

THE WORLD OF MUSICAL DEVELOPMENT (ADDITIONAL MATERIALS)

United States

Children of Salt

Book and Lyrics: Lauren Epsenhart

Music: Jaime Lozano

Based on the play *Los Niños de Sal* by Hernán Galindo

- [2016 New York Musical Festival Production \(Full\)](#)
- [Interview with the Creators](#)

The story of *Children of Salt* is inspired by the biblical anecdote of Lot's wife, the moment she chose to look back at the crumbling village of Sodom and Gomorrah. The focal point of the piece is Raúl, a successful entrepreneur who infrequently returns home, avoiding people, memories, and situations that sent him packing twenty years prior. Upon learning of his estranged grandmother's illness, Raúl again returns home to the beach, in hopes of leaving as quickly as possible. Throughout the day, a series of unexpected meetings, with old friends and a lost love, unleash a Pandora of memories, some beautiful, others consuming. Raúl must learn from these memories in order to accept his present and move into his future. If he fails, he will remain one of the many "children of salt" he struggled to leave behind years before. Currently, *Children of Salt* is being adapted into a film.

December, 2008	Reading (excerpts), Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, NYC
May, 2009	Stage Reading, Graduate Musical Theatre Writing Program, Tisch School of the Arts, New York University, NYC
May, 2009	Concert (selections), Lower East Side Festival, Theatre for the New City, NYC
August, 2009	Table Reading, The Old Globe, San Diego, CA
January, 2011	Table Reading, Salgado Productions, NYC
November, 2015	Stage Reading, Troquel Studio, Mexico City
December, 2015	Industry Reading, GMTWP Black Box, NYC
December, 2016	Concert, Metropolitan Room, NYC
June, 2016	Production (World Premiere), New York Musical Festival (NYMF) Best of Fest Award, The Pearl Theatre Company, NYC

Did you work with Hernán Galindo to create the musical adaptation, or did you simply negotiate the rights to the play?

Jaime Lozano: We simply negotiated the rights to adapt the play into a musical. I think at the beginning the process was a little weird to him because there's no musical theatre industry in México. We had to be very clear what that process was. Hernán is a very generous and very sensitive and smart artist/writer, and practically he gave us his "little baby." This play is one of his most important works in México - it won very important awards down there. Even still, he let us find the best way to tell this story now as a musical. His voice was always heard and, when we had a question about the original material, he was very open about telling us his original intentions with the play.

Can you describe the differences between the table readings, readings, and staged readings you did? How did each of them contribute to the overall development of your musical?

JL: We have been very clear about what we wanted to get from every process. With a table reading the work is more "intellectual," because everything is in the paper and our brains. It is more about finding backstories - things that maybe the audience is never going to learn seeing the show but that we as writers need to know. With stage readings, you learn more from actors through their actions and choices.

Lauren Epsenhart: Readings and staged readings are sometimes a blurred line for me. I sometimes feel like they are one and the same in the end. A staged reading does not involve theatre sets and costumes but some sort of movement whereas a reading is even more simplistic and potentially static. My favorite part of the developmental process has always been table reads, particularly in regards to *Children of Salt*. For me, the best feedback and development always came in conversation around the table. The presence of fresh or seasoned eyes/ears lends itself to a deeper thought process. This was incredibly helpful in the development of plot and character.

You did a staged reading of *Children of Salt* in Mexico City. How did that come to pass? Were there similarities and differences in process and logistics between the two?

JL: That reading was the very first time we were using only Mexican actors (who spoke fluent English) to read and tell the story. The musical is based on a Mexican play, is set in México, and the characters are Mexicans. Having these actors brought honesty, connection, and authenticity. It helped to explore things and ask questions that only these actors could ask. It helped us to be more specific with the material while also making it more universal.

Writers very rarely get paid to develop their musicals. May we ask how you supported yourself during the gestation of *Children of Salt*?

JL: Right after I finished my Masters Degree at NYU, I was forced to work doing anything so I could survive living in New York City. I was even Santa Claus' elf. But then I realized that I needed to focus on my writing and telling stories. I made that choice of only working in music/theatre related things. To be honest, my life changed at that moment.

