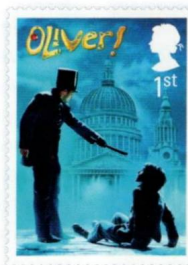
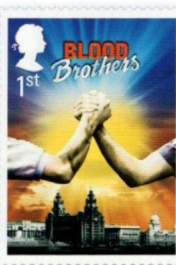


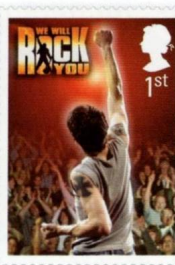
Remember that song? Great British musicals



Signalling the rebirth of the musical, *Oliver!* succeeded by working all the emotions



Blood Brothers was written as a play for Fazakerley Comp in Liverpool in 1981



We Will Rock you took six years to write and features 30 of Queen's best songs



Spamalot parodies the genre through songs with wrenching key and tempo changes

LONDON'S WEST END HAS a long history as a hub of theatrical excellence and many of its millions of visitors are attracted by the quality of its stage

musicals. While music has always had its place in the theatre, a turning point for the genre came in the 1960 with Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* which triumphed over the onslaught of American singing-and-dancing movies and paved the way for the home-grown British musicals to follow.

Musicals stamps: design and technical details

Number of stamps	Eight
Design	Webb and Webb
Acknowledgements	<i>Oliver!</i> foreground © Catherine Ashmore for OPL, background photo by Michael Le Poer Trench © Cameron Mackintosh Ltd, logo TM © OPL 2005. <i>Blood Brothers</i> copyright © Bill Kenwright Ltd. <i>We Will Rock You</i> © Queen Theatrical Productions Ltd. <i>Monty Python's Spamalot</i> © Ocean Music Ltd & Rutsongs Music; SPAM® is a registered trade mark of Hormel Foods Corporation. <i>The Rocky Horror Show</i> – Richard O'Brien's Rocky Horror Show 2006: illustration by leighgallagheart.blogspot.com, design and artwork by svd.uk.com; <i>Me and My Girl</i> © Noel Gay, artwork by Dewynters; <i>Return to the Forbidden Planet</i> – illustration by Garen Ewing © Josef Weinberger Ltd/Bob Carlton. <i>Billy Elliot</i> © Billy London Ltd/David Scheinmann
Stamp format	Portrait
Stamp size	27mm x 37mm
Printer	Cartor Security Printing, France
Print process	Lithography
Perforations	14 x 14
Phosphor	All over
Gum	PVA

An evolving form of entertainment Fans will be pleased to find their favourite show featured on a stamp in the special Musicals issue, released on 24 February (during Spring Stampex). In choosing the subjects, Royal Mail focused on various criteria including the shows' origin, writers and composers, longevity and success. A conscious effort has been made to represent the evolution of musical theatre over the years since the 1960s; the eight Musicals stamps, Presentation Pack, First Day Cover, Stamp Cards and Handstamps feature some of the oeuvre's all-time favourites.

There are four 1st Class options. The first subject is Lionel Bart's *Oliver!* which first opened in the West End at the New Theatre (now the Noel Coward Theatre) on 30 June, 1960. It ran for 2,618 performances and launched the careers of several child actors.

Willy Russell's *Blood Brothers* is also featured on a 1st Class stamp. This 1983 musical is one of the longest-running plays of all time, with the 1988

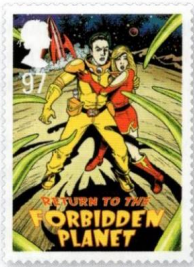
are applauded in this special stamp set



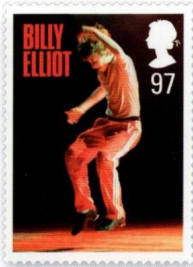
A heady mix of rock 'n' roll, science-fiction spoof, transvestism and a classic horror plot



A cockney unexpectedly inherits a title and a country estate but must first win the family's approval



The show has featured interesting guest stars in the role of narrator, including Sir Patrick Moore



Auditioning for boys to share the title role led to an academy being formed to train future cast members

West End production still running after over 20 years. The next subject is *We Will Rock You*, the jukebox musical based on the songs of Queen. Written by Ben Elton in collaboration with Brian May and Roger Taylor, it opened in the West End on 12 May 2002 and has been extended indefinitely, making it the longest running show at London's Dominion theatre.

Finally and most funnily, Monty Python's *Spamalot* by Eric Idle and John Du Prez features on the fourth 1st Class stamp. Based on the screenplay of *Monty Python and the Holy Grail*, the musical includes three songs from the 1975 film of that name. It retells the legendary tale of King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table, and their quest for the Holy Grail. Its Pythonesque characters include a chorus line of dancing divas and serfs, flatulent Frenchmen, killer rabbits and a legless knight.

The four 97p stamps show a further quartet of musicals. *The Rocky Horror Show* was written by Richard O'Brien and premiered in 1973, before establishing itself at the Comedy Theatre in the West End until September 1980, when it closed after 2,960 performances of its initial run. Another 97p stamp has *Me and My Girl* as its focus. This musical by Douglas Furber, L Arthur Rose and Noel Gay takes place in the late 1930s in Hampshire, Mayfair and Lambeth. It had a successful West End run in 1937 and successful revivals in London and New York in the 1980s.

The third 97p stamp shows *Return to the Forbidden Planet* by Bob Carlton, based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and the 1950s sci-fi film *Forbidden Planet*. It started life as a production for performance in a tent. A revised version opened at the Everyman Theatre in Liverpool in the mid 1980s and later moved to London's Tricycle Theatre. After some reworking, a final version opened in the West End in 1989. Finally, Billy Elliot dances across another 97p stamp. With music by Elton John and lyrics by Lee Hall and based on the film, it's set in the North East during the 1984-85 miners' strike and tells the story of a young boy's determination to dance. The show opened in London in May 2005 and is still going strong ●

The three special Musicals handstamps use Dancers End to complement the theme

