



MTEA

MUSICAL THEATRE
EDUCATORS' ALLIANCE

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Dear Members of the Musical Theatre Educators Alliance,

I am thrilled to address you as the newly appointed President of our esteemed organization. It is with great enthusiasm and a deep sense of responsibility that I step into this role, and I am eager to embark on a journey of collaboration, growth, and shared passion for musical theatre education.

First and foremost, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the previous leadership and to each of you for entrusting me with the honor of serving as President. I am inspired by the dedication and commitment that have defined our alliance, and I am excited about the opportunities that lie ahead.

Our community has long been a beacon of excellence in musical theatre education, fostering creativity, innovation, and the development of future industry leaders. As we collectively navigate the ever-evolving landscape of musical theatre education, I am committed to upholding and enhancing the standards of excellence that define the Musical Theatre Educators Alliance.

I would like to emphasize the crucial role our journal plays in advancing our mission. The Journal of the Musical Theatre Educators Alliance serves as a vital platform for scholarly discourse, pedagogical insights, and the exchange of ideas that propel our field forward. I encourage each member to actively engage with the journal, contribute scholarly articles, and leverage its wealth of knowledge to enhance your teaching practices.

One of my primary goals is to strengthen the bonds that unite us. I believe in the power of collaboration and open dialogue, and I encourage each member to actively participate, share insights, and contribute to the collective wisdom that makes our alliance extraordinary. Let us engage in meaningful conversations that elevate our profession and support one another in our shared mission of nurturing the next generation of musical theatre artists and educators.

In the coming months, we have an exciting lineup of events, initiatives, and collaborative projects that will further enrich our community. From workshops and conferences to resource-sharing platforms, we aim to provide valuable experiences that align with the diverse needs and aspirations of our members.

I invite you to actively participate, share your expertise, and make the most of the resources and connections within our alliance. Together, we can create an environment that fosters growth, inclusivity, and a passion for excellence in musical theatre education, with our journal serving as a cornerstone of knowledge and inspiration.

Thank you for your dedication to our shared mission, and I look forward to a thriving tenure as we continue to shape the future of musical theatre education.

Warm regards,
Jessica Humphrey



President, Musical Theatre Educators Alliance



LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

Dear MTEA Colleagues,


As all of us know, MTEA is a unique organization for numerous reasons. Unlike other academic and professional organizations, the MTEA membership is comprised of teachers from the fields of dance, theatre, and music, but also includes practitioners from all of these areas, as well as, most importantly, musical theatre. We are singers, dancers, actors, designers, directors, historians, dramaturgs, studio owners, music directors, composers, lyricists, writers, producers, administrators, and, yes, pedagogues. Creating a professional journal to serve the needs of our tenure-seeking members, while also speaking to those who are actively transforming the genre of musical theatre, both in the classroom and on stage, is an arduous task.

The last edition of the journal was produced at the beginning of the COVID outbreak, which, as we all know, has significantly changed the landscape of educating, as well as creating theatre. MTEA went through a restructuring during the pandemic, and the journal was relegated to an indefinite hiatus. Several members of the existing Journal committee insisted that the publication should be a priority for our group, especially since it provided a viable means for our tenure-seeking members to be published. I was encouraged by former President Matty Miller to take on the role of editor-in-chief, and after discussions with members of the committee, I finally decided to accept the position. To tell you the truth, the concept of taking on the journal was a little daunting, especially following the outstanding work of my predecessors Tracey Moore and Amelia Rollings.

WE ARE SINGERS, DANCERS, ACTORS, DESIGNERS, DIRECTORS,
HISTORIANS, DRAMATURGS, STUDIO OWNERS, MUSIC
DIRECTORS, COMPOSERS, LYRICISTS, WRITERS, PRODUCERS,
ADMINISTRATORS, AND, YES, PEDAGOGUES.

