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Musical Perspective: An Analysis of How Musicals Reflect Cultural Discourse

Music and Performing Arts Capstone

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Introduction

“Never let ‘em tell you who you ought to be. Just be. With dignity. Celebrate yourself triumphantly.” *Kinky Boots*, 2019

Musicals¹ are productions in film or on stage that utilize music and dance to tell a story. Music, vocals, and choreographed dancing are used along with the actor’s dialogue and blocking to create an engaging experience. Musicals have a great impact on physical, mental, and emotional perspectives for many people due to its wide appeal. If utilized well, musicals are capable of tackling deep issues. Musicals have developed and evolved to the point where they often reflect cultural discourse and issues from their time such as race, social class, and identity.

From Musical Comedy to Musical Drama

Musicals have had an extensive history with developments along the way that changed the landscape of entertainment. The concept of theatre has existed for centuries. There were many changes to the social landscape that altered the type of venue, type of audience, and eventually the type of story. Examples of musical theatre date back to the time of the Ancient Greeks during the 5th century BCE. They performed stage comedies and tragedies using music and dance. The 3rd century BCE had Roman comedies that featured song and dance with accompanying orchestration. At this time, alterations were made to theatre spaces to allow more audibility and clarity (Thorton 2). These advancements helped paved the way for later development with the use of music and dance for entertainment and technical innovations by the Romans.

¹ Within the course of this paper, I will be using the terms musical play, musical, and theatrical productions interchangeably

Theatre in the Middle Ages offered slapstick comedy along with musical performances from small performing troupes and other traveling shows. Eventually, during the 12th and 13th centuries, religious dramas emerged, which were forms of melodic praise accompanied by church chants. The performances were delivered using a combination of poetry, dialogue, and liturgical chants to tell biblical stories (Hoppin 180-181). Plays with a heavier tone such as tragedies or historical pieces were broken up with a short musical play to lighten the mood. These often included comedy, music, and dance followed by a dialogue set to popular tunes or jig afterpiece. Court masques were developed in the Tudor period. They were set apart from other plays due to the extravagance in stage and costume design. The musical sections also brought about the development of what we know as English operas (Buelow 26). Throughout the Middle Ages, the development of the theatre had a visible transition from comedic plays into more serious presentations. As shown by the transition of slapstick performances to dramas with religious themes. Court masques were important because they provided a look into the style of focusing on stage design and costuming that would ingrain itself in the structure of musicals.

To understand the development of musicals, the concept of operas must be understood. Originating in the 16th century, operas are theatrical performances where singers are involved in highly dramatic roles (Grout 1). Originating in the 17th century, comic operas were an alternative to the *opera seria* or serious opera. Comic operas were dramatic performances done in a comical nature (Grout 76). In the 18th century, the most popular forms of musical theatre were ballad operas. These operas, originating from Britain, included written lyrics for accompanying popular tunes. During the 19th century, theatre forms such as music halls and melodramas became popular. Music hall was popular in the Victorian era due to its mixture of popular songs, comedy, and special acts like juggling and wrestling. Melodramas had storylines that had a heavy appeal

to people's emotions and a concentration on dialogue (Sharma 186). Burlettas, or short comic operas, were incorporated along with melodramas, or the *opera seria*, to provide a break to feature comedy and music (Cullen 810). In Italian, the word burletta meant "little joke" (Boer 103).

The development of musical productions also began to split into two different directions. A percentage of musicals were family-friendly and wholesome while others were shown in a risqué or racially insensitive manner. In mid-19th century England, musical theatre contained adaptations of French operettas in risqué fashions. A form of musical theatre that coincided with these translations was musical burlesques. The commonality of these theatre forms was in the way they were geared towards adult audiences. This caused the creation of an opposing format: family-friendly entertainment such as the German Reed Entertainments (Sharma 191). This type of entertainment involved musical plays in a refined nature where people could safely bring their children without the risk of inappropriate elements or adult themes. The entertainment presented was gentle, intelligent, and comical. Another important development was the requirement to blend the songs organically in plays instead of halting the plot. A new ordinance in 1820 came into effect in London, restricting unlicensed theater productions to no more than six songs. It also required that each of the songs was written to be an organic part of the musical. (Cullen 810).

