



The Guide to Musical Theatre

CATS

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber; Lyrics by T.S. Eliot; Based on the book Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats by T.S. Eliot; Additional lyrics by Trevor Nunn and Richard Stilgoe

New London Theatre, London - 11 May, 1981 - 1 May 2002

Winter Garden Theatre, New York - 7 October, 1982 - 10 September, 2000
(7,485 performances)



SUMMARY:

This all-dance show's action is set on a gigantic rubbish dump which, after dark, becomes alive with cats of all types, shapes and sizes. Soon there are cats all over the place, including the auditorium, gathering for the Jellicle Ball during which one cat will be selected by the Jellicle Leader and allotted an extra precious life. It is the former glamour cat, Grizabella - turned dishevelled outcast who, at the end of the evening, is chosen by Deuteronomy to receive the prized additional life.

STORY:

It's the night of the Jellicle Ball. The cat clan has gathered for the annual event at which the revered elder Old Deuteronomy chooses the most deserving cat to ascend with him for a heavenly reward. The cats have gathered, and one by one, we learn about their personalities, exactly as T. S. Eliot portrayed them in his book of poems. Jennyanydots, Cassandra, Bombalurina, and Jellylorum are the first to strut their stuff. They welcome Rum Tum Tugger, a rock-star-idol type of cat, creating just the right mood for the arrival of Grizabella, the Glamour Cat. She is an aging beauty who has roamed some of the lowest alleys.

The younger felines mock and avoid her. Bustopher Jones, mature and well-rounded, catches everyone's eye with his natty clothes and well-groomed look. Mungojerrie and Rumple Teazer, two mischievous, fun-loving cats, provide a light moment before Old Deuteronomy arrives and sets a more serious tone for the ball. Barred from the festivities, Grizabella reflects on her memory of happier times and the new life that could be ahead. Also on the sidelines, Gus the Theatre Cat finds fault with the lack of dedication he perceives in today's actors and reminisces about some of his finest roles. In Skimbleshanks the Railway Cat, we find great pride and commitment in doing the relatively small job of keeping a single train on schedule. Macavity, the "fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity," is talked about in hushed voices. "Was there ever a cat so clever as magical Mr. Mistoffelees?" Yes, and much to the delight of all he bursts upon the scene. Still it is Grizabella that demonstrates the greatest depth of character and need. She is chosen to accompany Old Deuteronomy on this year's ascension "up, up, up, past the Russell Hotel. Up, up, up to the Heaviside layer."

Before their departure Old Deuteronomy summarizes Eliot's lifelong passion for paralleling catlike names and attributes to people he had observed:

"You've heard of several kinds of cat, And my opinion now is that You should need no interpreter To understand our character. You've learned enough to take the view That cats are very much like you."

PRINCIPAL CHARACTERS:

- Grizabella
- Rum Tum Tugger
- Asparagus
- Growltiger
- Mister Mistoffolees
- Deuteronomy
- Skimbleshanks
- Rumpleteazer
- Mungojerrie
- Munkustrap
- Jennyamdots

MUSICAL NUMBERS:

Act I

1. Overture – Orchestra
2. "Prologue: Jellicle Songs for Jellicle Cats" – The Company
3. "The Naming of Cats" – The Company
4. "The Invitation to the Jellicle Ball" – Victoria, Quaxo, Munkustrap
5. "The Old Gumbie Cat" – Jennyanydots, Munkustrap, Bombalurina, Jellylorum, Demeter
6. "The Rum Tum Tugger" – Rum Tum Tugger and Company
7. "Grizabella: The Glamour Cat" – Grizabella, Demeter, Bombalurina
8. "Bustopher Jones: The Cat About Town" – Bustopher, Jennyanydots, Jellylorum, Bombalurina
9. "Mungojerrie and Rumpleteazer" – Mungojerrie, Rumpleteazer
10. "Old Deuteronomy" – Munkustrap, Rum Tum Tugger, Old Deuteronomy
11. "The Awful Battle of The Pokes and the Pollicles" – Munkustrap, Rumpus Cat and Company
12. "The Song of the Jellicles" – The Company
13. "The Jellicle Ball" – Orchestra
14. "Grizabella, The Glamour Cat" (Reprise) – Grizabella
15. "Memory" – Grizabella