Since MTEA went through an organizational restructuring, we put a survey into the field to find out if the journal needed a similar transformation. Although there were a number of members calling for the journal to be primarily a scholarly, peer-reviewed publication, the majority of the responses called for the contents of the journal to stay as is—a combination of scholarly articles, practical content pertaining to all areas of pedagogy and performance, special topic pieces, interviews, book reviews, etc. The new additions to the journal include the contracting of a professional copy editor to help alleviate some of the workload of our all-volunteer editorial staff, and getting an ISSN # assigned to the journal, as well as DOI #s for the articles. Erin Wright of Wright Services, LLC has come on as our copy editor, and she has been a godsend for all of us. As for the matter of the ISSN and DOI numbers, as I write this letter, we are still waiting to hear from the Library of Congress to assign us the ISSN #. Once that is completed, we will pursue the DOI #s. This may delay our drop date for this comeback issue, but it is well worth the wait if these added measures can help bring greater academic legitimacy to this publication and its writers.

Sincerely,
Michael E. McKelvey



Editor-in-Chief, MTEA Journal

Addressing Anti-Semitism Inclusive Musical Theatre Pedagogy

MTEA FOCUS GROUP

BY GWEN WALKER,
MAX CHERNIN,
ELIANA RUBIN,
JONAH SCHWARTZ, AND
BECCA SUSKAUER

As an ongoing effort to support inclusive musical theater training within our musical theater educational community, the MTEA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee hosts a Focus Group Series. On July 29th, 2023, Vice President of the MTEA DEI Committee Gwen Walker convened a focus group to discuss rising anti-Semitism and what musical theatre educators can do to address it. Included in our discussion from our community is an established professional, an educator, a young professional, and a student currently in an academic musical theater program. The panel included:

Max Chernin (he/him) is a Brooklyn-based actor and educator who most recently appeared in *Parade* on Broadway (U/S Leo Frank) and the *Bright Star* National Tour (Max). Max also teaches at Marymount Manhattan College in New York City.

Eliana Rubin (she/they) is a queer and trans artist and educator. She is a proud employee of The Jewish Education Project, serving as their Education Manager, Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI), and Belonging. Eliana is a graduate of HUC-JIR, where she received her Master of Educational Leadership. She also received her BFA in Drama from NYU/Tisch.

Jonah Schwartz (he/him) will graduate from the Penn State Musical Theatre BFA program in 2024 and is a current intern with the Kennedy Center Social Media Impact Programming Department.

Becca Suskauer (she/her) is an actor and activist and 2022 graduate of the Penn State Musical Theatre BFA Program. She is also the founder of The Jewish Theatre Advocacy Coalition.

Gwen Walker (host—she/her) is an Assistant Professor of Voice for Musical Theatre, Theatrical Intimacy Director, and Alexander Technique Teacher at Penn State University.

The following is a transcript of our conversation.

Gwen Walker (GW): I'd like to kick off our discussion by inviting some joy into the space and asking you, "What does being Jewish mean to you?"

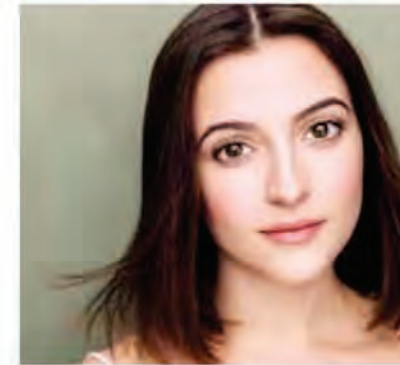
Becca Suskauer (BS): I think being Jewish can mean a lot of different things. I think of the words *Tikkun olam* which, in Hebrew, means *repairing the world*.

DEI FOCUS GROUP WEBINAR

Addressing Antisemitism - Inclusive Musical Theatre Pedagogy

SATURDAY JULY 29

10:00AM-11:00AM EST



BECCA SUSKAUER
Founder - Jewish Theatre
Advocacy Coalition



MAX CHERNIN
U/S Ben Platt in
Parade



ELIANA RUBIN
Education Manager for DEI and
Belonging at the Jewish
Education Project



JONAH SCHWARTZ
PSU MT - Kennedy Center
Social Impact Intern

What can I do to help other people? What can I do to advocate for my fellow Jewish people and for other marginalized groups? I feel like my best days lived are the ones where I am prioritizing that. Also, something that's very Jewish is asking questions, and I just like to come at things from a standpoint of curiosity and that just feels very Jewish to me.



