

# Come From Away

**Come From Away:** An Inspiring Musical That Celebrates Humanity and Hospitality

## Introduction to Come From Away

*Come From Away* is a critically acclaimed Broadway musical that tells the remarkable true story of kindness, community, and resilience in the face of adversity. Based on the events following September 11, 2001, the musical portrays how a small town in Newfoundland, Gander, and its residents opened their hearts and homes to nearly 7,000 stranded travelers when the United States closed its airspace. Since its debut, *Come From Away* has touched audiences worldwide with its powerful storytelling, memorable music, and heartfelt message.

## Background and Origin of Come From Away

### Inspiration from Real Events

*Come From Away* draws directly from the true events that unfolded on September 11, 2001. When the terrorist attacks caused widespread chaos, thousands of aircraft were diverted from U.S. airspace, leading to an unprecedented situation where entire flights had to be grounded in remote airports. Gander, a town with a population of approximately 9,000 residents, suddenly became home to over 6,500 stranded passengers and crew members.

### The Creators Behind the Musical

1. **Music and Lyrics:** Courtenay MacDonald and David Hein, a husband-and-wife duo, co-created the musical, combining their talents to craft a compelling score that captures the emotions of the story.
2. **Book:** The script was written by the same team, weaving together personal stories and historical facts into a cohesive narrative.

### Evolution from Stage to Stage

Initially conceived as a small workshop production, *Come From Away* premiered in 2012 at the La Jolla Playhouse in California. Its success led to a Broadway opening in 2017, quickly becoming a cultural phenomenon and earning multiple awards, including the Tony Award for Best Direction of a Musical.

# The Plot of Come From Away

## Setting and Premise

The musical is set in the days immediately following September 11, 2001, in the town of Gander, Newfoundland. The story unfolds through interwoven perspectives of various characters—passengers, crew members, and residents—highlighting their fears, hopes, and acts of kindness.

## Main Themes and Messages

1. **Community and Compassion:** How strangers can become family through acts of generosity.
2. **Resilience in Crisis:** The strength to come together and support each other amidst chaos.
3. **Understanding and Connection:** Breaking down cultural barriers through empathy.

## Synopsis Overview

1. **The Diversion:** Flights are rerouted due to the attacks, and the stranded passengers arrive in Gander.
2. **The Arrival:** The townspeople prepare to host the newcomers, offering food, shelter, and comfort.
3. **Personal Stories:** The musical delves into individual stories—families reuniting, friendships forming, and personal fears confronting hope.
4. **Resolution and Reflection:** As the world begins to recover, both residents and visitors reflect on the profound impact of their shared experience.

## Music and Artistic Elements of Come From Away

### Musical Style and Score

*Come From Away* features a vibrant and emotionally resonant score that blends folk, musical theater, and Celtic influences. The music underscores the diverse backgrounds of the characters and the universal themes of compassion.

### Notable Songs

1. **"Welcome to the Rock":** An energetic opening that introduces Gander and its residents.
2. **"Me and the Sky":** A heartfelt solo reflecting a pilot's aspirations and fears.
3. **"Screech In":** A humorous and cultural rite of passage for newcomers to Newfoundland.

4. **“Prayer”**: An emotional prayer that encapsulates hope and longing.

## Staging and Set Design

The musical employs minimalistic yet versatile staging, allowing quick transitions between scenes and emphasizing storytelling. The use of multimedia and projections enhances the narrative, immersing audiences in the emotional landscape.

## Impact and Reception

### Critical Acclaim

*Come From Away* has received rave reviews from critics and audiences alike. It has been praised for its powerful storytelling, compelling music, and positive message. Awards include:

1. Tony Award for Best Direction of a Musical
2. Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album
3. Outer Critics Circle Award for Outstanding New Broadway Musical

### Audience Response

The musical resonates with diverse audiences by reminding us of the importance of kindness and community. Many viewers describe it as uplifting, emotionally moving, and inspiring.

### Educational and Cultural Significance

*Come From Away* has become a tool for education about September 11, intercultural understanding, and humanitarian values. It fosters empathy and highlights the extraordinary kindness that can emerge during times of crisis.

## Why Watch *Come From Away*?

### Key Reasons to Experience the Musical

1. **Inspirational Message**: It reminds us that humanity can shine brightest in moments of darkness.
2. **Stunning Performances**: Talented casts bring heartfelt characters to life.
3. **Memorable Music**: The score is both catchy and emotionally powerful.
4. **Historical Education**: Provides insight into a pivotal moment in recent history.
5. **Universal Themes**: Explores love, hope, resilience, and community across cultural boundaries.

## Recommended Audience

*Come From Away* appeals to theater enthusiasts, history buffs, families, and anyone seeking an uplifting story about human kindness.

## Where to See Come From Away

### Current and Future Productions

The musical has been staged in numerous cities worldwide, including Broadway, London's West End, and touring productions across North America and beyond. Check official websites and ticket platforms for current showtimes and locations.

### Watching the Musical Virtually

During times when live performances are limited, various recordings and streamed performances are available for viewing online, offering access to audiences globally.

