

## Types of Musical Numbers

*Below are the types of musical numbers you are likely to encounter within musicals and cues to some staging ideas for each.*

*From "Directing in Musical Theatre: An Essential Guide" by Joe Deer*

**Solo Ballad-** One character alone on stage dealing with a personal question or reflecting on an inner journey. Directors often stage these songs with a sense of naturalism, creating a close stylized connection to scene work. This kind of song often feels "unstaged" though it is always staged- even when the actor unconsciously does the job with you.

**Solo up-tempo or charm songs-** The up-tempo song expresses the lighter moments- often celebration, playfulness or pure performance for an audience. "Up-tempo" almost always means there is a clear and consistent rhythmic underpinning in the musical arrangement invites, or even requires, us to choreograph movement to express the character's experience.

**Duet ballad/ musical scene-** As with the solo ballad, staging a duet is really like staging a scene. We often explore romantic relationships in their tender or serious stage. The transition from realistic behavior into stylized musical behavior is usually subtle, so your audience may not even noticed it's happened.

**Duet up- tempo or charm song-** The same positive feelings we connect to solo up-temp songs often apply here. But now you have two characters- typically in a clear relationship with one another. Even when the outcome or circumstance is serious, the overall tone is usually lighter. Usually the province of comic characters in happier moments, these songs also require more physical, choreographic specificity and overly theatrical musical staging than the music scene.

**Small- group staging-** Songs with three to approximately six characters can be different than full scale musical sequences because we still maintain a sense of the individuality of every character and their relationship to each other within a small group. Even with moments of unison movement, we may see differences in execution.

**Full-scale group staging-** Virtually every musical that has a sequence that involves the entire cast onstage for climactic moments. The beginning of a show, the end of the first and second acts, and usually one or two more sections often fit this description. By sheer population alone these numbers provide spectacle value. The mass of voices and moving bodies adds impact and urgency to the event.