, musical swells, key changes, adding more singers, volume, lack of volume, etc.

### **Excerpt, Be Our Guest - Beauty And The Beast**

#### **Chorus:**

Be our guest! Be our guest! Be our guest!

#### **Verse:**

Get your worries off your chest  
Let us say for your entree  
We've an array; may we suggest:  
Try the bread! Try the soup!  
When the croutons loop de loop  
It's a treat for any dinner  
Don't believe me? Ask the china  
Singing pork! Dancing veal!  
What an entertaining meal!  
How could anyone be gloomy and depressed?  
We'll make you shout "encore!"

#### **Chorus:**

So, be our guest! Be our guest! Be our guest!

### **Solos and the Solo Spot**

The "solo spot" is downstage center. If a cast member walks directly to this spot they are indicating that they are going to create a solo. Most of the time, when a cast member enters the stage another cast member will enter with them to support.

If you enter to support another cast member, and they move to the "solo spot" then you should pause, look at the back of the head of the cast member initiating a solo, and wait to exit the stage when you will not pull focus- usually when the music for the solo starts.

Even though a cast member is doing a solo we should still support them by providing back up dancing, singing with them, helping them find a chorus, and even acting out parts of their song.

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### **IMPORTANT NOTES, TIPS, AND GUIDELINES**

Here are some notes, tips, and guidelines that will help you be successful. If you have any questions, suggestions, or concerns, please let the producer know.

- Have fun. Relax. Let 'er rip. Be great. You don't have to prove anything. You belong here. You were invited to play with this team because you are ready.
- This show thrives on making bold decisions. Be bold.
- Make smart choices that support the plot, characters, and theme of the show. When we make choices that are overly sexual, crass, or profane, just to get a laugh, or because we are nervous, it takes away from impact of the show. We CAN go blue, we CAN push boundaries, but it should always be earned and in support of the show.
- Make choices that support the plot of the show. Keep the plot easy so you can focus on unusual characters.
- When the show is announced, take the stage with energy but don't overdo it. This is the first time the audience will see you on stage- you don't want to scare them.
- People sing in musicals because the emotion has grown so intense that they can't contain it any longer and they *have* to sing.
- A simple story allows you to use your brain power to create amazing characters and moments.
- Keep your choruses dumb and simple.
- Eye contact is your ally. Check in with your scene/song partner(s).
- Make motivated and deliberate movement. Plant your feet for more power.
- Find your light. If you can't feel it on your face, you haven't found it yet.
- Play off the back wall toward the middle of the stage.
- Create interesting stage pictures.
- The dress code for cast and crew is black or lite colored shirts, black pants, nice shoes. Look sharp. You can even wear a tie.
- Avoid giving notes or talking about the show immediately after the show. Give yourself some time to reflect on the show and wait to share your thoughts during notes. The team will meet for notes via zoom sometime during the week after the show. A video of the show will be posted for everyone to watch before notes. Watch it, even though you hate watching yourself. This show thrives on making bold decisions. Be bold.
- Remember, even when individually or as a group we think we had a "bad" or "okay" show, the audience is blown away! They think it's magical.
- We will always be critical of what we create because we want to be better each time we go on stage. Don't share your critique with the audience after the show- you will be robbing them of the magic they just witnessed.
- Develop your skills. Yo, this show is hard. You have to be a good improviser, be able to rhyme, sing, dance, and have a knowledge of musicals. This show requires you to work on your skills outside of this show. Consider it an investment in yourself- all of the skills you develop for YOU! The Musical will help you be a better performer in other shows.
- **The next show should always be better than the last. Strive to exceed expectations.**