

their selection process, the reverse has been true – the turnout at open auditions is very high, and successful auditionees feel a sense of achievement. The status of the Club is thereby enhanced, and unsuccessful applicants are encouraged to try for the next, perhaps more appropriate production, where the emphasis might be more on singing or drama rather than movement.

FAME Casting

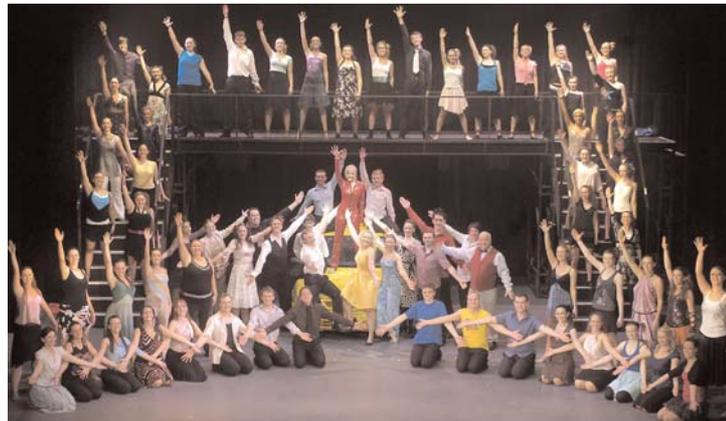
It is highly unlikely that you will be considering *Fame* if your company pre-dominantly consists of middle aged, non-dancing members.

The special requirements of *Fame* are that several of the young principal characters have to sing, dance and act to a high standard. The Apollo Players found Tyrone, in particular, a difficult role to cast. He is written as a black character, who has to be able to do rap and ballet, as well as be a strong singer and dramatic actor. In the recent Apollo production the part finally went to a white actor because of his particular performing strengths, and the poor response from black performers in the area. This will vary, depending on the population of the local community. Carmen demands a talented actress – singer - dancer, and Serena can be difficult to cast in terms of finding a young singer with the required vocal ability. The only 'older' parts are the four teachers, but these provide good character opportunities, with Miss Sherman needing to be an outstanding singer to deliver the powerful 'These Are My Children'.

REHEARSALS

The nature of the show demands a lot of energy and, as the show song says, 'Hard Work', so the Apollo found most of their 60-strong cast to be in the 16 – 25 age group. Fortunately, unlike many societies, the Apollo has never had a problem recruiting young men, and *Fame* featured over 20 young males. The secret,

paradoxically enough, is felt to be in the demanding nature of rehearsals. Weekly company rehearsals start at 7pm sharp and can go on until after 10pm, with only a short break. As time progresses, rehearsals become more frequent and principals can expect to be called out 3, 4 or even 5 times per week. *Fame* rehearsals need to start with an energetic, but fun, workout and a young cast appear to thrive on being pushed to perfect routines.



SET

In terms of the set, *Fame* only requires a basic standing set, which makes the staging and technical process much simpler. However, whatever the size of your stage and performing company, you need all the space you can get to stage the dance numbers. Scenes need to flow smoothly from one to the next and furniture needs to be kept to a minimum and be easily removed and stored.

COSTUMES

In term of costumes, care has to be taken that these do not look too modern – remember the show is set in the early 1980s, not 2006! Significant savings can be made over most other shows, as cast members can largely supply their own rehearsal-type clothing, which is all most of them will require. The only costumes needing to be sourced are graduation gowns for the emotional 'Bring On Tomorrow' scene, (which the Apollo Wardrobe Team made

themselves); optional Circus or Pierrot type costumes for 'I Want to Make Magic' and a few optional Shakespearean costumes for the Pavanne sequence.

LIGHTING

The significant additional cost the Apollo production incurred was in lighting. The Club engaged a professional Lighting Designer, which was felt to be a necessary investment given the

extended Finale. Apollo sourced its own real saloon car from a local car market. Health and Safety regulations demand that the engine and fuel tank are removed before a real vehicle can appear on stage. Once painted yellow with an illuminated taxi sign and chequered tape along the bodywork, the old banger worked a treat, and audiences went wild seeing Carmen enter through clouds of smoke, on the bonnet of the taxi, singing *Fame*. It is strange that while almost all of the songs in the stage version of *Fame* are different from those in the film and TV versions, and the characters are similar but their names have changed (e.g. Tyrone instead of Leroy), this does not seem to matter to the audience who seem to love the show, many coming back more than once.

CONCLUSION

Fame is great show to be part of, and the graduation scene is extremely emotional for both cast and audience. The story is timeless and is relevant today, dealing as it does with pertinent issues facing young people such as drug abuse, relationships, sexuality, prejudice, literacy and self worth.

Photographs: Ian Watson, Studio Scotland, Glasgow

basic static set and the large stage. Additional moving lights were brought in, which added so much to the production, in changing the mood of scenes and matching the fast paced dancing routines such as 'Dancing On the Sidewalk' and the title number. Take the Apollo word for it – don't skimp on up-to-date, modern lighting – the show demands it!

ORCHESTRA

The orchestra requirement is for only seven musicians – far less than most Broadway shows. Some Clubs try to reduce this further, but the Apollo advice is – don't cut back – use the musicians the show is written for.

UNUSUAL CHALLENGES

Staging *Fame* does require one main special effect, which everyone in the audience will be looking out for – the yellow New York taxi – which makes its appearance as part of the

The Apollo Players are honoured to have been invited by 'Father Fame', David De Silva to stage the World Premiere of the sequel to *Fame – the Musical*. *Fame Forever* will be presented at Glasgow's King's Theatre from 30 April – 5 May 2007. *Fame Forever* warps through twenty years to reveal the fate of the characters in the original musical, now all grown up, and their children who are now the students at the famed High School of the Performing Arts. Auditions are this month. For information on the production and on Apollo Players go to www.apolloplayers.com.