

LET THE MEMORY LIVE AGAIN



CATS

# STUDY GUIDE



THE  
NATIONAL THEATRE  
FOUNDATION

CATS the musical  
The National Theatre  
January 17–23, 2023  
West End, May 1981  
Broadway, October 1982

Music by Andrew Lloyd Webber  
Lyrics based on “Old Possum’s Book of Practical Cats” by T.S. Eliot  
Directed by Trevor Nunn  
Packet prepared by Dramaturg Leayne C. Dempsey

*CATS*, the record-breaking musical spectacular by Andrew Lloyd Webber that has captivated audiences in over 30 countries and 15 languages, is now on tour across North America! Audiences and critics alike are rediscovering this beloved musical with breathtaking music, including one of the most treasured songs in musical theater—“Memory.” Winner of 7 Tony Awards® including BEST MUSICAL, *CATS* tells the story of one magical night when an extraordinary tribe of cats gathers for its annual ball to rejoice and decide which cat will be reborn. The original score by Andrew Lloyd Webber (*The Phantom of the Opera*, *School of Rock*, *Sunset Boulevard*), original scenic and costume design by John Napier (*Les Misérables*), all-new lighting design by Natasha Katz (*Aladdin*), all-new sound design by Mick Potter, new choreography by Andy Blankenbuehler (*Hamilton*) based on the original choreography by Gillian Lynne (*Phantom*) and direction by Trevor Nunn (*Les Misérables*) make this production a new *CATS* for a new generation!



For almost 200 years, The National Theatre has occupied a prominent position on Pennsylvania Avenue—“America’s Main Street”—and played a central role in the cultural and civic life of Washington, DC. Located a stone’s throw from the White House and having the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site as its “front yard,” The National Theatre is a historic, cultural presence in our Nation’s Capital and the oldest continuously operating enterprise on Pennsylvania Avenue.

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# DRAMATURGICAL ESSAY

One of my fondest childhood memories is reading poetry from Shel Silverstein's, *Where the Sidewalk Ends*. Have you heard of it before? At a young age, I was captured by his funny characters, and their nonsensical decisions. I remember my favorite poems. I loved them so much that I even brought the book in for show-and-tell one year in elementary school. And now, I look back at those poems and marvel at how they seemed to mesmerize me as a young child.

I'd like to imagine that this is how Andrew Lloyd Webber may have felt when he recalled the children's book of poetry *Old Possum's Stories of Practical Cats*. To think that this Tony Award winning musical was inspired by a book of children's poetry may first seem odd, but I encourage you to lean into your favorite piece of literature from your childhood. What was its title? Who were the characters? What far off land did it take you too? Or what belly laugh did it provoke? Or what dream did it validate in your heart? That is what makes it the perfect material for a musical. The memory.

And yet, there is still a sadness, or maybe a longing to go back to that time when we were discovering poetry for the first time. As we grow up, we have to remind ourselves that we are still capable of indulging in the whimsical things of life. As life brings sadness it can also contain joy, and we are still capable of living our lives to the fullest, no matter what weight our pasts may be to the present. We are as lively as the Jellicle cats, and still experience the hopelessness and redemption of Grizabella.

*CATS* the musical debuted on the West End in London in 1981 and debuted on Broadway in 1982. The production went on to become one of the longest running shows on Broadway. In 1983, it won seven Tony Awards including Best Musical. There is no doubt that there is something special about this production, and I cannot wait for you to discover it for yourself. And before you do, you must first allow yourself to accept the invitation to enjoy and take in the world that is the Jellicle Ball.

One of my favorite poems by Shel Silverstein is a poem called, "The Invitation." It says: If you are a dreamer, come in / If you are a dreamer, a wisher, a liar, / A hope-er, a pray-er, a magic bean buyer.../ If you're a pretender, come sit by the fire / For we have some flax-golden tales to spin. / Come in! / Come in!"