LE: I made the choice to begin a career as a special education teacher. Since, my educational career has evolved into academic intervention and instructional coaching with various populations of students and teachers. No longer living in New York, raising a family, and

Performing in Contemporary Musicals
by David Sisco & Laura Josepher

working in a different field has proven to be challenging when balancing the demands of any project, but not impossible. I cannot drop everything to pursue the development of *Children of Salt*, but with planning I can still actively be a part should the opportunity present itself at any point in time.¹

England

The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole Aged 13 ¾

Book & Lyrics: Jake Brunger

Music & Lyrics: Pippa Cleary

- [Official Website](#)
- [The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole 13 ¾ \(Trailer\)](#)
- [Interview with the Creators](#)

Based on the best-selling book by Sue Townsend, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole aged 13¾* is a timeless tale of teenage angst, family struggles and unrequited love, as told through the eyes of tortured poet and misunderstood intellectual Adrian Mole. One of the most enduring comedy characters of all time, he's the hapless, hilarious, spotty teenager who captured the zeitgeist of 1980s Britain.

January, 2012	10-Minute Pitch to Author Sue Townsend, Leicester Curve
February, 2012	Act 1 Read-Through, Leicester Curve
September 2012	Full Draft Read-Through, Leicester Curve
November 2013	Full Show Industry Reading, Prince of Wales Theatre
October 2014	Staged Development Workshop, London
March/April 2015	Production (World Premiere), Leicester Curve
July/Sept 2017	Second Production, Menier Chocolate Factory
June/Sept 2019	Third Production, West End

You had to first write a pitch for young adult novelist Sue Townsend. How did you go about contacting her and what did the 10-minute pitch consist of?

Jake Brunger: Our agent got in touch with Sue Townsend's agent, Jane Villiers. Jane said that they had been approached numerous times over the years to adapt *Adrian Mole* as a musical and had always turned them down. She later told us that it was our youthful energy and enthusiasm that advised her she ought to take a punt on us. She asked us to write a 10 minute pitch, get on a train to see Sue in Leicester, and play it to her.

Pippa Cleary: We played for Sue what we had written - both of us playing all of the characters between us - then there was a long pause. "Well where's the rest of it?" she asked. We explained that this was just a pitch to see if she liked our ideas. All she said was "Well go and write it then!" and that was that! She sold us the rights the next day for £1 as she knew we were young and had no money. So for a little while we personally owned the rights to one of the biggest selling books of the 1980s!

The musical has a young person as the protagonist. How much did writing for a younger performer influence your creative and development processes, if at all?

JB: Oh almost entirely - this was one of the biggest things we had to overcome at every stage. Our first readings had young-looking actors in their early twenties playing the kids, but for the Delfont Rooms presentation - on the suggestion of director Luke Sheppard, who was the Associate Director of *Matilda* - we used real teenagers and it completely transformed the piece.

PC: The vocal ranges of the children were one of the most difficult challenges of the production process; how high could they sing, how low, at what stage were their voices breaking, etc? We had to look at them in the auditions and take an educated guess at just how long they would be able to sing it for. Our orchestrator Paul said vocally the lead role of Adrian is the “Elphaba of children’s musical theatre” – whereby he sings *a lot* and it is a very vocally demanding part, as are the roles of Nigel, Pandora & Barry.

What changes did you make to the musical based on your Staged Development Workshop in 2014?

PC: We changed the whole end of Act 1, which was a more ‘groovy’ number called “Red Socks” to the more *Les Mis*-leaning revolutionary “Take a Stand.” There was also an entire subplot, which put the focus in the wrong place, so that went.

Did you make any changes to the show between the premiere production and the subsequent productions?

PC: Between Leicester Curve and the Menier Chocolate Factory, we made what seemed like small but were actually monumental changes. Firstly we realised we were missing a big Act 1 production number - a “Welcome to the 60’s” moment if you will, where there’s a bit of a lull and you need to pep the audience up.

JB: We also changed “My Lost Love” from a full company number to a duet as people thought that it was the end of Act 1 and there was a lot of bum-shuffling when they realised there was still 10 minutes to go.

May we ask how you supported yourself during the gestation of *The Secret Diary*...?

