

Mamma mia! the musical: history and music

[History](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Mamma Mia! is hit Broadway musical that celebrates the music of ABBA, a 1970's Swedish pop group. It includes over 20 original ABBA songs, the most famous of which is Mamma Mia, which lends itself to the title of the musical. The musical is based on a book written by British author Catherine Johnson, and the music was primarily written by Benny Andersson and Björn Ulvaeus of ABBA.

ABBA began in the 1970's in Sweden, and became famous when the group won the 1974 Eurovision song writing contest. It consisted of four members: Benny Andersson, Björn Ulvaeus, Ani-Frid Lyngstad, and Agnetha Faltskog. It is from their first names that the group's name came. They wrote songs that became extremely popular world-wide, including Dancing Queen (which was number one on charts across the world, including the US. It was only song to become number one in the US), Waterloo (the song that won the Eurovision contest), and of course, Mamma Mia. All of these popular songs, and more, are included in the show that became Mamma Mia! (Mamma Mia official site).

Catherine Johnson's book tells a story about a daughter (Sophie) who is about to get married, but she doesn't know who her own father is. She is living on a Greek island paradise, and invites the three potential candidates to the island to see her - the first time they've all set foot on the island in 20 years (Harry, Bill, and Sam). She tries to figure out which one of these men is her father while hiding this from her mother, Donna, who won't talk about her past. Her goal is to have her real father walk her down the aisle.

Ultimately, her mother walks her down the aisle because everyone realizes that they don't know who her real father is, but that it doesn't matter - they will all be a part of her life. She also realizes she doesn't actually want to get married, so her mother ends up marrying one of the three men (Sam) instead, and Sophie and her fiancé go off to travel the world (Wikipedia).

The musical is interspersed with songs like Does Your Mother Know, Super-Trouper, Lay All Your Love on Me, and more. Many of the songs are not used in their original context, but are used in key parts of the musical. For example, the original lyrics in Does Your Mother Know are sung by a man who is asking his underage date if her mother know she's seeing him. In the musical, it is sung by women and used to ask Sophie if her mother knows she's invited these men to the island (Wikipedia).

The original idea for the musical was conceived in 1989 by Judy Craymer, and was to use popular ABBA songs in the new context of a musical. Björn and Benny had attempted to write their own musical in the 70's, consisting of songs like Thank You for the Music (now used in Mamma Mia!) and others, but it was never completed. Lending songs to a musical that was completed and performed was obviously something they were interested in. In May 1999, 10 years after the original idea, Mamma Mia! was born, and made its debut in London theaters. While the creators and producers were initially worried about audience reception, it was an instant success, and went on to play all over Britain, and then in the United States on Broadway.

The U. S. debut was in 2000, and has since played in many Broadway and off-Broadway theaters throughout the country. It is playing simultaneously

in more theaters than any other musical. Today, it is estimated that over 20 million people have seen the show (Mamma Mia official website). The show has toured all major US cities and many minor ones as well, and continues to play on Broadway. There are several casts that are performing the show at any given time.

The show is now playing world-wide, including in Japan, Sweden, and other European countries. It is estimated that 1.3 million people have seen the show in one of these countries. The show has swept not only the English-speaking countries, but the entire world. The soundtrack is also available in different languages for the diverse audience members.

Typical advertising lines include “ People are singing in their seats and dancing in the aisles” when they see the musical. Also, audience members are encouraged to sing along during the encore, which consists of three songs sung earlier in the musical; there are 22 unique songs in all.

Audiences consist of people of all ages, as the musical is family friendly and the music is loved not only by the older generation that grew up with it, but also by the younger generation becoming familiar with it for the first time (Mamma Mia! official site).

The combination of familiar, well-loved songs with a new, exciting story is what makes Mamma Mia! what it is. Many of the adults in world were growing up during the 1970's and spent a lot of time listening to ABBA music. Their songs topped charts around the world from their debut in 1974 straight through the mid-80's. They produced several greatest hits CDs, include ABBA Gold and More Gold, which together include over 40 songs.

<https://assignbuster.com/mamma-mia-the-musical-history-and-music/>

ABBA continues to play on “ oldies” radios today, and their music has been passed down to younger generations.

The music is so upbeat and exciting and perfect for the stage that when it was combined with the cute and interesting story by Catherine Johnson, it was well-received and well-loved. Mamma Mia! will likely continue to play in theaters throughout the country for several more years, as it continues to be an exciting, fun show for all to enjoy.

Bibliography

“ Mamma Mia!” Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. Modified Dec. 8, 2006.

Accessed December 12, 2006. Website: [http://en.wikipedia.](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamma_Mia!)

[org/wiki/Mamma_Mia!](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mamma_Mia!)

“ Mamma-Mia Official Website.” Accessed December 12, 2006. Website:

<http://www.mamma-mia.com/>