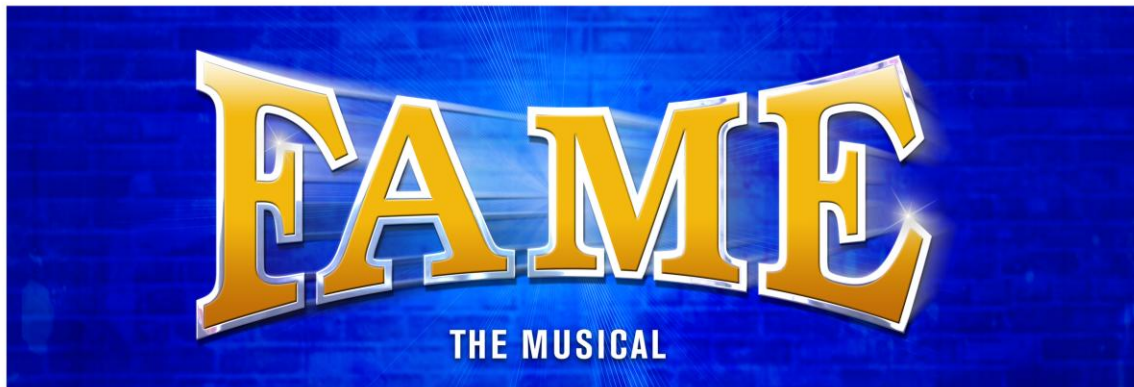


MEDIA KIT



Sydney, get ready for the new high-energy production of **FAME THE MUSICAL**. Produced by John Frost and directed and choreographed by *So You Think You Can Dance*'s Kelley Abbey, the musical that inspired new generations to fight for fame and light up the sky like a flame is back!

This multi-million dollar production of **FAME THE MUSICAL**, featuring some of the most dynamic choreography you'll ever see in the theatre, is coming to Sydney for a Strictly Limited Season at the **Capitol Theatre** from **October 9**.

FAME is, almost uniquely, a classic of cinema, television and music theatre. The movie, released in 1980, won an Academy Award and swept the world. The TV show ran for six seasons, won numerous Emmy Awards and was broadcast in over 70 countries. **FAME THE MUSICAL** ran for a decade on London's West End and has been seen by over ten million people worldwide. It follows the story of a diverse group of students at New York City's celebrated High School of the Performing Arts who inspired a generation.

Audience members will no doubt remember **Talia Fowler's** name when she takes to the stage. The *So You Think You Can Dance* 2009 winner will play the classically trained ballerina *Iris Kelly*. In a case of life imitating art, Talia, who began training in ballet, jazz and tap aged 3, and enjoyed an inspiring and enviable career as a ballerina prior to her win, recently turned down a contract with the San Francisco Ballet company to take up this role!

Playing the role of the cheeky *Tyrone* will be Nigerian born **Timomatic**. Tim has inspired dance students of all ages and has built a solid reputation as a leader of Hip Hop culture as well as making the Top 8 for the 2009 *So You Think You Can Dance*.

Ever popular performer **Andrew McFarlane**, seen most recently in *Underbelly*, but known to many for his role in the long running soap *The Sullivans*, will play Mr Myers the drama teacher at the New York High School of Performing Arts. Joining him on stage in the role of music teacher Mr Scheinkopf is another long serving performer, the loveable **Brian Wenzel**, best known for his role as Sergeant Frank Gilroy from *A Country Practice*. And Tony Award winning Broadway star **Lillias White** will play Miss Sherman. For her 1997 role as Sonja in *The Life*, Lillias won Broadway's Prestigious Quadruple Crown – the Tony, Drama Desk, People's Choice and The Outer Critics Awards for Best Actress in a Musical, and her other Broadway credits include *Fela!*, *Chicago*, *Dreamgirls*, *Romance in Hard Times*, *How to Succeed in Business*, *Once on This Island*, *Rock n' Roll: The First 5,000 Years (Aretha Franklin)*, *Barnum* and *Carrie*.

