

Andrew Lloyd Webber

Andrew Lloyd Webber was born in South Kensington, London in 1948. His father, William, was a composer and he was also the principal of the London College of Music. His mother, Jean, was a piano teacher. Andrew also had a brother, Julian, who was to become a world famous cellist. Friends of the family say that they were bohemian and extremely musical. “The house was a mess. But there was music everywhere. You could hear it out in the street”.

Andrew was a musical wonder child. He learned to play the violin at the age of three. He started to compose his own music when he was six and wrote a full piano suite when he was nine.

Andrew’s father was an odd person. Although he was the head master of a music school, he forbade his own son to attend one. “A music school won’t do you any good. It will only destroy your talent,” he said. After a lot of arguments between father and son Andrew went to the Royal College of Music. He didn’t study very hard, though, and took no diploma.

Andrew Lloyd Webber’s great interest was musicals. When he was 17 he met another young man who shared his interest, Tim Rice. Andrew liked to write music, Tim lyrics. They were a perfect combination. In the first musicals they wrote together they found the stories in the Bible. The first one was *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*. From the beginning this was written for schools. It was around half an hour long and was to be performed by a school choir, a school orchestra and a rock group. Later on, the musical was rewritten. Today it takes two hours to perform.

After Joseph they wrote *Jesus Christ Superstar* – which became an enormous success. It has been staged all over the world. The best known song from this musical is “I Don’t Know How to Love Him”. Then they wrote a musical about Evita Peron, the poor girl who became the wife of President Juan Peron of Argentina. The musical was called *Evita* and the hit from it was “Don’t Cry For me Argentina”. In 1996 *Evita* was produced as a film – starring Madonna.

After that Tim Rice and Andrew Lloyd Webber went separate ways. Andrew Lloyd Webber wrote musical after musical. With hits like *Starlight Express*, *Cats*, *The Phantom of the Opera*, and *Sunset Boulevard* he has established himself as one of the greatest musical composers of all time.

Questions

1. Where do you think Andrew Lloyd Webber had his talent from?
2. Why was he called a “wonder child”?
3. Why didn’t his father want Andrew to go to a music school?
4. How did Andrew do at the Royal College of Music?
5. What was Andrew best at?
6. What was Tim Rice best at?
7. How much longer was their musical, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, after they had rewritten it?
8. Who was their next musical about?
9. Where does their musical *Evita* take place?