

WICKED PATH TO THE WEST END

Amendum and UNCG Assistant Professor Erin Farrell Speer recently launched a new BFA concentration in musical theatre. The first cohort of seven musical theatre majors began in fall 2019.

A mouse click starts the YouTube video. An orchestra score slowly swells beneath the lofty voices of two cast members, as they perform “When You Believe” from DreamWorks’ epic new London stage production of “The Prince of Egypt.” Music supervisor and arranger Dominick Amendum gently nods his head, conducting the scene in his mind.

“This ... here,” he says, gesturing to the screen, as the orchestra and voices suddenly rise in unison. Those background vocals and the shape of the song’s arrangement are the result of his work. Amendum’s eyes well up slightly, evidence of the heart and soul he has put into bringing the moment to fruition.

This much-anticipated show on the West End is not Amendum’s first big production. UNCG’s Smart-Tillman Artist in Residence served nearly a decade as associate music supervisor of the hit musical “Wicked.” He also conducted and music-directed the show on Broadway, in Los Angeles, and on its first national tour.

As coordinator of UNCG’s Musical Theatre program, Amendum (bottom right, with students) has found his sweet spot – his love of teaching, he says, feeds and informs his work in the professional world and vice-versa. And he expects as much from his students as he does from Broadway performers.

“If I’m doing my job, they should leave here and be able to walk into that rehearsal room for a Broadway show and know exactly what that’s going to feel like and what the expectation is.”

Amendum has a strong working relationship with award-winning composer Steven Schwartz of “Wicked” and “Pippin” fame, and the dynamic duo collaborate through every stage of music score creation. “A big part of what I do is kind of like alchemy,” says Amendum. “Filtering and knowing the composer – knowing what they’re thinking – then bringing that into the world. That’s why a lot of my career has been working with the same people, because I get to know their style really well.”

What’s it like working as an arranger? “Putting up a musical is like building a house,” Amendum explains. “The composer is the architect and draws all the plans and has the vision, and the arranger is the contractor who actually puts all those ideas into play.”

By Matthew Bryant • Learn more at musicaltheatre.uncg.edu and theprinceofegyptmusical.com



LIFETIME CONNECTIONS Amendum’s commercial theater work means he brings current industry knowledge and connections to the classroom, but that’s not all his students value. “I carry his teachings with me,” says UNCG alumnus Deon’te Goodman (above), of “Hamilton” Broadway fame. “Despite his insane schedule and incredible amount of responsibility, it never felt as though he didn’t have time for me. Not only did he verbally express his belief in me and my potential, he showed it by providing me with opportunities that allowed me to learn, grow, and prove myself. He stressed the importance of being a kind person just as much as a skilled professional.”