Audiences in Melbourne and Brisbane have already flocked see the show, and critics have raved:

"Should not be missed!" - Courier Mail

"A high-octane rocket ride!" - The Age

"Feverish, furiously energetic!" - The Australian

"Fame is fantastic, fun, funny." - Brisbane Times

"Passionate, razor sharp!" - Courier Mail

Don't miss this gritty urban drama awash with passion! **FAME THE MUSICAL** will take the audience to the pinnacle of desire and revive memories of youth, love, energy and risk.

BOOKING DETAILS

Venue:	Capitol Theatre, Campbell Street, Haymarket
Season:	From 9 October 2010
Opening Night:	Thursday 14 October
Performance Times:	Wed–Sat 8pm, Matinees Wed 1pm, Sat 2pm, Sunday 1pm and 6pm
Price:	\$79.90 - \$109.90
Bookings:	1300 723 038 or ticketmaster.com.au Groups of 12 or more (02) 8512 9020

MESSAGE FROM DIRECTOR AND CHOREOGRAPHER KELLEY ABBEY

FAME has long been an extraordinary and very special force in my life. I was an aspiring young dancer when the original movie came out and it certainly further ignited my passion to follow my dream to become a performing artist.

Ten years ago I played the leading role of Carmen Diaz in David Atkins' FAME THE MUSICAL where I also made my choreographic debut in a stage musical. It was an amazing opportunity to combine many of the things I love into the one show. I was also fortunate to re-stage my choreography for FAME productions that toured throughout Asia and South Africa.

This year I make my directorial debut as well as choreograph John Frost's new production of *FAME THE MUSICAL*, and am again drawn into this amazing story of life affirming creative expression and celebration of talent.

David De Silva [Father Fame] created a phenomenon when he produced the original film in 1980, which then gave birth to an ever popular TV series. His story about raw, talented kids on a journey of self-discovery and transformation via the performing arts, inspired a generation to pursue their dreams as well as painting a very real picture of life in show business.

Though some of us remain '80s nostalgic for dancers in legwarmers dancing over taxis and canteen tables, a new generation is now inspired by this timeless story where issues of literacy, drug abuse and morality remain relevant.

I give thanks to my incredible cast. Some are new to the theatre stage, working alongside seasoned professionals. Essentially the show is about them – these thrilling performers. Art imitates life as I work with them on their FAME journey of self-discovery. Their joy, energy, passion and commitment inspire me to be better.

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THE HISTORY OF THE FAME SCHOOL

Throughout the world, young artists, passionate and idealistic, push their talents to the limit in many performing arts high schools. While receiving professional arts training in a conservatory-style program, they also balance a college preparatory level of academics.

The best known of these government-funded high schools is in New York City. The Fame School, as it is known by fans of the award winning movie, the hit television series and the musical really began as School of Music and Art, which was created in 1936 by New York City Mayor, Fiorello H. La Guardia. Ten years later, the High School of Performing Arts was established. It later merged with the School of Music and Art and became the Fiorello H. La Guardia High School of Music and Art and Performing Arts. Today, the school provides 2,400 students with lessons in the fine arts, dance, voice, instrumental music and drama. Students balance a rigorous academic schedule and their arts training in a 50/50 mix.

With over 10,000 students applying each year, only relatively few are accepted. Applicants come from each of the five boroughs of New York City and from every walk of life in an ethnic and cultural mix that represents the city's diversity. Although recently as many as 800 students were accepted, some years the number of students admitted is as low as 650. Admission is based on an academic screening test and an audition or portfolio. Talent is essential.

Well-known performers, such as Diahann Carroll, Janis Ian, Eartha Kitt, Shari Lewis, Hal Linden, Melissa Manchester, Liza Minnelli, Arthur Mitchell, Peter Nero, Carroll O'Connor, Al Pacino, Suzanne Pleshette, Jerome Robbins, Helen Slater, Suzanne Vega, Ben Vereen, Ed Vilella and Billy Dee Williams are graduates of the La Guardia School. Some alumni like it so much they never leave. Twenty percent of the teaching staff at La Guardia are graduates of the school.