Eliana Rubin (ER): When I think of what being Jewish means to me, I think of community. I grew up in the reform movement and my Mom is a cantor, clergy member who does musical liturgy, and anytime that I stepped foot into the synagogue or into my youth programs, I was always met with such a warm and inviting community and this feeling of safety and security and compassion. Similarly to Becca, I also love asking questions, and I also like to challenge my own thought processes to see how I can improve myself. There is this Rabbinic sage from a long time ago named Ben Bag-Bag saying, “Turn it and turn it for everything is in it,” referring to the Torah, but I think there is something inherently Jewish about turning the aspects of how we carry ourselves in the world and seeing how we can continue to grow as people.

Jonah Schwartz (JS): Part of what makes me Jewish is the idea of what I used to learn when I was a little kid in Hebrew school was that being Jewish is an activist idea—we're always asking questions about how we can better the world. I think when I was having my bar mitzvah, I was committed to this idea spoken by this ancient rabbi Hillel: “If not you, who? And if not now, when?” Which is a saying that I try to live by in all of my activist endeavors. There is this saying *Hineni* which is a sense of Jewish pride. And then one last thing is that I love—I never feel more Jewish than when I'm bickering with someone else about what it means to be Jewish. There are a million and one different ways to be Jewish, and I think that is the most Jewish thing. The way that my family in North Carolina is Jewish and the way they interact with each other is very different from my family [in Virginia] and the way we interact with each other—it's a very Jewish thing.

Max Clayton (MC): When I think about my Jewishness, I can't help but think about how I was raised, which was Unitarian Universalist, which is a very hippy-dippy abstract view of religion on the whole. And every week in Sunday School, we dissected each popular religion...In addition to that, I would go to Temple with my Jewish grandparents. And I think a lot about community, I think about family, food, gathering together, and about storytelling. With every holiday and every gathering there is always a rich, amazing story about why we have been gathering for thousands of years. There is a loving connection between the folks who identify as Jewish, and I feel a duty to continue to share those traditions regardless of how someone identifies.

GW: Thank you so very much for those shares. I thought it was very important to begin with some joy this morning as we begin our discussion. I'm just going to provide some framework for our conversation and then leave the conversation in your very capable hands. With the rise of the right in Europe and the escalation of ethnic tensions in the middle east and the increasing anonymity provided by social media platforms, anti-Semitism is again on the rise. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL) reports that anti-Semitic incidents in the United States in 2022 added up to a total of 3,697 counts of assault, harassment, and vandalism (Anti-Defamation League, 2023). This represents the largest number of incidents against Jews since tracking began decades ago. We all know about recent events that have happened in our industry.

I'd like to begin our discussion with the following question:

“What do you think are the biggest struggles that Jewish performers face right now, and what can educators do to address or alleviate them?”

BS: My personal focus is representation in our industry, specifically, what that looks like. How nuanced of a conversation that is and the lack of nuance with which the people in and out of our group discuss that representation. Jewish actors being allowed to tell stories of Jewish life, not just Jewish death. If you look at the casting of the *Marvelous Mrs. Maisel*, the recent casting of Fanny Brice in the *Funny Girl* tour vs. the Leo and Lucille Frank in *Parade* on Broadway... As educators, the conversation [that] can also start at school is: “How can we make sure Jewish students feel heard when we talk about this complicated subject?” How can we create a space where Jewish students and Jewish educators are able to discuss this without being gaslit by our peers, which is very common? I think the problem is that the conversations about representation really started in 2020, and I don't think that they ever grew to include Jewish people.

MC: I'll speak to being a part of a show that I have felt really held within my Jewishness. The approach of how we crafted the show is an approach that I would love to see practiced across the board in theater spaces—in any space. We had a sensitivity coordinator on our show who was able to help us unpack the themes in *Parade* both as a whole and then in affinity groups. During our lunch breaks, different groups would meet with her. We have a group of young adults in the show...and I felt that it was so important for them to be held and to help them dissect the history that they hadn't covered before. We had a Black affinity group within our show, which was really important because *Parade* is the intersection of racism and anti-Semitism, and we had a white affinity group. At first, I was like, “hmmm...” and then I realized that we needed a space to talk about what it felt like to inflict harm on other people. And then we had a Jewish affinity group, which was a really special time to connect with everyone who identified as Jewish in our show. That kind of space would be a wonderful addition to any educational space. There are some really hard roadblocks here in terms of considering Jewish people as a marginalized group. That's still a radical idea to some folks because they consider being Jewish the same thing as being a small part of someone's character. When it hinges on Jewishness or hinges on big ideas of death or anti-Semitism there is an inherent part of the storytelling that is important to come from a Jewish voice.