America in the mid-18th century saw the development of vaudeville and minstrel shows. The first English theatre piece that fits the modern form of musicals is *The Black Crook*. It premiered in New York on September 12, 1866. Another musical called *The Black Domino/Between You, Me and the Post* was the first example of a musical comedy (Jackson 197). The period saw a shift from the racially unethical presentation of vaudeville shows to productions about real issues

such as poverty in New York. This shift would allow musicals to stretch their horizons and explore different concepts.

Within American and British musicals, changes led to an increase of patronage to theatre productions. Poverty in London and New York decreased, transportation improved, and the incorporation of street lighting made traveling at night safer. The increased patronage allowed plays to run for longer periods and bring in large audiences. The family-friendly entertainment of Gilbert and Sullivan comic operas such as *H.M.S. Pinafore* and *The Mikado* set the standard for what a successful run looks like as they surpassed 500 performances in London (Sharma 190). This era in the development of musicals saw more profit that increased production values and audience appeal. The increase in the appeal was a key step in defining the impact musicals could have in later development. They had an impact on the development of musical theatre with their integration of lyrics and dialogue in making a blended story.

In the 1910s, the team of P.G. Wodehouse, Guy Bolton, and Jerome Kern created their "Princess Theatre" shows based on the works of Gilbert and Sullivan. The shows later paved the way to future productions by Kern, incorporating entertainment with a coherent story and music. The settings and characters were believable and brought humor out of their situations (Sharma 197). Kern composed music that helped to develop characterization. This differed from past musical plays because songs that were incorporated would often halt the progression of the story (Bordman 470). The influence of Wodehouse, Bolton, and Kern's Princess shows is felt to this day.

During World War I, American people found an escape in the entertainment of theatre. Kern and other composers from the Tin Pan Alley began bringing new musical styles like ragtime and jazz into theatrical productions. Many duos like the Gershwin brothers, the Shubert

brothers, and the team of Rodgers and Hart started producing shows. The transition to the twentieth century brought a change to the way musicals were presented (Sharma 199). The restrictions from the nineteenth century disappeared, allowing even more experimentation and room to flourish (Lamb 15). The new century also brought a focus to famous actors and actresses and large dancing routines. Those and the focus on popular songs came at the expense of the story told in musicals. Examples include *Sally*, *Lady Be Good*, and *Funny Face*. Oftentimes the popularity of stars such as Fred Astaire and Marilyn Miller and the songs produced overshadowed the original books that inspired these productions (Sharma 200).

Aside from musicals, shows known as revues swept the landscape with a focus on entertainment over a coherent story and message. They would include sketches and songs with little to no connection between them. One of the best-known revues is the *Ziegfeld Follies*. They frequently had grand sets and costumes, which raised production values. Musical revues became more expensive based on these features (Kenrick 145). As mentioned earlier, revues and other musical productions in America saw an increase in audience size as more people were looking for an escape from the presence of World War I. After which, musicals would start delving into deeper concepts with the whole nation as their audience.

Show Boat presented evolution in the integration of a book and a musical score from the Princess Theatre musicals. The musical found ways to explore dramatic themes using music, dialogue, movement, and its setting. Edna Ferber's novel was adapted to the stage with the lyrics from Kern and the craft of Oscar Hammerstein II (Kreuger 26). Theatre historian Gerard Bordman believes that *Show Boat* is similar to an operetta with a romantic story, set in an operetta fashion. He claims this because of its use of arioso passages, a solo vocal piece that falls between ordinary speaking patterns and an aria style. He insists that the musical depth and

seriousness of the play are set in an operetta style through the use of ariosos (Bordman 270). *Show Boat* provided a perspective of musical plays as formats for expressing social themes. As the Great Depression set in, people returned to simple escapist entertainment and light musical comedies (Bordman 470). Since the making of *Show Boat*, there have been more attempts to build off from its success.

Many shows in the 1930s continued the light-hearted style of plays in the 1920s. Although people focused on more escapist entertainment, some teams were working to build on the innovations of *Show Boat*. Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart's *I'd Rather Be Right* was a political satire with President Roosevelt being depicted by George M. Cohan (Riddle 66). Kurt Weill's *Knickerbocker Holiday* depicted the early history of New York City while satirizing the intentions of President Roosevelt. Despite the economic troubles of the decade, musicals were able to survive. This survival was thanks in part to the political satire of plays such as *Of Thee I Sing*, *I'd Rather Be Right*, and *Knickerbocker Holiday*. The sophistication of music in the works of Gershwin, Kern, Rodgers, and Weill along with the staging and a natural dialogue style showed the evolution of musical theatre from mere comedies and romance pieces to artistic productions with a message to give (Sharma 205).

Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma* was a follow-up to the innovations presented in *Show Boat*. It integrated musical theatre with a serious and cohesive plot. The songs and dances furthered the progression of the story and provided characterization and development to the characters. It also became the first "blockbuster" Broadway show, running for over 2,000 performances (Sharma 207). The musical follows the story of a farm girl and the rivalry between two suitors for her love. There's also another romance between a cowboy and his fiancée. From a glance, it may seem like a typical romantic tale, but the love triangle takes a more sinister angle

when a violent altercation ends in a character's death (Rossman). The musical also played a substantial role in illustrating the development of musical integration with books. Book musicals are musical plays where the songs and dances contribute to telling a deeper story that can evoke emotions other than laughter from the audience (Sharma 175). The revolution started by *Show Boat* and the continued innovation by *Oklahoma* showed that musical plays could display more complex themes and a grander plot. These two works helped to normalize having drama in musicals and production numbers to further the plot instead of just for pure entertainment.

Another key factor that allowed musicals to adapt to deeper themes was the inclusion of death in the plot. As evidenced earlier, musical plays in the early 1900s were made for pure entertainment. The songs that were incorporated were present to be spectacular production numbers instead of integral parts to a complex plot. The stories, if there were any, were typical romantic tales with happy endings. The characters depicted were always one or two-dimensional. Some examples include the braggart warrior, lecherous husband, and the promiscuous damsel as present in the 60s musical *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. The show-stopping songs often outlived any reference to their debut in a musical play. As World War II set in, musicals began to go through a shift. They started incorporating death in their plots. Plays like *Oklahoma*, *South Pacific*, and *Carousel* had characters die within their stories (Greenspan 155). The landscape of musicals changed, the presence of death in musicals reflected that of the losses of the war. The tone of musicals started to become serious due to their incorporation of dramatic deaths.

The concept of death can be placed in many different variations within a musical play. Death could be used to lead to an action or be the conclusion of the event. It can be presented as something that happened in the past. It can happen multiple times or it can happen once. In the

case of the theatrical piece, *Les Misérables*, the characters who die usually pass away dramatically with an operatic style. For instance, the character Javert sings an extended aria before he ends his life (Greenspan 157). The concept of death could fit almost anywhere in the narrative. The introduction of death in musicals changed their outlook and allowed musicals to tell complex stories. For instance, the musical *Rent* has the character Mimi die from the scourge of the AIDS epidemic (Greenspan 158). The tragedy was not uncommon in musical plays of the past, but the inclusion of death created an atmosphere for musicals that reflected the pain and loss of the war. This made musicals more realistic. There was more realism in musical plays of the late 1900s than the musical comedies that adorned the early 1900s because of the exploration of deeper and darker themes.

Musical Impact on Emotion

Ever since the rise of musicals such as *Oklahoma*, musical plays have gained a more refined use of pathos. By pathos, I mean the ability to appeal to and engage an audience through the stimulation of emotions. For instance, Rodgers and Hammerstein's follow-up *Carousel* provides a tale that explores a darker theme. The story involves two married New Englanders. The husband tries to provide for his unborn baby by taking part in a robbery. He ends up dying by falling on his knife. Years later, his ghost returns from heaven for one day to help his wife and daughter through their journeys (Rossman).

The ability to appeal to the audience does not stem from just the expression of emotions. Rodgers and Hammerstein also understood the need to make their characters prove their ethos (Sook 32). That's another way of saying they situated their characters within the setting by establishing the characters' interests, feelings, mannerisms, and convictions. Characters in the

musical comedies of the past were always one or two-dimensional. They were there to carry the thin veneer of a plot. They also were there to be pretty faces and present spectacular production numbers. Many characters post-*Oklahoma* had a strong sense of ethos. Their desires became the desires of their community as well as those of the audience (Sook 77). There was a need to see these characters succeed. If the characters did not succeed, it would impact the audience as much as it did them. That's why a character's death would have a great impact on how audiences felt.