La Guardia is the first government-funded school for the arts in the United States and became the model for many similar schools across the country. Baltimore, Boston, Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit, Greenville, Los Angeles, Miami, Milwaukee, Norfolk, Phoenix, Rochester, San Diego, San Francisco and Washington DC are just some of the many cities with schools offering talented teenagers a public education in the arts.

In 1984, La Guardia High School moved into a nine-storey building in the Lincoln Center district of Manhattan. The school was an answer to a twenty-year promise from the City's school board for a state-of-the-art facility. It houses a 1,100-seat concert hall and 500-seat theatre.
(Cromarty & Co., Peter Cromarty, Alice Cromarty)

BIOGRAPHIES

KELLEY ABBEY (Director and Choreographer)

For over two decades Kelley Abbey has performed, danced and choreographed for theatre, film and television. A leading lady in musicals like *Sweet Charity* and *FAME – The Musical*, Kelley has won as many hearts as awards. For *Sweet Charity* she received the Green Room, Variety Heart and MO Awards for Best Female Musical Theatre Performer. In *FAME – The Musical*, she both starred and choreographed, winning a MO Award for Best Female Performer/Choreographer in a Musical and the Green Room Award for Best Original Choreography.

Her choreography this year has seen her create performances for the *Logies*, *MTV Awards* and Channel Seven's top rating TV series *Packed to the Rafters*. She was also the special guest judge and choreographed memorable group routines for the Australian production of *So You Think You Can Dance*. This led her to be invited as the only Australian choreographer to create group routines for the US TV series of *So You Think You Can Dance*.

In 2008, she was the Australian judge on the US *NBC* series *Superstars of Dance* working alongside Nigel Lythgoe, Simon Fuller and Michael Flatley.

From 2002 to 2006, Kelley worked as the choreographer, lead performer and creative motion capture consultant on the Golden Globe, BAFTA and OSCAR-winning feature film *Happy Feet*, for George Miller, Warner Bros. and Village Roadshow. On its release, *Happy Feet* was No.1 in the box office in Britain and America. Kelley was honoured in the feature film category at the Los Angeles Choreography Media Honors for her work in *Happy Feet*.

In 2006, Kelley co-choreographed Hugh Jackman's *The Boy From Oz* Australian Arena Tour for producers Ben Gannon and Robert Fox. Kelley and co-choreographer/director Kenny Ortega won the Helpmann Award for Best Choreography in a Musical for this production.

Kelley has choreographed many other stage musicals including *Footloose* for Gordon Frost/SEL, for which she earned a Helpmann Award nomination, the Sydney Opera House concert production of *Follies* and *Fame – The Musical* in Australia, Asia and South Africa.

While playing Rizzo in *Grease – The Arena Spectacular* in 1998, she was also Assistant Choreographer and Assistant Director. In 2005, Kelley choreographed a new arena production of *Grease* for Gordon Frost/SEL. She most recently choreographed a new production of *Hedwig and The Angry Inch* for Showtune Productions. Other theatre credits as a performer include *Dancin' Man* and *Dynamite!* with David Atkins, *West Side Story* for the Victoria State Opera and the role of Rizzo in the return Melbourne and Sydney seasons of *Grease – The Arena Spectacular*.

From 1991 to 1993, Kelley first came to public notice as Jo-Jo in the popular soap *E-Street* on Network Ten Australia and Britain's Sky Network. She has also performed on many other television shows as an actor, dancer and singer. She sang at the 1997 Grand Final at the Melbourne Cricket Ground and at the Opening of the Olympic Stadium in Sydney.

Kelley is also one of Australia's leading music video choreographers working with many pop artists and award-winning international acts. Her directorial debut in music video was nominated for Best Video at the Australian Music Awards.

Kelley staged and choreographed Human Nature performances on their international tours with Michael Jackson, Janet Jackson and Celine Dion. She has choreographed many *Logies* performances for pop idols as well as staging Ricky Martin's *Logies* performance. Kelley was also choreographer and staging director of *The Main Event* arena concert starring John Farnham, Olivia Newton-John and Anthony Warlow.

Kelley has completed choreographing, consulting and playing a role in a new Australian feature film called *In Her Skin* starring Sam Neil, Guy Pearce and Miranda Otto, to be released this year.