JB: *Adrian Mole*... is a show that was built and made in Britain’s subsidised system, something we are eternally grateful exists; writers can’t just survive on writing on the fringe forever. The show would never have even vaguely turned a profit at Curve, but thankfully the Arts Council is there precisely to support the process of new musicals such as this, which are expensive to make owing to their large creative teams, bands, and production requirements.

Having stated that, we have been very open in the past about how low the UK fees are for writing new musicals. A standard Independent Theatre Council (ITC) commission for a musical is about £12,000 and that obviously has to be split between book writer, lyricist, composer and - in the case of Sue - some towards source material too. So it is a very low upfront fee for an incredibly lengthy process, which probably explains why there are so few musicals in the UK. We were 24 and 25 at the time and supported ourselves through nannying, office temping, and teaching children at Stagecoach. Pippa set up her own business running music classes to babies

Performing in Contemporary Musicals
by David Sisco & Laura Josepher

and toddlers. Even now we could not survive off the fees from writing musicals alone - I write films, and Pippa writes commercial music for adverts to pay the bills, as well as maintaining her toddler music business.²

AUSTRALIA

Evie May

Book & Lyrics: Hugo Chiarella

Music & Lyrics: Naomi Livingston

- [Production Highlights](#)
- [Actors discuss creating the main characters in Evie May](#)

In 1966, on the evening of the last ever Tivoli performance in Sydney, veteran variety star Evie May recalls the events that lead her from obscurity in regional Western Australia to the bright lights of the Australian variety circuit and the many sacrifices she made to get there. *Evie May* offers a compelling take on memory, motherhood, and the fascinating characters populating Australia's rich theatrical history.

August, 2015	Initial concept development and storyboarding, Sydney
May, 2016	New Musicals Australia, 20 minute 'snapshot' presentation, Sydney.
September, 2016	New Musicals Australia, rehearsed reading and feedback session, Sydney.
January, 2017	Dramaturgical sessions with Christie Evangelisto, Sydney.
February, 2017	1 week workshop and moved reading for industry audience, Sydney.
Throughout 2017	Written feedback from industry experts.
May, 2018	Pre-production workshop with creative team, Sydney.
September, 2018	Rehearsals, Sydney.
October, 2018	Production (World Premiere), Hayes Theatre, Sydney.

In a 2018 article for the Audrey Journal³, you explain that you met each other while touring Australia in *Les Miserables*. What was it like researching and writing while on tour?

Hugo Chiarella: Working together on *Les Miserables* for the initial phases of development of the show was an extremely convenient set of circumstances. We'd been doing the show for a long time at that point, so we were well and truly in the swing of things in terms of the demands of the production. But being in such close proximity all the time enabled us to maintain the momentum of our creative conversation and build that collaborative relationship in a more sustained way than we might otherwise have been able to.

Naomi Livingston: We would often meet in the Green Room either before call time or in dinner breaks to brainstorm and flesh out characters, setting, and narrative. And then we would work on our independent tasks in our own time. Hugo and I became very good at working independently of each other while maintaining a collaborative dialogue and sharing resources of interest and relevance.

Can you briefly explain how Tivoli became woven into Naomi's original concept?

NL: This is essentially the time of death for the Tivoli. Television became the main source of entertainment for the population. If they were to go out to see some live theatre, it would be to see a main stage musical, not a variety show like the Tivoli. This essentially gave us a great obstacle and propellant for Evie May's story. The world she belonged to was disintegrating and she was facing her "what now?" moment. It allowed us a reason to look back at her journey, discover her secrets and watch her make choices about her future.

You slowly expanded your cast, from a one-woman show to a musical with six characters. What were some of the discoveries that necessitated those gradual changes?

HC: The initial need to add more characters stemmed from Naomi's original concept. After a certain amount of monologuing, it became apparent that the story really needed this other character to speak in order to sustain itself. From there, we began to play with the device of the character beginning to interact with the memories she was recalling. This necessitated additional actors to populate those memories. Gradually, as we began to flesh out the story and populate her world, the story just felt like it wanted to be told at a particular scale. The world and the narrative felt incomplete with four actors. Once we had six, we were able to do enough character doubling that we could maintain the integrity of each of those characters, but still create a world that felt rich and populated.

How does being a musical theatre performer buoy your work as writers? Are there times when those particular skills are not as helpful as you would have thought?