Pathos and ethos are important for the current engagement of audiences, but the system is not complete without having the use of logos. Logos is the use of facts, logic, and reasoning. Logos and ethos go hand in hand for distinguishing characters. The logic of their communities and their reasoning for their behavior are important for establishing their characters. In terms of the musical, ethos is the establishment of a character; logos are the facts and reasonings that influence their behavior and character; and pathos is the emotions that are expressed by the characters as dictated by their setting. All three are essential in creating an engaging narrative. An example of logos in *Carousel* is addressed with the fact that the character Billy is unemployed. This use of reasoning leads to Billy's decision to commit a robbery to provide for his family, which leads to his untimely death. In *Carousel*, Billy was viewed in a negative light due to his mistreatment of Carrie. Regardless, his death brought about emotions that affected the community within the musical and the audience. When he came back as a ghost to be with his family he got the chance to be redeemed in the eyes of viewers (juanandonly21). The pathos of his relationship with his daughter, allowed the logos and ethos of his character to be perceived in a positive light. Although pathos can attach itself to audience members, it loses its essence if it is not complemented by ethos and logos. The ability to create an engaging narrative has also allowed musicals to tell complex stories that could add to societal discussions.

Social Commentary in Musicals

Musical plays often discussed complex themes and explored social issues through the late 20th century and into the 21st century. The concept of race has been heavily ingrained in society for centuries. The discourse of race is present in everyone's mind whether they'd like to admit it or not, especially in the United States. Many musicals had a hidden racial subtext. For example, *Show Boat* was about the relationship between two white people, but present in the musical is the concept of race relations of the time. African-Americans were depicted as downtrodden workers. There was also a need for light-skinned African-Americans to pass off as white to rise above the glass ceiling imposed by the racist society (Hoffman 32). There wasn't only a racial subtext for minorities. Often the racial subtext in musicals was in placing white people or Americans within a sphere of peace and prosperity. 1957's *The Music Man* has no discussions of race and actively avoids showing people of any other race. Regardless, the issue comes with placing the white people within the story in an idealized perfect setting. Oftentimes the settings of musicals would project the notions of the American Dream (Hoffman 92). Racial subtext can either be hidden behind the spectacle and entertainment value of musicals or blatant to the audience. Based on this notion, it is clear that musicals did not shy away from expressing real-world ideologies. Even if the creators tried to step outside the facets of the real world, the setting would find itself reflecting the current structure of society. With this theory in mind, some people sought to tackle real-world ideologies head-on and even explore modern social issues.

In 2002, *Hairspray* came to the stage in Seattle. It told a tale of a rambunctious and musically inclined teen named Tracy Turnblad and her goal to be a part of a local teenage dance show. She desires to audition for the show after a position opens up. Her mother denies her

entering because she is afraid she'll be shunned due to her larger stature. She, instead, goes to the audition with her father's permission. The producer rejects her due to her weight. She also rejects a black girl named Little Inez. Tracy also meets a black teen named Seaweed J. Stubbs who teaches her dance moves. The dance moves she's taught get her a spot on the teen dance show. After her performance, the producer of the show tries to get her kicked off. Tracy befriends more black people at school and suggests that everyone march against the station because black people are not allowed to dance on the show except for the monthly Negro Day. In the end, Tracy wins the Miss Teenage Hairspray competition after which she announces that the show will forever be racially integrated (Shankman).

As the plot illustrates, *Hairspray* tells a story of friendship and individuality. It also explores themes of freedom of expression and racial prejudice in the United States. The musical does this by making the main character's goal the integration of a popular T.V. show. The march that takes place reflects that of common civil protests during the Civil Rights movements. The musical teaches us the values of appreciating everyone and respecting what makes us unique by exploring a narrative of trying to integrate a school dance. Although the integration of the dance is easier than it was to integrate schools, it still explores the notion that everyone should be free to participate. In a society with growing civil unrest, the musical adds its perspective of race relations. The director of *Hairspray Live* stated that the musical is something that is needed to unify us during a time filled with so much hate (Villareal). In conclusion, *Hairspray* is another example of musicals that offered social commentary to the current political climate of the nation of America.

Rent is a musical set in urban Lower Manhattan, where several artists struggle to make ends meet. They all live within an apartment complex in the East Village and live under the