And I say the same to you. Come in, and hear the tales of the Jellicle cats. Who knows, if you look close enough, and if you listen close enough, you may even find yourself in their tales too.

Best,  
Leayne Dempsey, Dramaturg

## FIVE THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW BY THE END OF THIS PACKET:

- Who is Andrew Lloyd Webber and who are the people on the production's creative team?
- Who is T.S. Eliot?
- What's the *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*?
- Who is Grizabella?
- What are the responsibilities of the set, costume, and lighting designers in a production?



PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY, MURPHYMADE

# THE CREATIVE TEAM



## ANDREW LLOYD WEBBER

The composer of the Tony Award winning *CATS*. Webber is the composer of many well known scores such as: *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, *Sunset Boulevard*, and *School of Rock* to name a few. He is also the composer of the highly anticipated new musical *Bad Cinderella* that is set to make its Broadway debut on February 17, 2023. The Andrew Lloyd Webber Foundation was created by Webber with a commitment to diversity in music education. His foundation provides thirty scholarship opportunities for students pursuing the arts in college.



GETTY IMAGES

## TREVOR NUNN

Directed the Tony Award winning *CATS* and was a co-author of the song “Memory” with Andrew Lloyd Webber and T.S. Eliot. Trevor was the Associate Director of the Royal Shakespeare Company. He has directed other acclaimed musicals such as: *Les Misérables*, *Starlight Express*, *Chess*, *Oklahoma!*, *My Fair Lady*, and *Sunset Boulevard*.



## GILLIAN LYNNE

The original choreographer of the Tony Award winning *CATS*. Gillian choreographed two of the longest running shows on Broadway: *CATS* and *The Phantom of the Opera*. Gillian is the first non-royal woman to have a theater named after her on the West End, the Gillian Lynne Theatre.



## T.S. ELIOT

The author of the *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. T.S. Eliot's words in this book are what Webber used to create *CATS*. Eliot is known as one of the most important writers in history. He is well known for his poem “The Waste Land.”

## ADDITIONAL CREATIVE TEAM

**Andy Blankenbuehler**, Choreographer (2017 Revival) ●

**Natasha Katz**, Sound Design (2017 Revival)

**John Napier**, Original Set and Costume Design

**Mick Potter**, Sound Design (2017 Revival)

Did you know?  
Andy Blankenbuehler was also the choreographer for the Tony Award winning show *Hamilton*?



# A 6-TIME TONY WINNER SHARES THE SECRET TO GREAT LIGHTING DESIGN

*By Casey Mink*

Six-time Tony Award winner Natasha Katz's work is synonymous with theatrical lighting design. This season alone, her credits include Broadway's "MJ the Musical" and "Diana: The Musical"—both about cultural icons—as well as The Public Theater's hit production of "Suffs," a musical about the women's suffrage movement. No subject is too vast or varied for Katz to tackle, because the intent is always the same: lighting in service of storytelling.

**When you've signed on to a project, where do you actually begin?**

I read the script. A director or producer might call me up and say, "We'd love you to do this show. I'll send you the script. See if you like it, and we'll go from there." So much of a job depends on who else is working on the show. It's not just about the material, because the material takes on a different life from the first time you read it. I read a script as if I'm not a lighting designer; I read it as if I'm just your average viewer, and the thoughts flow in an extremely organic way. Then I read it again, and I start marking it up. Certainly, time of day matters to me. There are directors who might not care about time of day, but I make notes like that to myself—and what the character, emotionally, might be thinking at that time. They all help me later on when I go back and look at what my initial feelings about it were, because as you get more and more involved in a project, you have less objectivity [toward] it.

**How would you define great lighting design?**

Lighting is so subconscious, and storytelling is, no question, the most important part of it. It's also making the characters look beautiful and the performers look beautiful within the context of the story. What separates the good from great is whether there is a visceral, emotional feeling that you're trying to get across in every single moment of the show. It's the emotional underpinning of whatever point of view we're taking for the show and the character.