NL: Personally, having trained as an actor and singer helps me immensely! I use singing often to write music and use my training and experience as an actor to hopefully write material that is good for other performers to work with! I think being on the inside of musicals and plays too can help guide us on how we structure a show and build in character arcs.

HC: Where it can be unhelpful is once other actors become involved. I love hearing actors bring my work to life. But as a performer, you do have to work hard to break out of preconceptions that are based on how you would deliver the material. It's important to allow performers the space to make their own discoveries, and to learn from the aspects of the work that they are perhaps having trouble with. But it takes some discipline to resist the urge to just give everyone line readings.

Hugo, you were in London for the final leg of *Evie May*'s development process in Sydney, which is unusual. How did you make the decision to stay in London with *Les Miserables* and work with Naomi and the creative team from afar?

In 2017, shortly after our workshop presentation for *Evie May*, I was offered the opportunity to go and perform in *Les Miserables* on the West End. The downside was that we were still in the middle of development on *Evie May*. But Naomi and I had spent a lot of time collaborating on the show from different countries due to our various touring schedules. So that didn't seem like an insurmountable problem, and our production was still over a year away, so I figured I would likely be back in Australia by the time we were in pre-production.

Performing in Contemporary Musicals
by David Sisco & Laura Josepher

The timing didn't quite work out that way. By the time we were doing our pre-production workshop, I was still doing *Les Mis* in London, completing my Master of Arts degree, and working part time for a production company. I would get up at seven in the morning, to get a debrief on what had come up during that day's workshopping. It was not an ideal process. But ultimately it meant that there was no room for me to be defensive about the feedback I was receiving. I trusted everyone who was there in the room. In some ways it was perhaps the most honest and undiluted feedback I could have received, because I wasn't actually there.⁴

SOUTH KOREA

Red Book

Book & Lyrics: Han Jung Seok

Music: Lee Sun Young

- [Korean Herald Article about *Red Book*](#)
- [A Selection from *Red Book*](#)

Set in England during the Victoria era, *Red Book* is a romantic comedy about Anna - a woman growing up to be a novelist despite the criticism and prejudice of society - and Brown, a man who learns the meaning of understanding and respect through her.

May-July, 2015	Planning and development at SEEYA PLATFORM: Composers and Writers, funded by the Wooran Foundation, Seoul
December, 2015	ARKO Selection (Performing Arts) hosted by Arts Council Korea selects <i>Red Book</i> as most excellent work. Includes cash prize and workshop
June, 2016	30-minute showcase presentation at Daehakro Arts Theatre, Seoul Selected as 2016 Performing Arts Birth of Creation's New Outstanding Work, including tryout performances
January, 2017	Tryout performances at Daehakro Arts Theatre
February, 2018	Premiere production at Sejong M Theater, Seoul
June-August, 2021	Revival at Hongik Art Center, Seoul

What was the impetus for writing this original musical?

Composer Sun Young Lee and I were offered to participate in SEEYA PLATFORM: Composers and Writers in January, 2015. The program was supposed to start in March so we only had two months to pick the subject. At first, we looked at books and celebrity anecdotes to use as the foundation, but we couldn't find anything we liked. There was also a difficulty in obtaining the copyright if we wanted to go that route. So we just started writing a story with two main objectives in mind: "Since we've only been writing for male leads, let's have a female lead this time," and "Since we're running out of time, let's make the lead character's job a writer which we already know so well."

While looking for something provocative to add on to the 'female writer' idea, we thought: "What if the book she writes is provocative?" Then we thought: "We should set it in a very conservative time for the idea of a woman writing a provocative book to cause conflict." After we put these little puzzle pieces together, we completed the concept.

Was the Victorian era a time period of particular interest to you, and what resonance do you feel it has with today's society? How did the period influence the text and the musical language you used?

I wasn't that interested in the Victorian era. I just thought of that time more as "romantic and charming" based on what I had seen in the movies and TV shows. But after I did some research on conservative time periods for *Red Book*, I learned that the Victorian era was much more patriarchal and that women's rights issues were more serious than I thought. I was shocked to find out that, not only the women of that time were forbidden to speak of their bodies, but also their only goals were to be wives. We came to a decision that setting the story in this era would actually enhance the story because it didn't quite match our female character, who is honest and independent. Moreover, 2015 was a time when Korea also lacked a sense of human rights for women and minorities, although it wasn't as severe as it was in the Victorian era. So we thought it would be effective to criticize our current issues in the light of Victorian times. (In fact, when *Red Book* performed in 2017, we received lots of positive feedback from the audience that they thought the show was about feminism).

