



Michael Bingham, Edward Howard and Brett Whittingham play assassins in a new musical.

Picture: GLENN DANIELS

A fascination with assassination comes to Willi

Theatre | Stella Tzobanakis

A CONTROVERSIAL stage show about the men and women who killed or tried to kill presidents of the US, is coming to Williamstown this week.

Assassins was written by American composer and lyricist Stephen Sondheim who is known for famous scores including *Sweeney Todd* and *Follies*. From Friday, the Williamstown Musical Theatre Company will present the show which focuses on the stories

of nine individuals, including Lee Harvey Oswald and John Wilkes Booth, who either assassinated or tried to assassinate a US president.

"It's perhaps the most controversial musical ever written", says director Chris Hughes.

"It's no secret that Americans are fiercely patriotic, so writing a musical where the protagonists are all guilty of murdering or trying to murder their most revered symbol – the president – was always going to be a contentious issue.

"The show doesn't sugar-coat his-

tory but it doesn't pass judgment on the assassins either and, as a result, we get a unique look at history from both sides.

"*Assassins* challenges the popular perception of history."

Hughes said such was the sensitivity around the show in the US, its original opening was delayed due to the Gulf War and the 2001 production was pushed back three years because of September 11.

He said it was this delicacy and rareness that attracted him to the script.

Hughes said one of the finest casts ever to be assembled on a non-professional stage will bring the local show to life.

"The show is intense yet surprisingly funny," Hughes said. "It challenges the audience to think but also very entertaining."

► **Assassins, is at the Williamstown Mechanics Institute from Friday until November 28. Tickets: \$30 adults, \$27 for concession and group bookings of 12 or more. Call 1800 881 545 or go to wmtc.org.au**