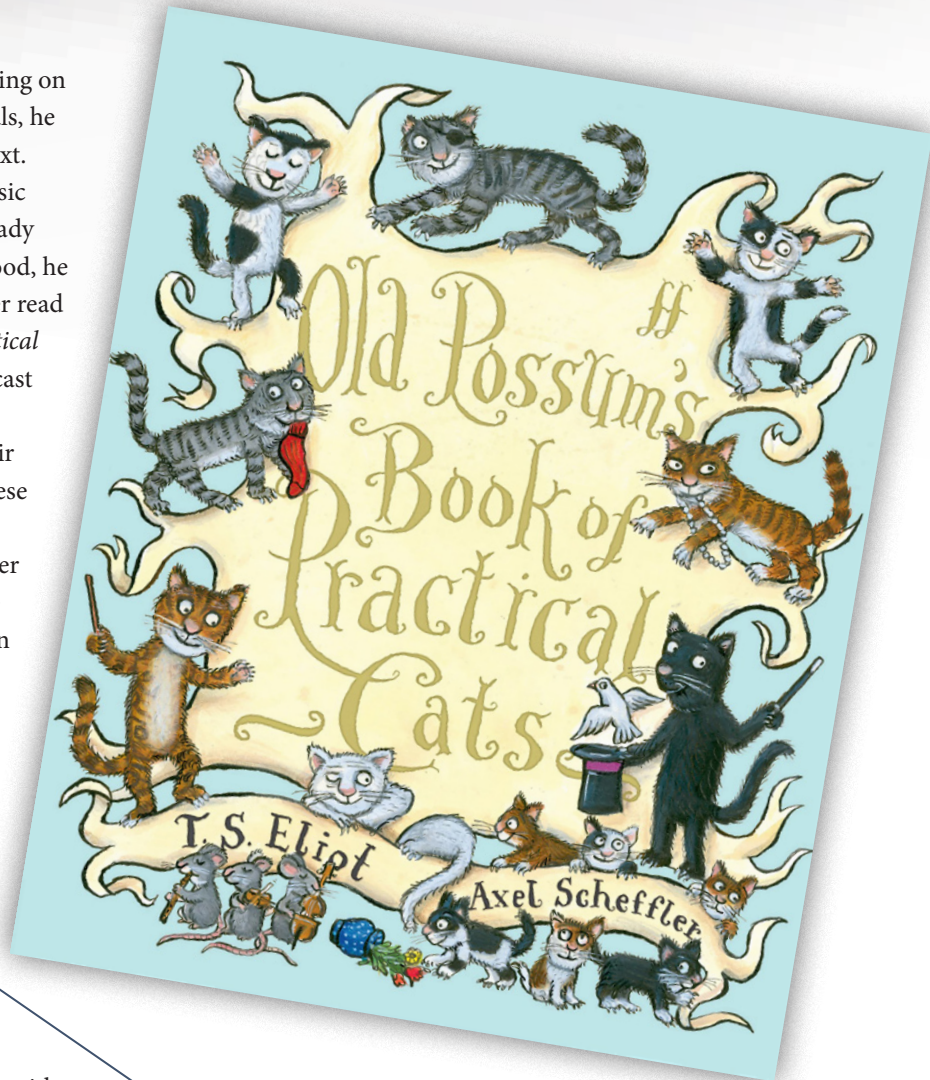
**What is one piece of advice you'd give to aspiring or early career lighting designers?**

Watching other people work was such a great way for me to learn. You can take so much in about how people communicate, because there are so many different people in the theater. Learn about the different instruments in lighting. The other thing is that references are really important, which means watching movies and starting to understand light and thinking about why choices were made. Know the history of lighting, know the history of scenic design, because lighting designers, we don't live on our own. We are part of a greater world, which includes scenery, costumes, projection—so many other things. It's so fulfilling to know what other people have gone through and what it takes to put on a show.