## Conclusion: The Enduring Legacy of Come From Away

*Come From Away* stands as a testament to the resilience of the human spirit and the transformative power of kindness. Its heartfelt portrayal of strangers becoming friends encourages audiences to reflect on their own capacity for compassion and community. Whether experienced on stage or through a recorded performance, this musical continues to inspire hope and unity in a divided world.

## Additional Resources

1. [Official Come From Away Website](#)
2. [IBDB - Come From Away](#)
3. [Tony Awards - Come From Away](#)

Come From Away: A Heartwarming Musical that Celebrates Humanity and Resilience

## Introduction: An Uplifting Tale of Compassion and Community

In the vast landscape of musical theatre, few productions manage to capture the collective human spirit with as much poignancy and immediacy as *Come From Away*. Since its debut in 2017, this Tony Award-winning musical has resonated deeply with audiences worldwide, offering a heartfelt reflection on kindness, unity, and the extraordinary capacity for compassion in the face of tragedy. Set against the backdrop of the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, *Come From Away* chronicles the true story

of 7,000 airline passengers stranded in Gander, Newfoundland, and the local residents who, despite their own challenges, opened their hearts and homes. This review delves into every facet of *Come From Away*, exploring its origins, narrative structure, thematic depth, musical composition, character development, staging, and cultural impact. Through a comprehensive analysis, readers will gain insight into why this musical continues to touch countless lives and remains a defining work in contemporary theatre.

## **Origins and Development**

### **Historical Background**

*Come From Away* is based on real events that unfolded on September 11, 2001. When the U.S. airspace was shut down following the terrorist attacks, thousands of airline passengers were forced to land unexpectedly in Gander, a small town in Newfoundland, Canada. The town's population of around 9,000 suddenly doubled as these stranded travelers sought refuge and safety. The story is rooted in interviews and firsthand accounts collected by the show's creators, Irene Sankoff and David Hein, who initially conceived the musical after visiting Gander and speaking with locals and passengers. Their research was meticulous, capturing the emotional nuances of that pivotal moment in history.

### **Development and Premiere**

The creators worked closely with Gander residents and survivors, ensuring authenticity and respect for the real-life stories. The musical premiered in 2016 at the La Jolla Playhouse in California before transferring to Broadway in 2017. Its immediate success was driven by powerful storytelling, compelling characters, and a universal message of hope.

## **Storyline and Narrative Structure**

### **Plot Summary**

*Come From Away* unfolds over a few days in September 2001, focusing on the intertwined stories of both the stranded airline passengers and the residents of Gander. The musical opens with the chaos of the attacks, setting a tense, somber tone. As planes are rerouted, the narrative shifts to the arrivals of the "come from aways"—a colloquial Newfoundland term for visitors from away. The story is told through a series of vignettes, showcasing individual characters and their experiences. These stories highlight themes of fear, grief, hope, and community. The local townspeople, led by characters like Mayor Claude Elliott and a diverse array of residents, rally to provide shelter, food, and comfort. Meanwhile, passengers grapple with shock, loss, and uncertainty but also find unexpected kinship and kindness in their hosts. The musical

emphasizes that despite differences in background, nationality, or beliefs, shared humanity prevails.

## **Nonlinear and Ensemble-Driven Narrative**

The musical's structure is non-linear, weaving multiple storylines seamlessly. Its ensemble cast is vital, with actors often taking on multiple roles, representing various characters, including passengers, airline staff, and townspeople. This approach reinforces the universality of the stories and the collective effort of the community.

## **Themes and Messages**

### **Humanity and Compassion**

At its core, *Come From Away* celebrates the innate kindness of ordinary people. In a moment of global crisis, the residents of Gander exemplify generosity and selflessness, challenging notions of fear and suspicion. The musical underscores that acts of compassion can transcend borders and differences.

### **Resilience and Hope**

The stories depict resilience—how communities and individuals recover from trauma. The characters face profound loss and uncertainty but find ways to rebuild hope through connection and mutual support.

### **Unity in Diversity**

The diverse backgrounds of the passengers and residents highlight themes of multiculturalism and acceptance. The musical emphasizes that diversity enriches communities and that shared values can unite disparate groups.

### **Challenging Stereotypes**

Throughout the show, stereotypes are challenged and broken down. Characters evolve beyond initial assumptions, illustrating the importance of empathy and understanding.

## **Musical Composition and Score**

### **Musical Style**

The score of *Come From Away* is a blend of folk, Celtic, and musical theatre genres. Its melodies are catchy and accessible, often inspired by Newfoundland folk music, which lends an authentic regional flavor. The musical's score is characterized by: - Upbeat ensemble numbers that foster camaraderie - Intimate ballads conveying vulnerability -

Harmonious choral arrangements that evoke community spirit

## **Notable Songs**

Some of the most memorable and impactful songs include: - "Welcome to the Rock" – An energetic opening that introduces Gander and its residents. - "Me and the Sky" – A powerful solo sung by a female pilot, highlighting themes of perseverance and breaking barriers. - "Screech In" – A humorous yet meaningful song about Newfoundland traditions and local identity. - "Blankets and Bedding" – An emotional ballad illustrating comfort amid chaos. - "Something's Missing" – A reflective piece capturing loss and longing.

