

ATG AMBASSADOR THEATRE GROUP

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MAGAZINE

OH-THE JOY

BEND IT LIKE
BECKHAM

GAMBLERS &
GANGSTERS

**GUYS &
DOLLS**

RICHARD
O'BRIEN'S
**ROCKY
HORROR
SHOW**

WARNING-
NAUGHTY
BITS!

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KEITH ALLEN
GARY KEMP
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SPECTACULAR**

Meet Torvill & Dean



MUSICAL *Magic*

**FUNNY, UPLIFTING, UNIVERSAL -
BEND IT LIKE BECKHAM IS HARD TO BEAT**

'All we're really doing is taking the story and doing it in a completely new way,' says Howard Goodall, composer of *Bend It Like Beckham: The Musical*. Fans of the smash-hit film will enjoy the show, he hopes, but more important is that the theatre production 'stands on its own two feet'. Judging from the ecstatic response of both critics and audiences since *Bend It Like Beckham* opened at the Phoenix Theatre in May, it does just that, and then some.

When director Gurinder Chadha first approached Goodall about adapting her 2002 feelgood movie about Jess' attempts to follow in the footsteps of her hero David Beckham, they agreed that the music had to be 'a completely original thing'. The composer knew barely anything about Punjabi music at that point, but threw himself into it, setting out 'to create a musical language for the piece that belongs just to this story and these people on that stage for those two and a half hours.'

Interview by Jo Caird
Photography by Ellie Kurtz
and Kevin McDaid



Howard Goodall
Jamie Campbell Bower

'ONE OF THE SUNNIEST, FUNNIEST MUSICALS IN MANY A YEAR'

DAILY EXPRESS

In some ways, Goodall's creative process was no different to that of any other musical (and the composer has written plenty, from 1984's *The Hired Man* to the more recent *Love Story*). 'You judge, what does the character need? What does the moment need? What does the drama need? And you do all that and you create all that structure,' he explains.

But along with making sure that audiences were fully invested in Jess and her friends and family as characters, Goodall had to try to 'recreate musically from scratch' the excitement of bhangra, without simply doing a pastiche.

'That was obviously going to be a big challenge but a really fun one. I don't think I've enjoyed anything as much as doing this show in my whole career.'

With the help of orchestrator Kuljit Bhamra ('the godfather of bhangra', according to Goodall), the composer dreamt up a score featuring both what we think of as traditional musical theatre instruments - piano, electric bass, guitar, violin, cello - and Indian percussion and voices.

'It's a mixture of them improvising and me saying, 'OK, now I've got the hang of this, can you try a bit of this? And that's why the whole process has been joyful because normally you don't get that. It's very rare to have that amount of creative input from everybody.'

The musical's plot has made for a more satisfying than usual creative journey too. 'Our story, which is about someone whose parents have difficulty with what she's chosen to do, it's the story of many people in our cast,' the composer reveals. 'So often those discussions in rehearsal have been very interesting, and rather emotional.'

It's this universality - trying to find your path while navigating other people's expectations - that has made *Bend It Like Beckham* a hit with such a diverse range of audiences in the West End. 'It's much more like a British high street than most theatres are,' says Goodall, who is delighted to be able to share his work on such a scale.

'I've had to write a form of music that I never would have anticipated having written. I've had to write for an audience that's quite new for me. I mean obviously in the TV world I've done it as a writer for a very broad

audience (on documentaries including *The Story of Music*), but in stage terms this is quite new territory,' he explains.

Goodall was thrilled to immerse himself in an unfamiliar culture and style of music when creating the show, and if he's done his job well,

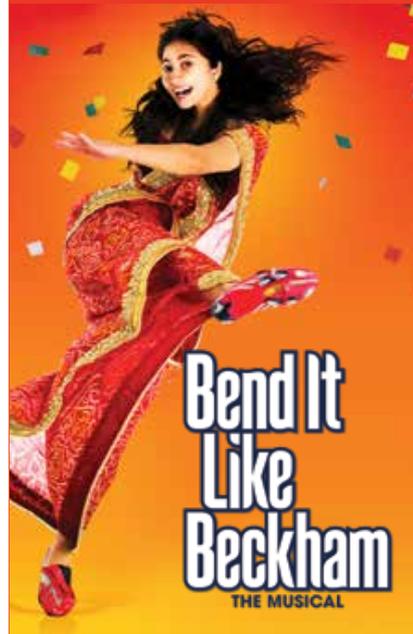
he says, audiences will experience a similar sensation.

'When people come out of *Mamma Mia!* they're smiling from one ear to the other because they know that music really well, it triggers all the buttons. We'd love it if people came out of *Bend It Like Beckham* with the same sense of joy and fun.'

Joy and fun isn't the only thing the composer wants audiences to take home with them. 'I would like them to come out thinking that cultural mix is positive,' says Goodall. 'This piece is the result of the fact that there are immigrant communities living next door to people who've been here much longer. And that the resulting thing can be joyous.' ■



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'UTTERLY UPLIFTING'
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'IRRESISTIBLE. AN
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WONDERFULLY
LIFE AFFIRMING'
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PHOENIX THEATRE
**BEND IT LIKE
BECKHAM**

Until 20 February 2016
Directed by Gurinder Chadha with choreography and musical staging by Aletta Collins. Written by Paul Mayeda Berges and Gurinder Chadha. Score by Howard Goodall, lyrics by Charles Hart and orchestrations by Howard Goodall and Kuljit Bhamra
Box Office 0844 871 7629*

Online booking at atgtickets.com

*Calls cost 7p per minute, plus your phone company's access charge, bkg fees apply.