# WHAT'S THE OLD POSSUM'S BOOK OF PRACTICAL CATS?

While Andrew Lloyd Webber was working on *Evita*, another one of his popular musicals, he sought to create a musical from found text. In other words, he wanted to build a music composition from a source that was already written. As he reminisced on his childhood, he remembered a book of poetry his mother read to him called, *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. It is a collection of poems about a cast of Jellicle cats who each have their own personalities, and more importantly, their own names; three names to be exact. These poems originated from letters T.S. Eliot would send to his godchildren. Each letter was a new poem about one of the Jellicle cats. "Old Possum" was a nickname given to T.S. Eliot by his god children's father. There are fifteen poems in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, and these fifteen poems, all written in verse, are what inspired the musical phenomenon of CATS.

*Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, begins with the poem, "The Naming of Cats." In this poem, we are introduced to the significance of a cat's name. More specifically, Eliot shares with us that cats have three names. The first is a simple and "sensible" name suited for everyday matters. The second, is a bit "fancier" and more "dignified." And the third name is only known by the cat itself, and the mere thought of it brings them into deep contemplation. This poem is arguably one of the most important poems to read because it reveals an existential depth that is not expected in children's literature, but it is present in Webber's musical interpretation of the poem. Although



Verse refers to lines of poetry that are written in such a way that the lines have a rhythm or pattern. In many poems, this pattern or rhythm is established by the use of rhyme.



"A cat has nine lives.  
For three he plays,  
for three he strays,  
and for the last three he stays."

- Unknown Author

most of us are familiar with the **proverb** about cats having nine lives, we aren't as familiar with the idea of them having three names. Yet, Eliot makes the naming and the addressing of a cat deeply personal, and humanlike.

After that first poem, we are introduced to some of our favorite and most infamous Jellicle cats and their stories. We meet Jennyanydots the Old Gumbie Cat, Rum Tum Tugger the Curious Cat, the mischievous Mungojerrie and Rumpelteazer, Old Deuteronomy, Mr. Mistoffelees the Original Conjuring Cat, and the mysterious cat Macavity. All of these cats and their stories set the stage for the Jellicle Cats' junkyard that we are invited into

at the top of Act One.

The phrase "from the top" or "take it from the top" are phrases often used in the performing arts to refer to the beginning of a piece of music. The start of the music is located at the top of the page. It is now used to as a reference to doing something from the beginning.

"The Song of the Jellicles" and "The Ad-dressing of Cats" are two poems in the book that help establish significant moments in the musical. "The Song of the Jellicles" is performed at the top of the show to introduce us to the world of the play. It cunningly answers the question, "What's a Jellicle Cat?", while also introducing the reader to the most important night of them all; the Jellicle Ball. "The Ad-dressing of Cats" closes this playful text by reminding us, the readers, that Jellicle cats are much like humans. There is a specific way they should be approached and spoken to because they too require respect. In the musical, this poem becomes the final song sung by Old Deuteronomy after Grizabella commences her journey to the Heaviside Layer.

Tayler Harris as  
Grizabella



PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY, MURPHYMADE

But who is Grizabella? Grizabella the Glamour Cat is quite peculiar because she does not show up anywhere in *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*. In fact, her character comes from a different unpublished piece by T.S. Eliot called, "Grizabella, the Glamour Cat." Just as she is absent from the children's book of poetry, Grizabella is also separated from the Jellicle cats and deemed an outcast in the plot of the musical.

Each song and each character in *CATS* was lifted out of one of T.S. Eliot's poems, and brought to life on stage. Perhaps it is this very creative process by Andrew Lloyd Webber and the creative team that makes this musical one of the longest running musicals in Broadway history. And perhaps the very act of seeing something from childhood being brought to life right before our eyes is a bit of what makes this musical so magical as well. Whatever it may be, it is important to know that without *Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats*, there would be no *CATS*. It all stems from a series of letters whose whole intention was to introduce a world of cats to a beloved child. Those cats were a little silly, a little whimsical, a little profound, and a little mysterious; like humans. But humans they were not. They were Jellicle. **Dear little cats.**

So what's a Jellicle cat?  
Jellicle cats are fictional. The word Jellicle is derived from an English colloquialism that means "dear little cats."