Act II

16. "The Moments of Happiness"/"Memory" – Old Deuteronomy, Jemima
17. "Gus: The Theatre Cat" – Asparagus, Jellylorum
18. *"Growltiger's Last Stand", incorporating either 'The Ballad Of Billy M'Caw' or the Italian aria 'In Una Tepida Notte' – Growltiger, Griddelbone, Ghengis, the Siamese, the Crew
19. "Gus: The Theater Cat" (Reprise) – Asparagus
20. "Skimbleshanks: The Railway Cat" – Skimbleshanks and Company
21. "Macavity: The Mystery Cat" – Demeter, Bombalurina
22. "Macavity Fight" – Macavity, Munkustrap, Alonzo
23. "Mr. Mistoffelees" – Quaxo, otherwise known as Mr. Mistoffelees, Rum Tum Tugger
24. "Jellicle Choice"/"Daylight" – Munkustrap and Jemima
25. "Memory" (Reprise) – Grizabella, Jemima
26. "The Journey to the Heaviside Layer" – The Company
27. "Finale: The Ad-Dressing of Cats" – Old Deuteronomy

INSTRUMENTATION

Tenor/soprano/flute, trumpet/piccolo/trumpet, trumpet/flugel, flute/ baritone/soprano/clarinet, cello, percussion, trombone/euphonium, horns, oboe/cor anglais, keyboards (4), electric/ acoustic guitar, bass guitar/string bass, four pit voices.

CASTING

22 parts (doubling is written for 5 characters), 4 principals; however, every part is featured. Virtually all parts are for strong dancers who sing exceptionally well.

Grizabella, actress/ dancer with lilting voice.

Old Deuteronomy, actor with robust basso voice.

Rum Tum Tugger, dynamic actor with rock-type personality who sings and dances.

Mistoffelees, Jellylorum, Bombalurina, Cassandra, Demeter, Jennyanydots, featured dancers who sing.

SCENES AND SETTINGS

2 acts, large unit set depicting an oversized junk yard containing old auto wheels and parts, bottles, household trash (including catfood boxes and tins), shoes, other discards. Pirate ship. Full moon on backdrop. Period and Costumes

1939, or the present, or a time in space. Costumes are a major part of the Cats concept. Body suits or leotards are the basis of most costumes, painted appropriately for each character. Each has a fuzzy tail and is cinched with a gold chain belt. Matching leg-warmers and similar knit-tubes for wrists and lower arms. Wigs and fur enhance makeup and complete the catlike transformations. Gus the Theatre Cat, Old Deuteronomy and several others have coats made of fake fur. Grizabella has straggly fur cape, tattered feather headdress. Siamese headdresses for Siamese cats. Bulldog heads, Raggedy Ann and Andytype costumes à la comic strips. Growl-tiger, tigerstriped fake fur outfit, goggled eye, flylike mask and headdress, vest. Mr. Mistoffelees, stretch satin/ fur outfit, many collars, Old Deuteronomy's cloak.

CHOREOGRAPHY

Jazz, acrobatic, modern ballet, tap, and production numbers.

LIGHTING AND SPECIAL EFFECTS

Lighting for an eerie nocturnal environment-huge backlighted moon, strings of colored lights, a ring of spotlights above center stage, smoke and fog effects. Christmas lights.

NOTES: *Cats* is a production spectacle. The T. S. Eliot lyrics are greatly enhanced by the Webber score, but it's the costume/ makeup and dynamic production concepts that hold everything together and make the show work.