ANDREW MCFARLANE (Mr Myers)

Andrew McFarlane is an instantly recognisable personality to Australian film, television and theatre audiences. Over three decades on television, he has become an icon of the Australian screen, having appeared in some of our most successful programs. His broad ranging appeal has delighted children for almost a decade on *Play School*, he also played beloved '70s/'80s character John Sullivan in *The Sullivans*, and Dr Tom Calaghan in *The Flying Doctors*, among many other memorable TV appearances in programs including: *The Alice*, *Neighbours*, *Through My Eyes*, *Heroes' Mountain – the Thredbo Story*, *The Day of The Roses*, *Home & Away*, *Water Rats*, *Blue Heelers*, *Shortland Street*, *All Saints*, *Murder Call*, *The Violent Earth*, *Heartbreak High*, *Spellbinder*, *Halifax f.p.*, *GP*, *Rafferty's Rules*, *Patrol Boat*, *Division 4* and *Homicide*.

Andrew appeared as Donald Mackay in *Underbelly II, A Tale of Two Cities* – Australia's highest-rating television series launch ever, attracting an average 2.584 million across the first hour. He is also a regular on the popular reality programme *20 to One*. Andrew's film credits include *The Falls, Razzle Dazzle, Little White Lies, Returning Lily, Boulevard of Broken Dreams, Doctors and Nurses, Break of Day* and *Born to Run*.

Andrew has also appeared in leading roles in countless stage productions, many with Sydney and Melbourne main stage theatre companies. His credits include *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof, Cyrano de Bergerac, King Lear, Henry IV Pt 1, A Month in the Country, Private Lives, Emerald City, After the Ball, Woman in Mind, Scarlett O'Hara at the Crimson Parrot, Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolfe* and, last year, he played Salieri in Peter Shafer's *Amadeus* and premiered David Williamson's latest play, *Let the Sunshine*.

BEN WENZEL (Mr Sheinkopf)

Brian Wenzel has appeared in over 2,000 hours of television, and is the recipient of a Silver Logie. Brian left school at the age of 14 and, before becoming a professional actor at the age of 17, worked in some 112 different jobs ranging from a grocer's delivery boy to a horse groom and dog trainer for Sole Bros. Circus. After leaving the circus in 1948, he appeared in his first stage play, a musical comedy, in Adelaide. He then went on to work in numerous stage productions, musicals, pantomimes and children's theatre. Some highlights were: *Death of a Salesman, The Crucible, The Imaginary Invalid* and *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*. Brian has also appeared in four productions for the Adelaide Festival of Arts, and was in the first three productions of the South Australian Theatre Company.

Brian first appeared on television in 1956. His television credits include: *Neighbours, Rove Live, Marshall Law, The Evil Touch, Katch Kandy, Behind the Legend, Over There, Punishment, Bellamy, Home Sweet Home, Skyways, Tickled Pink, Certain Women* (3½ years), *Glenview High, Cop Shop, The Young Doctors, Chopper Squad, Boney, The Restless Years, Hunter, The Death Train* (TV movie), *The Long Arm, Division 4, Matlock Police, Ryan, Ride on Stranger, Young Ramsay* and *Homicide*. However, the role that cemented Brian in the hearts of many Australians was that of Sgt. Frank Gilroy in the popular series *A Country Practice*, which he starred in for 12 years.

In addition to acting, Brian has also been an Australia Day Ambassador in Victoria for the last 16 years, after two years in the role in NSW, and also gives a lot of his time to charity, including Variety Club and the Blue Ribbon Foundation, Victoria.