# WORKSHEET ON “MEMORY”

The director is responsible for the overall vision and concept of the production. Directors often explore various aspects of a show through research in order to discover new ideas and inspirations that they can include in their work. Trevor Nunn, the original director of *CATS*, explored T.S. Eliot’s poem “Rhapsody on a Windy Night” when working on paraphrasing some of the lyrics for the song “Memory.”

## COMPARE THE POEM TO THE LYRICS IN THE SONG “MEMORY”

### Directions:

Underline the words that show up in both pieces.

Circle the imagery that is similar in both pieces.

Highlight the lines in both pieces that reference the human mind and body.

Highlight the lines in both pieces that reference nature.

**Answer this question:** How do both pieces explore the idea of hopelessness? How do these pieces relate to the character Grizabella and her relationship to others in the musical?

## RHAPSODY ON A WINDY NIGHT

BY T. S. ELIOT

Twelve o’clock.  
Along the reaches of the street  
Held in a lunar synthesis,  
Whispering lunar incantations  
Dissolve the floors of memory  
And all its clear relations,  
Its divisions and precisions,  
Every street lamp that I pass  
Beats like a fatalistic drum,  
And through the spaces of the dark  
Midnight shakes the memory  
As a madman shakes a dead geranium.

*Here is an example!*

Half-past one,  
The street lamp sputtered,  
The street lamp muttered,  
The street lamp said, ‘Regard that woman  
Who hesitates towards you in the light of the door  
Which opens on her like a grin.  
You see the border of her dress  
Is torn and stained with sand,  
And you see the corner of her eye  
Twists like a crooked pin.’

The memory throws up high and dry  
A crowd of twisted things;  
A twisted branch upon the beach  
Eaten smooth, and polished  
As if the world gave up  
The secret of its skeleton,  
Stiff and white.  
A broken spring in a factory yard,  
Rust that clings to the form that the strength has left  
Hard and curled and ready to snap.



Half-past two,  
The street lamp said,  
'Remark the cat which flattens itself in the gutter,  
Slips out its tongue  
And devours a morsel of rancid butter.'  
So the hand of a child, automatic,  
Slipped out and pocketed a toy that was running along the quay.  
I could see nothing behind that child's eye.  
I have seen eyes in the street  
Trying to peer through lighted shutters,  
And a crab one afternoon in a pool,  
An old crab with barnacles on his back,  
Gripped the end of a stick which I held him.

Half-past three,  
The lamp sputtered,  
The lamp muttered in the dark.  
The lamp hummed:  
'Regard the moon,  
La lune ne garde aucune rancune,  
She winks a feeble eye,  
She smiles into corners.  
She smoothes the hair of the grass.  
The moon has lost her memory.  
A washed-out smallpox cracks her face,  
Her hand twists a paper rose,  
That smells of dust and old Cologne,  
She is alone  
With all the old nocturnal smells  
That cross and cross across her brain.'  
The reminiscence comes  
Of sunless dry geraniums  
And dust in crevices,  
Smells of chestnuts in the streets,  
And female smells in shuttered rooms,  
And cigarettes in corridors  
And cocktail smells in bars.

The lamp said,  
'Four o'clock,  
Here is the number on the door.  
Memory!  
You have the key,  
The little lamp spreads a ring on the stair,  
Mount.  
The bed is open; the tooth-brush hangs on the wall,  
Put your shoes at the door, sleep, prepare for life.'

The last twist of the knife.

