

Broadway hits, done Malaysian style

It sounds like a marriage made in heaven: the soaring melodies of classic Broadway show tunes, combined with witty lyrics that both celebrate and spoof the intricacies of Malaysian life.

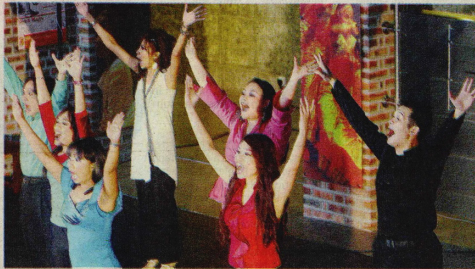
Imagine lyrics that tell of typical gatherings at the mamak stall set to the rambunctious music of the gangs meeting in *West Side Story*, for instance, or tales of the dire bus ride up to Genting Highlands sung to a tune from *Les Misérables*....

Such is the premise of *Broadway Parodies Lagi Lah!* (BPLL!), a fun-filled revue of comedic song and dance numbers adapted from the award-winning show *Forbidden Broadway* by American parodist Gerard Alessandrini.

BPLL! is a sequel to last year's highly successful *Broadway Parodies Lah*, which performed to full houses in all of its 10 performances. As with last year's production, *BPLL!* features lyrics written by Brian McIntyre, a co-founding member of Kuala Lumpur-based a cappella group Six2Eight.

Last year's production of this show was McIntyre's first stab at a musical, though he's no newbie in the theatre scene, having appeared in productions such as *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *The Fantasticks*, *The Storyteller*, *The Mikado*, and *Stand Up and Deliver* since the 1990s.

So what's an Englishman doing writing about Malaysian life? Well, this particular Mat Salleh has been living here for almost two decades, which certainly means he's well-versed in the idiosyncrasies and quirks of life in this colourful country.



The media preview of *Broadway Parodies Lagi Lah!* last week was an energetic, fun-filled show of funny words and great music. – AZLINA ABDULLAH / The Star

And McIntyre brings a fond yet keen eye to bear on life here because he's hit all the right spots. For one thing, he obviously knows all about the national love affair with food, as musical numbers relating to food are aplenty.

And then there's *I Could Have Played Golf All Day* set to *My Fair Lady*'s *I Could Have Danced All Night*, while *Hair*'s *Good Morning Starshine* turns into (those ubiquitous!) *Good*

Morning Towels.

While old favourites such as *Bomoh of the Bursa* and *Damansara* make a return, there are new songs as well, as this year's production is being held on a "slightly bigger scale", according to executive producer Datuk Faridah Merican, who explains that there's a nationwide tour in the works this time.

After its mid-September run concludes in Kuala Lumpur, *BPLL!* will move on to Penang,

Johor and Kota Kinabalu, among other cities, next month.

A bigger scale also means that little bit of extra pressure on this year's cast, which includes both established and rising stars in the local performing arts scene: Glamorique Arshad and Ho Soon Yoon from last year's production return and are joined by Janet Lee, Keith Yew, Mia Palencia, Sarah Low, Shahila Johan, Sham Sunder Binwani, Tabitha Kong, Tria, and Zeqhty Natrah Ramli.

This diverse ensemble, all of whom have been involved previously in various local film and theatrical productions, came together at the end of March and have been rehearsing hard for months, an experience that Kong describes as "very exciting, an experience that always had something for us to look forward to".

The Broadway-style choreography was, once again, created by Farah Sulaiman; and, also like last year, the ensemble will be accompanied by both live and computer sequenced musical backing. – TERENCE TOH

■ 'Broadway Parodies Lagi Lah!' is on from Sept 18-28 at Pentas 1, KLPac (Jalan Strachan, off Jalan Ipoh, Sentul Park). Tickets are priced at RM60 and RM40, and at RM20 for students.

For more information, call 03-4047 9000, 03-2094 9400 or go to theactorsstudio.com.my. Details of the nationwide tour that will begin next month will be announced later.