JS: As a student currently in a musical theater program, there is a general hesitance to have conversations where Jewish people are regarded as an oppressed people. I was talking to a group of professors about Jewish representation in the media and the importance of Jewish representation on stage, and we came to an obstacle where most of the professors I was speaking to were not aware that the Jewish community is an ethno-religious community. So, a lot of the hesitance that I've encountered comes from people who aren't willing to consider a community of faith a community that is oppressed because they think that our Jewishness is a choice. Our Jewishness is synonymous with our name, it is synonymous with our genetics. It is synonymous with the air that we breathe and the color of my hair—it is everything that I am. It becomes a challenge to talk about Jewish people as a historically othered people—essentially—we are not seen as a community worth this conversation because of this and that leads to a lot of harm. An example of this is that I was in a production of *Brigadoon*—there was this incredible concept for the costumes of the show—*Brigadoon* revolves around a magical village in Scotland that appears once every 100 years, and so we were thinking that because



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Why
Everyone
Should See
Broadway's
'Parade'



it's a magical village, we could have magical costumes, and these costumes can reflect the identities and cultures of the people on stage. Everyone was afforded a conversation about what they wanted to be featured on their costume. Different materials from different nations were imported. But the two Jewish members in the show, myself and the person playing my father, were not afforded any type of conversation. Instead, I walked into a tech rehearsal one day and found that a golden star of David had been sewn onto the shoulder of my wedding sash. Instead of being asked, "What part of your Jewishness would you like to reflect within your costume or would you like to at all?" Instead, I just arrived at tech rehearsal to the star on my wedding sash. It was a very pretty star, but it was right on my shoulder and the type of star which would have been worn on a Jewish person's uniform during the holocaust.

BS: That is a more overt experience of microaggression than I experienced at school. I'm so sorry that happened to you, Jonah. That experience is an example of the idea or the problems that we have with Jewish visibility. It's my belief that Jewish visibility and what it means to be Jewish or visibly Jewish seems to be in the hands of everyone who isn't Jewish. That comes from regardless of political affiliation—it comes from the right, and it comes from the left. It's interesting that in this day and age, the stereotypes of Jews controlling the world media/Hollywood/Broadway are around and thriving. It's telling that we are the only people who don't get to tell the world who we are. Or we don't get to be believed. I think there is this idea that all Jews are white—which is just not true—you're discounting a very vast part of our community of Jews of color. It also equates Jewishness to whiteness—I'm a white woman. I'm white because I'm white—I'm not white because I'm Jewish. There is this idea—especially on the left, that Jewishness is ultra-whiteness. We get racialized and people are confused about us because we have been oppressed as a race, a religion, and an ethnicity—it's very specific when all of those things come together at once. So, on the far left, we have people equating us to ultra-whiteness. And on the far right, we have people equating us to being a sub-race—to being the opposite of white. Then there are those Jews in the middle who feel the walls closing on them from all sides. At the end of the day, anti-Semitism doesn't have a party—it exists everywhere. It is this sneaky little serpent that morphs throughout time. On the opening night of *Parade*, there was a protest of Neo-Nazis outside a Broadway Theatre. And then months later when news of Fanny Brice in the *Funny Girl* tour as a non-Jewish woman—who is about to travel the country and not be loudly Jewish to the corners of the world—there are people who really need to see it. To bring it back to Jewish visibility, I'd love to get to a point where we get to be the ones who speak about Jewish visibility first—and be listened to first—before anyone else—about our own identity. I moderated a panel about Jewish identity on Broadway at BroadwayCon with Shoshana Bean, Brandon Uranowitz, my sister Talia, [and] Al Silber—it was a wonderful hour-long conversation—just tossing around ideas about Jewish representation. We all have nuanced ideas and perspectives; we disagree with each other. But the one thing we could all agree on was: That role should have been cast as a Jewish woman. That is an ethnically Jewish woman who experienced anti-Semitism for being an ethnically Jewish woman—and a visibly and culturally loud, Jewish woman. She existed, she was real, and it's contributing to Jewish erasure when we don't cast that character as a Jewish person. Before you share your opinion about what Jewishness is, maybe have a conversation with a Jewish person.

