

2025 SYMPOSIUM REPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Swedish New Musical Theatre Symposium took place in Gothenburg in April 2025. The event was inspired by conversations with many people in the Swedish musical theatre community, as well as a wide range of international practitioners.

There is incredible talent within Swedish musical theatre, amazing stories to tell, and passionate audiences who love the genre. However, there are also many challenges and barriers to producing new work. When shows do make it into production, they are often faced with further barriers to evolving the work beyond its first iteration, as well as difficulties transferring productions to different venues – both nationally or internationally (a Swedish musical hasn't opened on the West End since *Chess* in 1986). And, unlike in other countries, there is currently no nationwide community built to serve this genre specifically, nor a structured support system to develop and showcase new work in particular.

Will these things in mind, the symposium was organised with three main aims:

Firstly, **to create a space to bring people together** – a space where creators and institutions could meet, where ideas could be shared, where collaborations could spark, and where the unique challenges and opportunities of making new musicals could be addressed honestly and creatively.

Secondly, to look outward: **to learn from international practitioners and initiatives**, and take ideas and inspiration from the strategies that have been successful in developing new musicals overseas.

Thirdly, **to connect Sweden's emerging musical theatre voices with international collaborators and advocates**: to create an opportunity for Swedish producers, writers, composers, venues and educators to meet international guests directly and gain contacts and inspiration.



THE PROGRAMME

The day was split into two sections. The morning session featured keynote speeches and panel discussions, featuring a wide range of industry experts – including international speakers from the UK and Denmark. We heard from renowned British producer **Francesca Moody**, who reflected on her experience of growing shows from small shows to West End successes, and shared insights into alternative financing models at a time of decreased public funding for the arts. Swedish director **Mattias Palm** chaired a panel discussed on new Swedish musical theatre, featuring **Mats Andersson (GöteborgsOperan)**, **My Blomqvist Olsberg**, **Erik Fägerborn** and Danish theatre director **Thomas Bay**. The morning session also featured a conversation between **Nina Norblad (HSM)** and **James Hadley**, executive director of the **UK Musical Theatre Network**. James spoke about how UKMTN nurtures new musicals and promotes artistic excellence, partly through running innovative showcase festival **BEAM**.

The afternoon started with a musical performance by students from Artisten, before leading into an interactive group discussion, facilitated by **David White**, **David Griffith-Jones** and **Markus Vitra**. During this session, attendees were split into small groups and were tasked with responding to one of three provocations. Each group then shared their ideas with the rest of the participants.

The day concluded with a speed networking session, with attendees able to book one-to-one slots with international producers, artistic directors, and venues.

Click [here](#) to view more information about the programme.



"Gälet inspirerande dag om hur vi ska bli bättre på att samarbeta i framtagandet av nya musikaler i Sverige. Med gäster från England och en oerhört kompetent klick från svenska musikbranschen"

– Fanny Ramel, Malmö Opera



LEARNINGS

A new chapter for Swedish musical theatre may have quietly begun. Over the course of the day, artists, producers, educators, venues and creatives came together with a shared purpose: to discuss ways in which we can lower the barriers that exist for the creation of new work, and to build the infrastructure that supports it.

We gained invaluable insights and inspiration from international guests. Francesca Moody MBE challenged us as a community to think outside traditional funding models and development processes – to consider incremental approaches rather than expecting a fully fledged international hit to appear from the ether. Thomas Bay spoke of his work establishing the Fredericia Musicalteater in Denmark and encouraged openness to Nordic collaboration. James Hadley from the UK Musical Theatre Network provided a fascinating case study of a successful musical theatre showcase festival, and spoke about how festivals and network organisations can find, encourage and develop new musicals.

There was talk of the need for affordable venues, where failure can be part of the process, not the end of it. Rehearsal spaces donated by established institutions. Regular events where composers and writers can hear their work out loud. Collaborations across borders and mentorships that span the Nordics. A Swedish national platform to connect performers, writers, composers with venues and producers. More collaborations, festivals, workshops and readings to support artists and their work at all stages of development.

To capture as many of these ideas and reflections as possible, we organised three written exercises throughout the day. Attendees were invited to contribute to a "Pains & Gains" wall, where they could share their views on current challenges as well as ideas to boost the genre and establish Swedish musical theatre on an international stage. During the afternoon's group discussion, each person was asked to spend three minutes writing down reflections on paper. And finally, at the end of the day, attendees were asked to respond to a prompt: "Based on everything I've heard today, I wish...". The responses to these exercise can be downloaded below.



Throughout the day, attendees were invited to share their views on current challenges that are hindering Swedish musical theatre, as well as ideas to boost the genre and facilitate international growth.



NEXT STEPS

It was clear from the conversations during the day – and from feedback following the event – that there is a strong desire for the conversations that were started during the symposium to continue. As a first step, a mailing list has been created, which will be used to share updates and resources. If you're interested, you can sign up [here](#).

PHOTO GALLERY