shadow of the AIDS/HIV epidemic. A lot of the songs and production numbers give a sense of urgency appropriate to the situation. One of the themes they explore is the virtue of not wasting time and living every moment like it's your last. Many of the main characters are already affected by AIDS in different manners. One of the characters, Mimi, sings about the desire to go out and live through the night. Through the song, she seeks to entice another main character, Roger, to go out with her. A few more members of their troupe come to join the song as they try to get Roger to leave the apartment. Roger holds himself back because of his difficulty in writing a song. His friends beckon him to let go and live in the moment with them. The tragedy of the AIDS epidemic is marked when the character, Angel, passes away from the disease. The musical explores other themes such as poverty, sexuality, and substance abuse. The main characters protest against the looming threat of rent that they were promised wouldn't be a problem. At least in the movie, it is made clear that homelessness persists around the setting. Due to the staggering rent, many people are unable to succeed given their socio-economic status. A couple of the main characters are also homosexual and take a liking to each other. In an excellent move of progressiveness, the musical gives the two characters the chance to have a duet to describe the future they can have together. One of the main characters, Mimi, is also shown to have an addiction that sends her life through a downward spiral. In Act II, she goes missing for months. When the main characters find her, she almost passes away, to their dismay. She holds on when her love interest, Roger, reprises a song they sang together (Columbus). Many musicals act as a mirror to political and social issues that are fresh in the minds of those watching.

Modern Musicals

Musicals in the 21st century have modeled themselves around creativity and the freedom of being unique. Many musicals have become cultural icons such as *Les Misérables*, *Hamilton*, *Rent*, and *Hairspray*. Although these were all great musicals that needed to have their stories told, *Hamilton* was a cultural phenomenon that revolutionized the way we look at musicals. *Hamilton* is a two-act musical that details the life of Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of America. The musical was created by Lin-Manuel Miranda. He got the inspiration from reading a book authored by Ron Chernow called *Alexander Hamilton*. The musical uses elements from many genres including hip hop, soul, R&B, and more. The show became a phenomenon and garnered critical acclaim (Ginn 10, 18).

In the beginning, Alexander Hamilton leaves his home after his father abandons him and his mother passes away. After he arrived in New York in 1776, he met Aaron Burr, John Laurens, Hercules Mulligan, and Marquis de Lafayette. They're inspired by Hamilton's passion and dedication to prove his capabilities. Hamilton's revolutionary mindset is expanded as Americans start to demand their independence from Great Britain. As the Revolutionary War starts, Hamilton catches the attention of General George Washington and he recruits Hamilton to be his right-hand man. After a long-fought war, they celebrate their victory against the British in the battle of Yorktown. They start the process of building their independent nation. Hamilton co-authors *The Federalist Papers* to support the Constitution and is appointed Secretary of the Treasury by President George Washington (Kail).

The musical tells an old story and brings new life to it that can reflect the current society. Throughout the musical, it's repeated how Hamilton is an orphan and immigrant. His competitors were baffled by his dedication and the effect he had on America. People everywhere doubted his ability to be more than what he was born into, which offers commentary on the

negative outlook on immigration today. It also goes over the tragedy of loss and how it can affect people. Most people try to keep their loved ones' memories alive no matter how much they affected their communities. Hamilton loses his mother, his friend, and his son. The deaths weigh on him, but instead of losing his resolve he tries to work harder to make their roles apparent and their legacies strong. The musical presented the idea that everyone has a shot to prove their voice matters and it's up to them whether they take their shot to make a change or throw it away.

There has also been a change to the format of musicals from corporatization. There has been a rise of conglomerates that changed the landscape of how a musical operates. Musical have always been pricey ventures since their inception. Beginning with companies like Disney, theatrical properties and venues have been bought out leading to a difference in the way they are produced. Oftentimes, there are heavy marketing campaigns to keep a show on the stage for a long period (Wollman 449). There has also been a rise in musical adaptations of films that make their way to Broadway. For instance, *Footloose*, *Saturday Night Fever*, and *The Producers* all were adapted from movies onto the stage. All gained enough popularity to be on Broadway no matter what their reception was. *Footloose* was met with mixed critical reception in 1998 due to its poor writing. Regardless, it went on for about 700 performances, thanks to its aggressive marketing (Wollman 450, 452).

The rise of musical corporatization has also led to the birth of the "megamusical." These "megamusicals," an example being *Cats*, often receive poor reviews for bad writing, bad direction, or bad musicality. They remain popular despite critical opinion due to aggressive marketing tactics from business conglomerates. (Wollman 452). The efforts of business conglomerates have made the art of the musical more sustainable. However, this impacts the creativity that musicals had before. The concept of the "megamusical" connects to the musical

comedies of the past through the fact they both provide entertainment as well as something the audience wants. Many musical comedies were made to bring people entertainment as an escape from the harshness of reality. Similarly, “megamusicals” provide audiences what they desire. They often prey upon nostalgia with examples being the adapted stage musicals of the *Lion King* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Despite this, musicals like *Hamilton* have shown that creativity still has its uncontended place within the art of musicals.