We went with both classical and pop for the music style so it's not too far from the era. We focused more on bringing out lovely, entertaining stories and the charm of the characters than on historical facts.

How did SEEYA PLATFORM support the musical's development?

SEEYA PLATFORM is a program that helps new writers and composer teams with the early stages of writing their shows. The biggest advantage of SEEYA PLATFORM was that it focused on supporting the creators rather than the shows. They encouraged the writing teams to write whatever subject they wanted to write about, and they offered help depending on what the writers needed at the moment. For example, when a team needed books or video materials, they gave them money to buy those materials, and when another team needed interviews with experts, they scheduled the meetings with the experts for them.

Feedback from the mentors was quite effective in bringing out the potential and strengths of the creators. Pilates classes for relieving stress and keeping our bodies healthy were also very helpful, as well as the counseling. The music recordings that were produced by the program were also very helpful when we were applying for writing contests and looking for producers.

You received financial support from a couple sources (including the Korean government) as you were writing *Red Book*. How did that support help you move the musical forward?

Red Book was not in a great position to be made into a show in the Korean Musical market at the time. Because of the fact that our lead is a woman, dealing with topics that criticize our society and women's rights issues, and having too many cast numbers for a medium-size show, we were told that it would not be likely that our show would be produced. On top of that, our production company was very small and new in the market so they weren't able to find sponsors for our show.

Thanks to the financial aid we received from ARKO Selection (Performing Arts), we were able to put up a decent show. Besides that, promotions and online streaming from the program helped

with our ticket sales. After that, they helped us make our two main songs into music videos that increased the recognition of our show as part of their post-support program.

What did the initial tryout reveal to you about your musical and what did you work on from the end of the tryout to the premiere production?

During the tryout performance, ARKO Selection (Performing Arts) conducted a survey for the audience who watched the show. The survey had multiple choice questions in each category, including script, music, directing, acting, etc, and short-answer questions to write down what they liked and disliked about the show. After the performance, they compiled all the answers into statistics and delivered them to us.

Based on the feedback, we modified some of the scenes and lyrics that were interpreted differently than we intended. A lot of people thought the tryout performance was too long. So when we were working on the premier production, we took out and compressed many lines and music as much as we could to reduce 10 minutes of the show time from the tryout. We also made correctional changes reflecting the time difference of scene transitions as the theatre changed. Overall, we worked on refining the story and music for a smooth run of the show.

Did you make any changes to the show from the premiere production to this latest production at Hongik Art Center? If so, what kinds of changes did you make?

In terms of script and music, we wrote one new song. During the premiere, Lorelai's (the protagonist) past story was only told through the lyrics, but for the latest production, we added flashback scenes to the song so that her character's emotions could be delivered better. We refined jokes and lines that have changed during those three years to keep it current. Also, we fine tuned points of characters' emotional beat changes, and highlighted more of the scenes that we thought were important. Other than the script and music, we made some amendments that reflected the changes of the production company, the director, the stage designer, and the theatre.⁵

We acknowledge and thank Q GyuJin Lim, who translated our email correspondences with Han Jung Seok and Lee Sun Young.

NOTES

1. Epsenhart, Lauren and Lozano, Jaime. 2021. Interview with David Sisco. Via email. July 10, 2021.
2. Brunger, James and Cleary, Pippa. 2021. Interview with David Sisco. Via email. July 11, 2021.
3. Chiarella, Hugo. 2018. "The Making (and Making) of Evie May." *Audrey Journal*, October 11, 2018. <https://www.audreyjournal.com.au/arts/the-making-and-making-of-evie-may/>

Performing in Contemporary Musicals
by David Sisco & Laura Josepher

4. Chiarella, Huga and Livingston, Naomi. 2021. Interview with David Sisco. Via email. July 12, 2021.
5. Lee, Sun Young and Seok, Han Jung. 2021. Interview with David Sisco (trans. Q GyuJin Lim). Via email. July 4, 2021.