



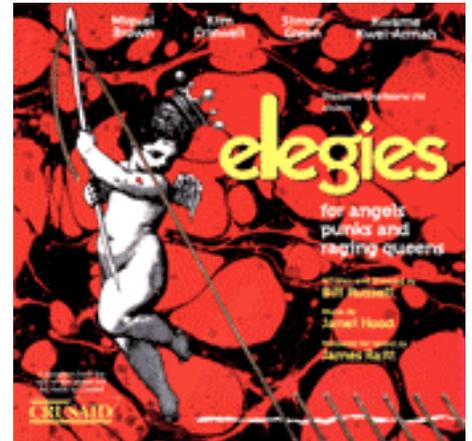
# The Guide to Musical Theatre

## ELEGIES FOR ANGELS, PUNKS AND RAGING QUEENS

by Bill Russell : Music by Janet Hood

It was presented to critical acclaim in London at the King's Head Theatre in 1992 and the following year at the Criterion Theatre. A celebration of lives lost to AIDS told in free-verse monologues with a blues, jazz and rock score, this piece is designed to include the community in a theatrical response to the AIDS crisis. It is often performed as a benefit for fund-raising and consciousness-raising.

This play with music tells the tale from the point of view of some 30 individuals who died as a result of contracting AIDS from a wide variety of sources - such as a "regular Joe who dropped into a brothel, to a granny who was given an infected blood transfusion". The actors step forward one by one to tell their stories in verse and song.



### THE SONGS FROM ELEGIES...

Inspired equally by seeing the Names Project Quilt at its initial display and Edgar Lee Masters' "Spoon River Anthology", I began writing first-person free-verse monologues about friends who'd died from AIDS. Early in that process I thought there were theatrical possibilities in the material and called my longtime collaborator Janet Hood to see if she'd be interested in writing music for the piece. She responded enthusiastically and we began.

Because the poems portrayed the perspective of characters who had died, they are voiced in past tense. It wasn't until I started putting together the first full production of Elegies.. that I realised the lyrics I'd written were in present tense and were expressions of those left alive in the face of this tragedy. Two worlds were present on stage, the dead who spoke in verse and the living who sang. I found the dynamic between the two realms intriguing and became more focused on trying to show a canvas of the many types both infected and affected by AIDS.

Janet and I have been graced with many wonderful singers through the various productions of the piece. Due to constraints of time, space and money, the previous incarnations of Elegies... were done with piano accompaniment only (usually with Janet supplying her notable talent on the keyboard). When Giacomo Capizzano first optioned the rights to the piece, practically the first words out of our mouths were, "we'd like James Raitt to orchestrate the music" and with the Criterion production that dream finally came true.

*Bill Russell*

### MUSICAL NUMBERS:

1. Angels, Punks & Raging Queens
2. I'm Holding On To You
3. And the Rain Keeps Falling Down
4. I Don't Do That Anymore
5. I Don't Know How To Help You
6. Celebrate
7. Heroes All Around

8. Spend It While You Can
9. My Brother Lived in San Francisco
10. Learning to Let Go

This is not a typical musical-comedy score and the singers should be comfortable with pop styles.

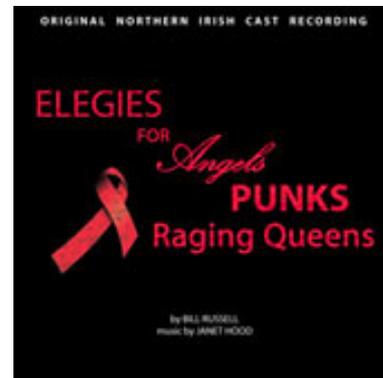
- *'It is an elegy, not just to 'Angels, punks and raging queens', but to suffering and togetherness.'* The Times
- *'Bursts with humour, rage and hope.'* Backstage

**CAST:** Male 20 - 25: Female 11 - 16 (doubling and expanding possible)

**ORCHESTRATION:** On application to rights holder

**DISCOGRAPHY:**

Original Cast Recording - First Night CASTCD 35  
Northern Irish Cast Recording



**THE NAMES PROJECT AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT**

Propelled by the death of a close friend from AIDS, a San Francisco man named Cleve Jones searched for a way to make people understand the loss and frustration that he and so many others felt. Meeting with several strangers who shared the common bond of similar loss and the hope of creating something that would serve as a lasting symbol of love and remembrance to those who had died, the idea of a quilt emerged. Consisting of 6' by 3' panels, each representing an individual lost to AIDS, the quilt was first displayed in Washington DC in October 1987. At that time, it included approximately 1,500 panels.

Displayed again in Washington in October 1992, the quilt had grown to over 20,000 panels covering 17 acres. Panels, primarily created by family or friends of the person commemorated, have been sent from countries all over the world. The materials used in the quilt include afghans, Barbie dolls, credit cards, sequins, wedding rings, pearls, stuffed animals and feather boas. In 1988, the Names project was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize - If you would like more information about the quilt or would like to see it, please contact the national office.

The Names Project (UK), 86 Constitution Street, Edinburgh EH6 6RP. Telephone. 031-555 3446. Fax 031-555 3453.