The Future of Musicals

Musicals have gone through many changes for many centuries. Back within the period of the Ancient Greeks, there are tellings of musical theatre growing as an art form. Through its development in Europe, there have been changes to the structure of musicals concerning the type of entertainment, style of the spectacle, and the format of the story being told. In America, musicals developed around the World Wars in ways that would impact modern musicals. The inclusion of death and a focus on establishing characters made for an engaging narrative that made audiences think about what they were watching. Love stories were given more edge, like in *Oklahoma!* where the typical love story had a savage rivalry between suitors that ended in someone’s death. Ever since Rodgers and Hammerstein changed the scope of how musicals can be perceived, productions such as *Hairspray*, *The Music Man*, *Rent*, and *Hamilton* have added their styles to the genre. They also provided social commentary on the state of the American political climate through the 20th and 21st centuries.

Musicals have become a cultural phenomenon that changed the way we interact with our surroundings. Watching these productions can entertain the masses as well as provide them food for thought. In a society where there are constant pressures of poverty, racism, classism, and

sexism, musicals remind us of the importance of understanding the power behind our voices and individuality. Musicals have the power to shift the perspectives of other people and ourselves. Musicals can be an inspiration or offer a prospect of an attainable future.

Works Cited

Bordman, Gerald. "Jerome David Kern: Innovator/Traditionalist." *The Musical Quarterly*, 1985, Vol. 71, No. 4, pp. 468–73.

Bordman discusses the influence of the composer Jerome David Kern and his influence on the format of musicals. He argues that Kern had the conviction to create a narrative that didn't placate people's sensitivities as evidenced by his hidden subtext in Show Boat. His focus was on the plot and coherency of musicals. This source is helpful to me because it talks about influential figures in the world of musicals.

Boer, Bertil van, and Bertil Van Boer. *Historical Dictionary of Music of the Classical Period*, Scarecrow Press, 2012. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csumb/detail.action?docID=893078>.

This book provides an extensive look on the chronology of the classic period and describes the roles of conductors, composers, performers, publishers, and patrons in shaping it. It also shows dictionary entries for musical terms, instrumentation, and other general named developments such as the symphony and opera. Overall, it takes an extensive look from 1730 to 1800 to uncover the development of classical music and how it maintained its core elements. This source is helpful to me because it defines terms in classical music.

Buelow, George J. *A History of Baroque Music*. Indiana University Press, 2004.

Buelow examines the music of the Baroque period mainly within the 17th century. He also studies the growth of the genre in other locations. For instance, a couple of chapters examine composers and genres from Russia, Croatia, and Latin America. The book reviews a variety of musical examples from all genres. This source is helpful because it also discusses the development of theatre during the Baroque period.

“Carousel the Musical - Best Version.” *YouTube*, uploaded by juanandonly21, 11 April 2019, www.youtube.com/watch?v=pXtMY6Teydg.

This is a recording of a recreation of the 1945 musical. The musical had music written by Richard Rodgers. The lyrics and book was written by Oscar Hammerstein II. It follows the story of a carousel barker named Billy Bigelow and his romance with a millworker named Julie Jordan which costs them both their jobs. Billy attempts a robbery to provide for her and their child. He loses his life and is granted a chance to revisit them as a ghost. This source is helpful to me because it provides an example for my discussion of early musicals.

Cullen, Frank. *Vaudeville, Old & New: An Encyclopedia of Variety Performers in America*. Vol. 2, Routledge, 2007.

This book references vaudeville shows in the past as well as other productions in the past. It explores burlesques, revues, and comic operas that took place in America. It also does a deep dive into the theatrical history that took place in early America. This source is helpful to me because it discusses productions and shows that were vital in the development of musicals.

Ginn, Molly. *Learning about Identity, Race, History, and Sexuality by Viewing Musical Theatre: A Social Learning Theory Perspective*, 2018. Master's Thesis. *Ann Arbor*

In this essay, Molly discusses the cultural discourses of 4 musicals. Those being Hamilton, Hairspray, Les Miserables, and Rent. Molly presents historical discourses such as race and sexuality and how these musicals reflect them. He does this through thematic analysis. He also conducted interviews with people who saw Hamilton. He seeks to analyze how the themes of these musicals influence daily interactions and societal discussions. This source helps me because he analyzes the themes of Hamilton, Rent, and Hairspray. He also discusses their relationship with important cultural discourses.

