

Musical Theatre Notes...

A musical is a stage show which incorporates dialogue,
singing and dancing.

An opera has no dialogue.

The music and the lyrics are not always written by the same person.

Some famous musical composing teams were:

Rodgers and Hammerstein

Lerner and Lowe

Webber and Rice

The dialogue of a musical is called the book.

Vaudeville was an early form of theatre which was a variety show.

Burlesque came later and was a variety show which was more adult. Burlesque started during

The Black Crook was considered to be the first American musical. It was produced in 1860. The 1800's were completed by the comic operettas of Gilbert and Sullivan. An example is Pirates of Penzance or Great Mikado.

In the 1910's American theatre was introduced to the works of Jerome Kern, George M. Cohan and Irving Berlin.

We were also entertained by the ultimate stage review: The Follies by Florenz Ziegfeld.

In the 1920's American folk music, blues and jazz began to influence the musical compositions. Show Boat by Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II is considered the most lasting hit of this decade.

In the 1930's The Great Depression did not stop Broadway, but the plays during this period were very light. Gershwin's Porgy and Bess was

the first musical to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama. One of the most loved pieces from this period is Anything Goes by Cole Porter (1934) Trivia-This is the most produced play of this decade.

In the 1940's There was an introduction to musicals that were more plot driven. The father's of American musicals Rodgers and Hammerstein Oklahoma was the first in 1943.

Trivia-the original title of this play was "Away we Go!"

In the 1950's This decade is defined by the way popular

MUSIC

Memorable hits from this decade are Guys and Dolls, The Sound of Music, Damn Yankees, and The King and I.
The big directors of this decade were: George Abbott, Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse.
The leading composers were: Frank Loesser, Rodgers + Hammerstein, Leonard Bernstein, and Lerner & Lowe.
Performers who were stars of the decade were Mary Martin and Ethel Merman, and Owen Verdon.
We are also introduced to the work of Stephen Sondheim with West Side Story the updated musical version of Shakespeare's Romeo + Juliet in 1957.
Stephen Sondheim remains the leading American composer of musical theatre.

The 1960's began with more of the same. The big hits from the early 60's were Bye, Bye Birdie, Hello Dolly and The Fantasticks. The end of the 60's introduced the rock musical with Hair in 1968.
The early 1970's brought us Jesus Christ Superstar, the first rock musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber.
Also representational of the current trends in music 1971 also brought us a second musical about Jesus, Godspell a more folksy version by Stephen Schwartz.
The later 70's gave us a new style of musical, the concept musical which focused around a theme instead of a traditional plot. Stephen Sondheim gave us Company but the most memorable concept musical of the 70's was A Chorus Line by Michael Bennett. The 70's finished up with serious musicals like Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber, also by Stephen Sondheim.

Also popular was the introduction of the elaborate "mega" musical by Andrew Lloyd Webber with Phantom of the Opera. Andrew Lloyd Webber remains the leading British composer of musicals. Important to mention is the Kander and Ebb musical Chicago which was introduced in 1975 but did not become a smash hit until revivals and the movie, much later.

In the 1980's The mega-musical continued to be popular with American audiences and the majority of the work during this time came from Andrew Lloyd Webber. These plays satisfied the public's love of special effects made popular in film. The major hits of the 80's were: Miss Saigon, Into the Woods, Starlight Express and Cats.

Trivia- "Cats" was based on the poems of T.S. Elliot.
"Miss Saigon" was inspired by the Puccini opera Madam Butterfly.
In the 1990's the costs of these mega musicals became so high that they

OF Fleet Street

were having trouble making a profit. Newer musicals required the backing of corporations such as Disney bringing us popular hits for the family like The Lion King → Taymor
Trivia- The Lion King made history for Julie ~~Day~~ more making her the first woman to win a Tony

For directing a musical
Another history making musical from this decade was RENT by Jonathan Larson. This play won a Tony Award for Best Musical as well as a Pulitzer Prize. It was based on the Puccini opera La Boheme

Trivia- Jonathan Larson died the night before the Broadway premier of his show

What is going on in the 2000's? Popular movies like Hairspray and television shows like The Addams Family are being made into musicals. There is a demand for strong comedic musicals like Spam a lot, Urine town and The Producers.

Stephen Schwartz gave us the incredibly popular Wicked. And music by popular artists are being placed into musicals. Two popular examples are Mamma Mia, Rock of Ages and Jersey Boys on Broadway today.

Other things you should know:

The person who designs the dancing for a musical is called the choreographer

A dancer who is rehearsed to be able to substitute for any dance role is called A swing

Bob Fosse was one of the most influential choreographers of American Musicals. Some signatures of his work include Broken Doll, Snaps, Isometrics, and Jazz Hands.