LILLIAS WHITE (Miss Sherman)

Lillias White has been recognized on Broadway with the Tony Award®, Drama Desk Award®, People's Choice® Award and The Outer Critics Award® for Best Actress in a Musical - Broadway's Prestigious Quadruple Crown - for her 1997 role as Sonja in *The Life*. In 1990 she won The Obie Award® for Best Actress in a Musical for her portrayal of Hennie in *Romance in Hard Times*. In addition, she won The Drama Logue Award® for Best Actress in a Musical for her role in the national tour of *Dreamgirls*. Other theatre credits include the Broadway productions of *Fela!*, *Chicago, How to Succeed in Business, Once on This Island, Rock n' Roll: The First 5,000 Years (Aretha Franklin)*, *Barnum, Carrie* and *Dreamgirls*, as well as the off Broadway productions of *Crowns, The Vagina Monologues, Waiting for Godot, The Princess & The Black-Eyed Pea* and *Dinah Was*. Lillias White has also gone on the national and international tours for *Ain't Misbehavin', Tintypes* and *The Wiz*.

Lillias White's TV and film credits include featured roles in the films *Pieces of April, The Grinch That Stole Christmas, Gloria, North* and Disney's *Hercules*. In 1992, Ms White won an Emmy Award® for

her role as Sesame Street's Lillian Edwards. Other television credits consist of recurring roles and guest spots on *Outreach*, *Law & Order*, *NYPD Blue* and *The Jury*. In 2004 Ms White was cast opposite Eddie Griffith in HBO's pilot *Pryor Offenses* (The Richard Pryor Story).

As a recording artist, Lillias White has an extensive list of recordings which include cast records and featured vocalist performances. Most recently she recorded *Dream Girls : The Concert, Too Hot To Handle* (The Gospel version of Handel's *Messiah*) and was featured with Tony Bennett on Cy Coleman's most recent record. Lillias White CDs include "From Shubert Alley to Jazz Alley" and "From Brooklyn to Broadway". She regularly appears in concert at The Kennedy Center, Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, as well as, a guest soloist on the PBS Special, such as, *A Tribute to Ella Fitzgerald* and *In Performance at The White House*.

TIMOMATIC (Tyrone Jackson)

'Timomatic' reached the Top 8 in *So You Think You Can Dance*, Australia 2009. This was quickly followed by a sell-out national tour and demand from all areas of the entertainment industry. He is currently being developed as a solo recording artist and intends to release in 2010.

Tim Omaji (aka Timomatic) immigrated to Australia at 10 months old from Nigeria, West Africa. His father was an academic, and thus Tim was raised in various cities around Australia, as his father was placed at universities in Canberra, Perth, Darwin, Melbourne and Sydney. He began dancing at the age of 11, studying hip hop and spending time with local break-dancers in each city. At 14, inspired by Michael Jackson's *Black and White*, he commenced studying singing at the Parkway Church in Canberra. At age 16, Timomatic debuted in a semi-professional production, *Ignite*, with the Tracks Dance Company.

After spending six months at University studying Psychology and Management, Timomatic decided to follow his true passions. He has since studied for a Diploma in Entertainment with a major in Vocals with JMC Academy. From ages 17–20, he acted as Artistic Director for the hip hop dance company, Kulture Break, based in Canberra, performing in Singapore, China and the USA, as well as touring nationally. Tim was winner of the 2005 Battlegrounds National Hip-Hop Competition and is basically a self-taught hip-hopper. His favoured style is popping. He also has an amazing voice...!

TALIA FOWLER (Iris Kelly)

Talia began training for a career in the performing arts at age three. She studied ballet, jazz and tap and, from an early age, showed promise as a ballerina. At 15, she was selected to compete in the internationally-acclaimed Prix de Lausanne dance competition in Switzerland. As a semi-finalist, she earned her position as one of the top 23 young classical dancers in the world. She also competed in the 2006 Genee International Ballet Competition in Hong Kong in which she was again a semi-finalist.

Talia studied with the Queensland Ballet Company for two years before being invited to join the company as their youngest dancer in history. She completed a year with the company prior to auditioning for hit reality television show, Channel Ten's *So You Think You Can Dance*. With her technical ability and versatility, she became an audience favourite and, after a gruelling schedule over several months working with Australia's leading choreographers, she was announced as the winner of the 2009 Series.

Since then, Talia has been appearing at live events all over the country and she recently travelled to the USA as part of her *So You Think You Can Dance* prize. She has been researching her options to further her career in an international dance company and is delighted to put these plans on hold to play a starring role in *Fame – The Musical*.