ER: Becca, that was really powerful. There is this assumption that Jewish people look like something, right? And that Jewish people are inherently seen as less than for the way that they look, for the way that they act, for the way that they pray. My brain is going to Barbra Streisand and how she was told to get a nose job and how she refused to get a nose job and now she's *Barbra Streisand* and she still has her *Jewish nose*. But this idea that people are able to co-opt our history and our oppression to get another role on their resume is really problematic. Because what it's doing is: 1) It's creating this culture of competition between performers; 2) When our educators are not facilitating these conversations with our students and with each other, it perpetuates this idea that if we ignore it, it's fine. Because the Jewish population is so small, we can just overlook it. Additionally, when we center Jewish voices, it's this balancing act of ensuring that we are making sure that Jewish people can speak on their own behalf and speak about their own experiences while also making sure that we are not putting them on a pedestal and assuming that they have all of the answers about how to solve anti-Semitism. It is not a Jewish person's responsibility to do that. It is not the responsibility of any marginalized group to solve the issues that the dominant identities have created for them. The last thing that

COURTESY OF WIKIIMAGES 2012



I will say on this, considering intersectionality—I think there is a struggle where a large part of the work that I do is working with people who are marginalized groups within the larger Jewish population—Jews of color, LGBTQ+ Jews, Jews with disabilities, Jews in interfaith relationships. Learning about the Jewish religion, culture, and history allows for more knowledge around what it means for one person to be Jewish while understanding the importance of the coalition.

GW: I am mindful that the people who will be [reading] this are musical theater educators and studio owners who are training the artists of tomorrow. What can we do to dismantle the anti-Semitic tropes of our canon, and what can we do to ensure that the things that have happened to you don't happen to the Jewish students who we teach?

JS: Let's talk about witches on stage. We have *Wicked*—we have readings of Rohl Dahl's *The Witches*. I think it's important to acknowledge that when witches are portrayed on stage we often see anti-Semitic tropes like hook noses—they are associated with demonic, evil practices. This goes all the way back to the 14th century when there was a witch craze in Eastern Europe, and Jewish people were being executed for witchcraft. Another affiliation of Jews and witches is with the pointy hat. In Hungary, in 1431 after a [convened] counsel of the government, Jews were required to wear a long, pointed cone-shaped hat—so that they could be physically othered—because they couldn't be identified in another way. I think we need to be mindful of the way we portray witches on stage because of this deep and long history of anti-Semitism in their portrayal. We could talk about Fagin from *Oliver*—Charles Dickens refers to him more often as "the Jew" than he refers to him by his name—and his big nose, his greedy nature, his luring of children to get him more money. There are a lot of characters in the canon that have an anti-Semitic history. We love to interpret that Rohl Dahl was notoriously anti-Semitic—*Matilda*, *Willy Wonka*, *James and the Giant Peach*. We could discover these things in table reads and acknowledge that they were written to inspire generations of harm, and we need to be more careful.

ER: When we are approaching pieces that have a history on stage or on screen or in literature, there is this culture around lineage. Part of the conversation needs to recognize that we can love something and also recognize that it is harmful or problematic for some communities. [If we can be] cognizant of the audiences that we are speaking to, who's doing the show, why we're doing the show, and why we're doing the show now, we can change the dialogue.

GW: I don't think we're doing the job of inviting Jewish leaders into our spaces the same way we invite leaders of color into our spaces (not to say that a Jewish leader is not a leader of color). This conversation certainly needs to be at the center of season and show selection. How can we actively combat the anti-Semitic trope of corrupt and nefarious Jewish control of the industry?