## **Lyricism and Musicality**

The lyrics are straightforward yet heartfelt, often infused with humor and warmth. The melodies are memorable, making the show both emotionally resonant and musically satisfying. The orchestration is minimal but effective, allowing the voices and storytelling to take center stage.

## **Staging and Choreography**

### **Set Design and Minimalism**

The staging of *Come From Away* is intentionally minimalistic, using versatile set pieces to evoke various locations—airports, homes, community halls. This simplicity allows for fluid scene transitions and keeps the focus on the actors' performances and storytelling.

### **Choreography and Movement**

Choreography is lively, reflecting the bustling activity of a small town and the chaos of a crisis. Ensemble movements emphasize unity and collective effort, often involving group singing, synchronized actions, and physical storytelling that enhances the emotional impact.

### **Use of Props and Visuals**

Props are sparingly used but strategically placed to evoke different settings. Multimedia elements, such as projected images or videos, may be incorporated in various productions to add context and depth, especially in touring or larger venues.

## **Character Development and Performances**

## **Ensemble Cast Dynamics**

The strength of *Come From Away* lies in its ensemble. The cast's versatility allows actors to portray multiple characters, which underscores the interconnectedness of the stories.

- Each performer brings authenticity and nuance to their roles. - The cast's chemistry fosters a sense of community on stage, mirroring the real-life bonds formed in Gander.

## **Key Characters**

While the musical is ensemble-driven, some standout roles include: - Mayor Claude Elliott – Embodies leadership, resilience, and compassion. - Annette – A nurse representing care and empathy. - Kevin T – A pilot who struggles with personal loss. - Hannah – A young girl offering innocence and hope. - The Passengers – Each with distinct backgrounds, stories, and arcs.

## **Performance Style**

Performers employ a naturalistic acting style, with warmth and sincerity. The vocal performances are powerful yet accessible, often involving ensemble singing that emphasizes collective emotion.

## **Production Elements and Overall Experience**

### **Direction and Artistic Vision**

The director, Christopher Ashley, masterfully balances humor, gravity, and hope. The pacing is tight, maintaining engagement through emotional highs and lows. The narrative is crafted to evoke empathy and reflection.

### **Audience Engagement**

*Come From Away* connects deeply with audiences, often eliciting spontaneous applause and emotional reactions. Its universal themes make it accessible across cultures and generations.

### **Emotional Impact**

The musical's most profound achievement is its ability to evoke genuine emotion—whether tears, laughter, or a sense of shared humanity. It reminds audiences that in times of crisis, kindness can prevail.

## **Cultural and Social Impact**

## Recognition and Awards

Since its Broadway debut, *Come From Away* has garnered numerous accolades, including: - 7 Tony Award nominations, winning for Best Direction of a Musical - Grammy Award for Best Musical Theater Album - Multiple Drama Desk Awards and Olivier Awards

## Educational and Community Outreach

The musical has been adopted by schools and community groups to promote themes of empathy, resilience, and multicultural understanding.

## Global Reach

Productions have toured internationally, with adaptations in various languages, emphasizing its universal appeal. The show has also been performed in Canada, the UK, Australia, and beyond.

## Legacy and Cultural Significance

*Come From Away* has become a symbol of hope and human connection, particularly poignant in a post-9/11 world. Its success demonstrates the power of storytelling to heal, inspire, and foster understanding across

## Questions & Answers About come from away

| No | Question                                        | Answer                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|----|-------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | What is the musical 'Come From Away' about?     | 'Come From Away' is a musical based on the true story of how the small town of Gander, Newfoundland, welcomed thousands of stranded airline passengers after the September 11 attacks in 2001. |
| 2  | When did 'Come From Away' premiere on Broadway? | 'Come From Away' premiered on Broadway in March 2017 at the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre.                                                                                                         |
| 3  | Who wrote the musical 'Come From Away'?         | The musical was written by Irene Sankoff and David Hein, who collaborated closely to craft its story and music.                                                                                |
| 4  | Is 'Come From Away' based on real events?       | Yes, the musical is based on true stories of the residents of Gander and the passengers during the aftermath of 9/11.                                                                          |
| 5  | Has 'Come From Away' won any major awards?      | Yes, 'Come From Away' has won multiple awards, including the Tony Award for Best Direction of a Musical and the Olivier Award for Best New Musical.                                            |

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|---|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 6 | Where can I see 'Come From Away' now?                        | The musical has touring productions worldwide, and it is also available for licensing for local theaters and regional performances.    |
| 7 | What are some of the main themes of 'Come From Away'?        | The musical explores themes of kindness, community, empathy, and the human capacity to come together in times of crisis.               |
| 8 | Are there any notable cast recordings of 'Come From Away'?   | Yes, the original cast recording is widely available on streaming platforms and features performances from the original Broadway cast. |
| 9 | Why has 'Come From Away' resonated with audiences worldwide? | Its powerful message of hope, compassion, and unity during a difficult time has made it a universally relatable and inspiring story.   |

musical, Broadway, Canada, Newfoundland, musical theatre, Tony Award, storytelling, immigration, community, musical adaptation