## MEMORY

Turn your face to the moonlight  
Let your memory lead you  
Open up enter in  
If you find there  
The meaning of what happiness is  
Then a new life will begin  
Memory  
All alone in the moonlight  
I can smile at the old days  
I was beautiful then  
I remember  
The time I knew what happiness was  
Let the memory  
Live again  
Burnt out ends of smoky days  
The stale cold smell of morning  
A street lamp dies  
Another night is over  
Another day is dawning  
Daylight  
I must wait for the sunrise  
I must think of a new life  
And I mustn't give in  
When the dawn comes  
Tonight will be a memory too  
And a new day will begin  
Sunlight through the trees in summer  
Endless masquerading  
Like a flower as the dawn is breaking  
The memory is fading  
Touch me  
It's so easy to leave me  
All alone with the memory  
Of my days in the sun  
If you touch me  
You'll understand what happiness is  
Look, a new day  
Has begun

# WHAT IS YOUR JELICLE NAME?

“When I tell you, a cat must have **THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.**” (Eliot,1)

According to T.S. Eliot’s poem, “The Naming of Cats,” all cats must have three different names.

What if the same were true for humans? What would your three names be?

Complete the activity below to find out.

“First of all, there’s the name that the family uses daily...” (Eliot, 1)

**Step One:** Write your full name. Yep, that’s right, your first and last name(s). This is the name you go by on a daily basis.

“But I tell you, a cat needs a name that’s particular,  
A name that’s peculiar, and more dignified...” (Eliot, 2)

**Step Two:** Choose one from each column to discover your second name.

Example: John Doe with a January birthday would be: **Skimbleoffelees the Old Cat**

## FIRST NAME BEGINS WITH..

A or B	Mistoff
C or D	Bomba
E or F	Griza
G or H	Rum Tum
I or J	Skimble
K or L	Jelly
M or N	Jenny
O or P	Mungo
Q or R	Rumpel
S or T	Griddle
U or V	Gus
W or X	Tumble
Y or Z	Bill

## LAST NAME BEGINS WITH...

A or B	alorina
C or D	offelees
E or F	teazer
G or H	oriocopat
I or J	tugger
K or L	tiger
M or N	deuteronomy
O or P	anydots
Q or R	demeter
S or T	rumpus
U or V	riddle
W or X	bone
Y or Z	shanks

## YOUR BIRTHDAY IS IN...

Jan	The Old Cat
Feb	The Curious Cat
March	The Mischievous Cat
April	The Glamour Cat
May	The Gumbie Cat
June	The Magical Cat
July	The Witty Cat
Aug	The Brave Cat
Sep	The Magnificent Cat
Oct	The Clever Cat
Nov	The Mysterious Cat
Dec	The Remarkable Cat
Dec	The Zealous Cat

“The name that no human research can discover—  
But **THE CAT HIMSELF KNOWS**, and will never confess.” (Eliot,3)

**Step Three:** If you had a secret name that no one else knew what would it be? Would it be a comical or serious name?

Would it reveal something about yourself that you often don’t show others? Or would it be like a buried treasure?

Something too precious to share, but it almost glows inside of you?

Take a moment and journal about what your third name would be. See what you can discover as you write.

# BEHIND THE SCENES



GO BEHIND THE SCENES AND  
DISCOVER WHAT IT'S LIKE  
TO PLAY GRIZABELLA!

*click or scan QR code*



## CHARACTER STUDY



Character Study of Broadway's Grizabella, Mamie Parris



LISTEN TO THE  
SOUNDTRACK OF *CATS*!

*click or scan QR code*



LISTEN IN ON A CONVERSATION  
WITH JOHN NAPIER THE SET  
AND COSTUME DESIGNER  
FOR *CATS*!

*click or scan QR code*



John Napier discusses the inspiration behind his iconic designs for the musical Cats! From Cats (...)



Did you know that *CATS* was made into a film in 2019 starring big names like Taylor Swift, Jennifer Hudson, and James Corden?

CHECK OUT THIS VIDEO AS  
THEY GO BEHIND THE SCENES  
WITH THE DANCERS.

*click or scan QR code*



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Indalecio De Jesús Valentín as  
Old Deuteronomy and the company of  
the 2021-2022 national tour of *CATS*



PHOTO BY MATTHEW MURPHY, MURPHYMADE



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