BS: I think it's so important that Jewish people are integrated into our DEI work at universities. I felt alone—like I was the only person who was reminding people to remember that Jewish people are here in these programs and need representation. People don't realize that they are participating in systems that have helped oppress Jews. College is where you really learn who you are, what your beliefs are, and how to advocate for other people. Coming from a place of empathy, listening, amplification... It's a great place to start.

JS: I would like to talk about Jewish appreciation in a BFA program. I say that I am Tevye in *Fiddler* and Tatch in *Ragtime*—that is my family's journey—where I came from to where I stand today. I think there is this idea of Jewish corruption in the industry who somehow took control of the industry, when the truth is that Jews are natural storytellers—the ways in which Jews survive completely revolve around our ability to tell stories. I think reframing the conversation about why Jews have a prominent place in our industry is really important.

BS: It's really important to listen to Jewish educators as well.

GW: I'm sorry that we have to wrap up. I am very excited to share this focus group with the world and I am grateful to all of you for sharing your valuable time and expertise with us. Closing thoughts?

MC: We are resources. I would love to be visible for the students who are going through it. This could be a part of the musical theater class. Don't think about budget or money. This is important.

BS: As long as people are coming from a place of wanting to learn, I'm happy to be a resource.

JS: I am also happy to be a resource.

ER: Remember that every Jewish experience is different, so get multiple perspectives while you are doing your research.

GW: Thank you all so very much.

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GWENDOLYN WALKER teaches in Penn State's prestigious BFA Musical Theatre program. She is an Alexander Technique Teacher, a Theatrical Intimacy Director, and a thought leader in reimagining how we can more gently train the next generation of musical theatre artists. Gwen is also the Vice President of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for the Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance.



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Aristotle's Musical Theatre History: A Poetic Approach

by Matthew Teague Miller

The world of musical theatre education has drastically changed in the past five years. What we teach and how we teach it has been turned upside-down and inside-out in just about every area of Musical Theatre Pedagogy. Between the long overdue conversations about racial inequities and our rapidly changing technology, the new world is here to stay and will no doubt continue to shift with each passing day.

Of all the areas that I teach, one that I have seen move the furthest has been Musical Theatre History.

This may be a controversial opinion, but I believe that the rapid access to information has made facts so quick to attain that it is no longer necessary to drill the type of details that my generation was forced to memorize in MT history. Yes, there are certain musical theatre facts that one needs to know. The musicals that Rodgers and Hammerstein wrote, for example, or that Sondheim won his Pulitzer for *Sunday in the Park*. Gone are the days, however, that we need to ask students to memorize that *West Side Story* opened on Broadway on September 26, 1957, at the Winter Garden Theatre because if they don't remember those details, they can look it up faster than most people my age can dig into their memory banks for the information.

The world has changed. Those types of facts are no longer necessary to memorize because we all walk around with an extension of our brains in our pocket and that information will forever be available there.

So, what **do** our students need to know? In my opinion, our students need to walk away from a musical theatre history course with two primary things.

First, they need to understand the problems of our past so that they can understand the structural issues with today's industry. Call it "Critical Race Theory of Broadway." This is the part of musical theatre history that has received much of our focus and attention recently because it has been the most pressing change that we have needed to make. I would be happy to recommend articles and books about this.

The second thing that students need to have, I have seen much less discussion surrounding, which is why I am focusing on it in this article. Our students need to leave our Musical Theatre course with an understanding of the major style trends within the musical theatre landscape, where we came from, where we have been, and where we are today. Well, I have a tool that makes this quick and easy.

The tool that I am talking about is what I call, "Musical Theatre According to Aristotle."

Before you start typing me an email, I am fully aware of the irony that I am telling you that anti-racism must be a part of musical theatre history courses while also providing you a shorthand tool to quickly explain musical theatre style trends based on a white European man's drama theory. I would offer that this is not a contradiction, but rather a strategy to use for quick hand with your students. The tools in the *Poetics* are not the only way to do script analysis, but they are the most common, and most of our students are already being taught them. In conjunction with frequent conversations about the structural exclusion and inequities (again, best outlined by others), this is a very useful tool for students to quickly understand the evolution and major style trends of musical theatre.

