



New work for new times: Introducing S&S Theatre Productions

Top writing award turns producer to bring radical new musical theatre to Off-West End and Off-Broadway stage

Founders announce first transatlantic co-production project is underway

The S&S Award is turning producer to become **S&S Theatre Productions**, dedicated to producing radical new musical theatre with partnerships between the UK and the USA. Joining forces with London-based, multiple Offie-nominated **Mercurius Theatre** and **Kent Nicholson**, doyen of new musical theatre writing in the States, the new company has already hit the ground running with the live-streaming of the award-winning *Stay Awake, Jake* from Southwark Playhouse.

Since the early days of the Award – given to the best new unproduced musical of the year – its founders, literary agent **Caroline Underwood** and writer **Warner Brown**, have longed to encourage links between the UK musical writing scene and that of the US and one of the aims of the new company is to mount co-productions with Off-West End and Off-Broadway companies.

“Writers in both territories have so much in common yet so much to learn from each other,” says Underwood. Exciting developments are in the pipeline regarding this, but first – even before the launch of the company – the fledgling producers couldn’t resist joining forces with Pearson Theatre Productions and Damien Tracey for the production of *Stay Awake, Jake* by **Tim Gilvin**.

The show was the 2014 S&S Award winner and, says Brown: “Tim Gilvin represents everything S&S Theatre Productions stands for in his fresh new approach to the form.”

The Award had developed from a small London-based entity to an international event, attracting entries from around the globe, but, Underwood says: “We were taken aback by its success. We had over 40 industry-leading UK and international judges and a final panel which included Nica Burns of Nimax Theatres, Nikolai Foster of Leicester Curve and Kent Nicholson of Playwrights Horizons in New York and in truth it had got too big to manage. We so wanted to carry on the good work the Award had started, though, and this seemed the next logical step.” She adds: “We want to produce work that simply breaks the mould.”

During a pandemic might not seem the obvious time to launch a new theatre production company, but Underwood and Brown have been inspired to announce their project by the increased determination of theatre professionals to prepare for a return to business after lockdown.

“We are thrilled to be making this announcement now and to join with the increasing number of our colleagues who are looking ahead to the time when theatres are fully back in business,” they state.

Warner Brown and **Joshua Schmidt** (the American composer of *Adding Machin3* amongst others) plan to set a template for the transatlantic aims of S&S Theatre Productions by forming a UK/US collaboration to write the new company’s second show. This new, innovative musical will be co-produced with the UK’s **Mercurius Theatre** – whose artistic chief **Jenny Eastop** will direct – and the USA’s **Kent Nicholson**.

Say Underwood and Brown: “Dates and venue for the London leg of this will be announced just as soon as the world returns to some kind of normal. S&S Theatre Productions are all set to go.”

Jenny Eastop, who directed Warner Brown’s musical *The Biograph Girl* at the Finborough Theatre in 2018, said: “It feels even more now like a perfect fit to form a collaboration with Warner and Caroline. We’ve found we’re all passionate about developing new musical theatre as a way into deeper and more

profound themes and we have similar ideas about the sorts of stories we're eager to tell."

Underwood and Brown added that the company is also inviting approaches from potential investors.

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SOCIAL MEDIA

Twitter: [@SandSTP](https://twitter.com/SandSTP)

Facebook: [S&S Theatre Productions](https://www.facebook.com/S&S-Theatre-Productions)

Instagram: [SandSTheatreProductions](https://www.instagram.com/SandSTheatreProductions)

Website: www.sandstheatreproductions.com

Hashtag: #SandSTP /#radicalmusicals

PRESS ASSETS/IMAGES

(Including images and video clips featuring My Theatre Mates' Terri Paddock interviewing Jenny Eastop, Tim Gilvin, Caroline Underwood and Warner Brown) are available [**HERE**](#)

The full **VIDEO** of the interview can be viewed [**HERE**](#)

Notes for Editors:

INFO – THE S&S AWARD

Caroline Underwood and Warner Brown co-founded the S&S Award in 2011. The Award, presented in association with Leicester Curve and Mercury Musical Developments, grew to have a panel of 49 industry-leading UK and international judges and patrons, with a final judging panel of Nica Burns of Nimax Theatres, Kent Nicholson of Playwrights Horizons in New York and Nikolai Foster of Leicester Curve. The Award was presented, at its annual London Gala at The Other Palace, by Michael Ball, Don Black, Nigel Harman and Janie Dee.

BIOS

CAROLINE UNDERWOOD

Caroline Underwood co-founded the S&S Award with Warner Brown in 2011. In 2016 she formed The Caroline Underwood Agency, representing both British

and American musical theatre writers “with a difference”. For the previous five years, she was Musical Theatre Consultant at London literary agency Alan Brodie Representation. Prior to this, as Head of Standard Repertoire and Musicals at Warner/Chappell Music for over twenty years, she worked with many of the company’s top international clients including the Irving Berlin Estate, the George and Ira Gershwin Estates, the Cole Porter Trusts, the Rodgers and Hart Estates, the Noël Coward Estate, Stephen Sondheim, Jerry Herman, Charles Strouse, Steven Sater and many more. Caroline’s extensive list of appointments includes Consultant to Harry Potter Theatrical Productions; Chair of Mercury Musical Developments for fourteen years; Chair of the Bunnett-Muir Musical Theatre Archive Trust; Trustee of the Noël Coward Foundation; Trustee of the Lost Musical Charitable Trust; and non-executive director of Stagescripts Ltd.