Greenspan, Charlotte. "Death Comes to the Broadway Musical." *Daedalus*, vol. 141, no. 1, 2012, pp. 154–159. www.jstor.org/stable/23240310.

In this essay, Greenspan discusses musicals in the 1940s and how they changed with the atmosphere of American culture. For the longest time, they were written to be musical comedies. Eventually, the story of musicals started to become dark with the inclusion of character deaths as a narrative piece. She explores the role death played in changing the scope and appeal of musicals. She identifies the way death is implemented and how it taps into the audience's pathos. This source will be helpful to me because it details a change in musicals in history and how the perspective of musicals and their sound changed.

Grout, Donald. *A Short History of Opera*. Columbia University Press, 2003. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csumb/detail.action?docID=909313>.

This book explores the development of opera within the 17th through the 20th centuries. It analyzes the uses of musical drama and documents the shift of its understanding. The book has received a new edition that discusses the presence of opera in the United States. This source is helpful to me because it discusses the origins of musical drama which are vital to understanding musical plays.

Hairspray, Directed by Adam Shankman, New Line Cinema, 2007.

*This is a movie adaptation of the 2002 musical. It was directed by Adam Shankman and released in July of 2007. It follows the story of a teenager named Tracy Turnblad and her efforts to be on the TV dance program, *The Corny Collins Show*. Tracy wins a spot on the show and campaigns for the show to be integrated. This source is helpful to me because it provides an example of a musical for my discussion of social change in musicals.*

Hamilton, Directed by Thomas Kail, Walt Disney Studios Motion Pictures, 2020.

This production is a filmed version of the live musical by the original Broadway cast. The musical is based on a book written by Ron Chernow. It follows the story of Alexander Hamilton and his journey to becoming one of the original founding fathers of America. As well as becoming the creator of the first national bank. In its hip-hop style it covers his coming to America during the Colonial War. Overall, it teaches audiences to maintain a resolve of greatness and a love to rise higher. This source is helpful to me because it provides an example of a modern musical that has social commentary.

Hoffman, Warren. *The Great White Way: Race and the Broadway Musical*. Rutgers University Press, 2014. ProQuest Ebook Central, <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/csumb/detail.action?docID=1637104>.

Hoffman discusses the content of musicals for the past 100 years. He presents the racial politics and subtext behind musicals and describes how they reflect the ideology of the time. He argues that the musicals have a hidden subtext that aligned with the concept of white identity in the U.S. He provides a new take on musicals such as Show Boat, Oklahoma!, West Side Story, and more. This source will be helpful to me because the author talks about how musicals are a reflection of their time period. I wish to explore how musicals changed throughout history and how their sound has been impacted.

Hoppin, Richard H. *Anthology of Medieval Music*. W.W. Norton & Company, 1978.

Hoppin explores the history of music during the Medieval period. He surveys the development of music from Christian liturgical chants to music in the Renaissance. He also seeks to analyze the music of the period and theorize its value. He also provides a perspective of medieval music in modern contemporary music. This source is helpful to me because it discusses a format that added innovation to the development of musicals.

Jackson, Kenneth T. *The Encyclopedia of New York*. Avid Reader Press / Simon & Schuster, 2020.

This book documents many events that took place in New York for the past century. It discusses everything from cultural innovations to restaurants. It also speaks on the development of Broadway in New York and its origins. This source is helpful to me because it describes a major point of development for American musicals.

Kenrick, John. *Musical Theatre: A History*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2010.

This book details the history of musical theatre and its transition from Europe to the United States. It also provides analysis of the growth of musicals and how that increased their appeal. Overall, this book provides a comprehensive history on how the art of the musical came to be. This source is helpful to me because it discusses the early development of musicals.

Kreuger, Miles. *Show Boat: the Story of a Classic American Musical*. Oxford University Press, 1977.

This book discusses the background of Rodgers and Hammerstein's musical Show Boat. It explores tales of the making of Show Boat such as friendships. He also discusses the intricacies of the stage production and the number of stars that were brought on to bring Edna Ferber's novel to life. Overall, it argues how Show Boat has remained a landmark of American musicals to this day. This source is helpful to me because it discusses an early musical that is important to my discussion.

Lamb, Andrew. "From Pinafore to Porter: United States-United Kingdom Interactions in Musical Theater, 1879–1929." *American Music*, Champaign, Ill. vol. 4, no. 1, 1986.

