

# TIMEOUT

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## Perth finally meets Matilda

**SARAH McNEILL**

**Actor**, comedian, writer, composer, lyricist, musician and honorary Doctor of Letters Tim Minchin says: “The definition of success is that people notice when you fail.”

The composer and lyricist of *Matilda the Musical* is definitely a success since the stage show has now garnered more than 70 awards around the world.

But Tim, the former Perth performer who tried his hand

at everything, struggled to get an acting agent or a recording contract and kept insisting to people who wouldn't listen that he was “above average at various stuff”, has never taken success for granted.

He said his phenomenal rise to fame since winning the Edinburgh Best

Newcomer award in

2005 had been very stressful.

“Success means you're never really in the moment,” he said. “Half my brain is going, ‘this is good – this what success feels like’.

“The rest of my brain is going, ‘shut up and go and write a song, you idiot!’”

In 2010, he and English script writer Dennis Kelly were commissioned by the Royal Shakespeare Company to turn Roald Dahl's story, *Matilda*, into a musical.

Dennis said at the time: “We became aware there were lots of rules to writing musicals and that we should probably listen to them. And

then we said, ‘no, not going to’, and decided to write whatever we enjoyed.”

It is because the pair rejected the musical formula that Tim says his favourite moment in the show is *Matilda's* song, *Quiet*, in the middle of Act II.

“It's an anti second-act song in the spot where there's usually a big show-stopper number,” he said. “But this is a moment to stop the audience and find space.

“If you can make something uncommon like this, it feels like achieving a big dream.”

Tim said he was more

worried about honouring Dennis's words than turning Dahl's famed story into songs.

“I was never worried about Dahl or translating him,” Tim said.

“Dahl was utterly fundamental to my childhood and my sense of humour.

“His poetry collection, *Revoltin' Rhymes*, had the greatest impact on me.

“His balance of dark and light and his criticism of anti-education are all part of what attracted me to the [*Matilda*] text.”

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