JENNY EASTOP (@jennyeastop, @Mercurius5)

Jenny Eastop is the multiple Offie-nominated Director and Producer for Mercurius Theatre, where she has directed fifteen productions and transfers. She has directed for companies such as Shakespeare’s Globe, Paines Plough, the National Studio and the London Play Festival and has been Associate Director to Michael Blakemore on *Copenhagen* at Chichester, *The Life* at Southwark Playhouse, *Blithe Spirit*, with Angela Lansbury – both West End and US tour – *Afterlife* at the National, *Embers* at the Duke of York’s, *Democracy* at the National, West End, Broadway, Sydney and Chichester and *Three Sisters*, starring Kristin Scott Thomas, in the West End.

www.mercuriustheatre.co.uk

KENT NICHOLSON

With a hand in nearly three decades of new works development with pioneering organisations on both US coasts, Kent Nicholson is an acclaimed leader in the field of new musical theatre writing. While serving as Associate Producer of musical theater at Playwrights Horizons, he has been creative producer for many groundbreaking productions, including the recent Pulitzer Prize-winning *A Strange Loop*. Kent created the New Works Initiative at TheatreWorks in Silicon Valley and the nationally-modelled New Works Festival, which developed the 2009 Tony Award-winning musical *Memphis*, as well as works by such writers as Andrew Lippa and Stephen Schwartz. He also created the Uncharted Writers Group at the renowned Ars Nova Theatre Company. He has been active with the National Alliance for Musical Theater and sits on the board of Musical Theatre Factory. As a founder of the commercial production company 959 Group, Kent oversaw and directed the production of Clint Black’s acclaimed Christmas musical *Looking For Christmas*, which premiered at the Old Globe in 2018. Founded in 2016, 959 Group currently has multiple projects in various stages of development.

WARNER BROWN (@warnercbrown)

Warner Brown co-founded the S&S Award with Caroline Underwood in 2011. He is an internationally-renowned writer whose work encompasses everything from the traditional form to the radical avant garde. He has collaborated with the composers Angelo Badalamenti, Michael Feinstein, Jenny Giering, Tony Hatch, David Heneker, Gwyneth Herbert, Michael Reed, Jimmy Roberts, Joshua Schmidt, Jim Steinman, Charles Strouse, George David Weiss and, by permission of the Cole Porter Trusts in New York, the late Cole Porter. For BBC Worldwide he wrote the award-winning *Walking With Dinosaurs – The Arena Spectacular*, creating an entirely new genre of theatrical presentation, which has become “the biggest family show of all time”. WWD has played in over 250 cities to almost ten million people.

www.warnerbrownwriter.com

JOSHUA SCHMIDT (@SchmidtJosh8)

Joshua Schmidt is the composer of *Adding Machin3*, which won the Lucille Lortel Award for Best Musical, the Outer Critics’ Circle Award for Best Score and Best Off-Broadway Musical, the Jefferson Award for Best Musical as well as four Obie Awards, nine Drama Desk Nominations and the Drama League Nomination for Best Musical. In the New York Times, Wall Street Journal, Time Out NY and Chicago Tribune it was one of the “ten best events of the year”. Further credits include the critically-acclaimed *Midwestern Gothic* at Signature, DC; *A Minister’s Wife* at Lincoln Center Theatre, winning the Best Musical Jeff Award; *Whida Peru* at 59E59; and *Gift of the Magi* at American Players Theatre. Josh is a Sundance Theatre Lab Ucross Artist, an Associate Artist of the Writers’ Theatre in Glencoe and is currently writing the score of a major independent movie and working on projects and commissions for the Metropolitan Opera in New York and Groundswell Productions in Los Angeles.

www.fortytwofootforward.com

TIM GILVIN (@TimGilvin)

Tim Gilvin is a multi-award-winning composer/lyricist. Recently he has been working with writers Foxx & Grant on several shows including the sell-out tour of *Unfortunate*. His one-man, one-act musical *Stay Awake, Jake* won the S&S Award in 2014 and the VAULT Festival Origins Award in 2016 after its run there. A cast album is due to be released soon and the show was live-streamed from Southwark Playhouse in December 2020. Tim appears regularly at Adam Lenson’s Signal at the H Club and Crazy Coqs, where he has been showcasing songs from *Cable Street*, a musical currently in development with 10 to 4 Productions. Also with 10 to 4, Tim is developing a song cycle based on a theme of Random Acts of Kindness, featuring songs by numerous UK

composers. Tim was a finalist in the 2015 Stiles + Drewe Prize at the Garrick Theatre and performed a sold-out revue of his songs at Zedel in 2017.
www.timgilvin.com