In this essay, Lamb discusses the musical atmosphere in the United Kingdom. She talks about musicals like Utopia Unlimited in London and The Doctor of Alcantra in Boston. She also discusses the interactions between the U.K. and the U.S. in the musical landscape. For instance, British musical comedies became popular in the U.S. in the late 1800s. This source is helpful to me because some developments of musical theatre also came from Europe.

“Oklahoma! - 1943 Restoration - Act 1.” *YouTube*, uploaded by David Rossman, 6 October 2015, www.youtube.com/watch?v=syM0JtapQ4Q.

This video shows a recreation of Rodgers and Hammerstein’s Oklahoma! It was done by the University of North Carolina School of Arts. It follows the story of a farm girl named Laurey Williams and her rivaling suitors, cowboy Curly Mclain and farmhand Jud Fry. This source is helpful to me because it provides an example for my discussion of early musicals.

Sharma, Raja. “Comedy” in *New Light-Literary Studies*. Lulu, 2011.

This book discusses the development of different types of musicals throughout the past few centuries. She includes information on musicals as well as musical figures such as Rodgers and Hammerstein. She begins her discussion by talking about the fundamentals of comedy and how that fits into the musical archetype. This source is helpful to me because it includes information about the development of musicals.

Sook, Sandra Mae. *An Analysis of the Aristotelian Rhetorical Appeals of Ethos, Logos, and Pathos in Selected Musical Plays of Rodgers and Hammerstein*. 2015. PhD dissertation. *ProQuest Dissertations & Theses*.

In this dissertation, Sook analyzes the reign of Rodgers and Hammerstein in the musical industry. She looks over three of their most influential musicals to identify their uses of pathos, ethos, and logos. She argues the importance of the three on the basis of Aristotle’s text. This

source is helpful to me because it helps me prove the use of pathos in musicals and how they engage their audiences in a new way.

Rent, Directed by Chris Columbus, Sony Pictures Releasing, 2005.

This film is an adaptation of the 1996 musical. It was based on a book written by Jonathan Larson. The premiere was in November of 2005. It follows the story of a group of impoverished youth artists who struggle to maintain their dreams in East Village of Manhattan. The musical is centered around the shadow of HIV/AIDS. This source is helpful to me because it provides an example of a musical for my discussion of social change in musicals.

Riddle, Peter. *The American Musical: History & Development*. Mosaic Press, 2003.

Riddle discusses the development of the American musical during the 19th century. It also precludes to the elements sourced from 18th century Europe. It describes early American entertainment and the composers that paved the way to musicals such as Show Boat. Overall, this book provides a comprehensive history on American musicals and their progression from the 1960's. This source is helpful to me because it provides information on the development of musicals.

Thornton, Shay. "A Wonderful Life: Educational Study Guide." *Theatre Under the Stars*. 2007.

https://web.archive.org/web/20071127051412/http://www.tuts.com/season07/wonderful_study.pdf

This source is a study guide for youth theatre. It briefly describes the meaning of musical theatre as well as a brief history of musical theatre. It also talks about the steps to creating a musical and tips to improve performing. This source is helpful to me because it discusses the origin of musicals during the Roman and Greek periods.

Villarreal, Yvonne. "A Timely 'Hairspray' Spritz; With Its Message of Racial Unity, the Live TV Musical Arrives at Just the Right Moment." *The Los Angeles Times*. 6 Dec. 2016.

Within this newspaper article, Villarreal speaks about the production of Hairspray and how it came at the right time. She talks about the protests of police brutality during the time. She speaks on the quality timing of the musical and how it offers perspective on oppression and racial inequality in America. The article also includes comments from the cast and crew. This source is helpful to me because it discusses Hairspray and its cultural impact.

Wollman, Elizabeth L. "The Economic Development of the 'New' Times Square and Its Impact on the Broadway Musical." *American Music*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2002, pp. 450–452. *JSTOR*, www.jstor.org/stable/1350153.

In this essay, Wollman discusses the influence on musicals from the Walt Disney Company becoming an investor, real-estate owner, and theater producer in New York's Time Square. She explores the prospects of corporatization and how musicals were brought back into the mainstream in the early 20th century. She also analyzes the trends that began with the increase of financial resources for Broadway productions. This source will be helpful because it describes a change in musicals and how perceptions of them changed with the rise of entertainment conglomerates.