To wrap your head around this, you must first go back to **your** basic script analysis course when Aristotle's *Poetics* was discussed. I know... I am asking a lot of your memory, but bear with me for a little bit longer because I believe that this leap will pay dividends in the end.

To refresh your memory, according to Aristotle's *Poetics*, a play's structure can be broken into six dramatic elements that have a clear order of importance. Over time, Aristotle's elements have been interpreted in slightly different ways than the original intention. The following definitions are updated slightly to meet the evolution of theatre and suit the purposes of this teaching tip.



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The Six Elements of Drama in order of importance are:

1. **Plot.** Shakespeare said “The play is the thing,” but Aristotle says it is actually the plot. Plot refers to, simply put, the story. Directors call it the “central dramatic action.” It typically centers around the protagonist (or main character) and their journey. Whatever you call it, there is a beginning, middle and end, and a climax. According to Aristotle, this is the “soul” of any play and, thus, the most important element of drama.
2. **Character.** Who are the people in this play? What do they want? Where do they live? How do they interact with one another? The answers to these questions drive the play. The plot of *West Side Story* might be very similar to Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*, but when performed they are very different because the Jets, as boys from New York City in 1957, interact with the world very differently than the Montagues, a family in Italy in 1595. Furthermore, Aristotle says that character can expose man’s “moral purpose.” What makes the character tick is a centerpiece of a play and, according to Aristotle, is the second most important element of drama.
3. **Thought.** What Aristotle called “thought” we typically call “theme,” “moral,” “message,” or “concept” today. What is the audience left with when they leave? Sometimes the thought is explicit in a spoken line (“There’s no place like home,” in *The Wizard of Oz*), and sometimes it is more conceptual (“Where does one find home?” in *Beauty and the Beast*). While many scripts are clearly driven by “thought,” Aristotle says it is the third most important element of drama.
4. **Diction.** Whether you call it “Diction” like Aristotle, or the commonly substituted “language,” or “dialogue,” this area can be most easily described as “the words the characters use to express themselves or communicate.” It falls further down the line than character and thought because both things will affect the words a character uses. In *Oklahoma!* Ado Annie says “It ain’t so much a question of not knowin’ what to do,” because that is how someone in her region, social rank, and education would speak. That would be much different than how Henry Higgins would speak in *My Fair Lady* or how Mimi would speak in *Rent*. Character’s dialect, as well the rhythm and poetry in which they speak, drastically affects the audience’s experience and understanding of the play. Regardless of its name, Aristotle says diction falls fourth in line, in the order of importance.
5. **Melody.** Long before musical theatre and the early-American musical, music played an integral role in theatrical storytelling. This element is sometimes said to include everything the audience hears other than speech, which includes sound effects and general noise. Over time, music’s role has changed within theatre, but it has always been present and, according to Aristotle, melody is the fifth most important element of drama.
6. **Spectacle.** When the Greeks created theatre, spectacle was so unimportant that deaths and battles occurred offstage. The audience only heard about such things from the characters who talked about it after the fact. Interpreted as most everything that we see on the stage, spectacle includes sets, costumes, lights and, yes, chorus lines. According to Aristotle, while this is an essential element of drama, it is the least important of the six.

Does that sound familiar at all? I hope so. Well, if you, like me, teach at an institution where students study this in their script analysis course, the tip I am about to share is going to come very easy when you are teaching your Musical Theatre History course. If your students are **not** getting this in other classes, then a single day of covering it will suffice, and set this tool up for the rest of the course.

My tip is to use Aristotle’s Six Elements of Drama in order of importance when you are teaching Musical Theatre History. Wacky, right?

HERE’S WHAT I MEAN

First, let’s look at the major predecessors of the American Musical, Minstrel Shows, Vaudeville, Burlesque, and the Follies/Revues. All four of these had **some** of Aristotle’s elements, but none had all of them in order. Let’s look.

Minstrel Shows

Thought/Theme (let’s not talk about it)
Melody
Spectacle
Diction
Character (many used familiar archetypes)
Plot (many had a plot to the third act “sketch”)

Vaudeville

Spectacle
Diction
Melody (most)
Character (some)

Burlesque

Spectacle
Thought/Theme

Follies/Revue

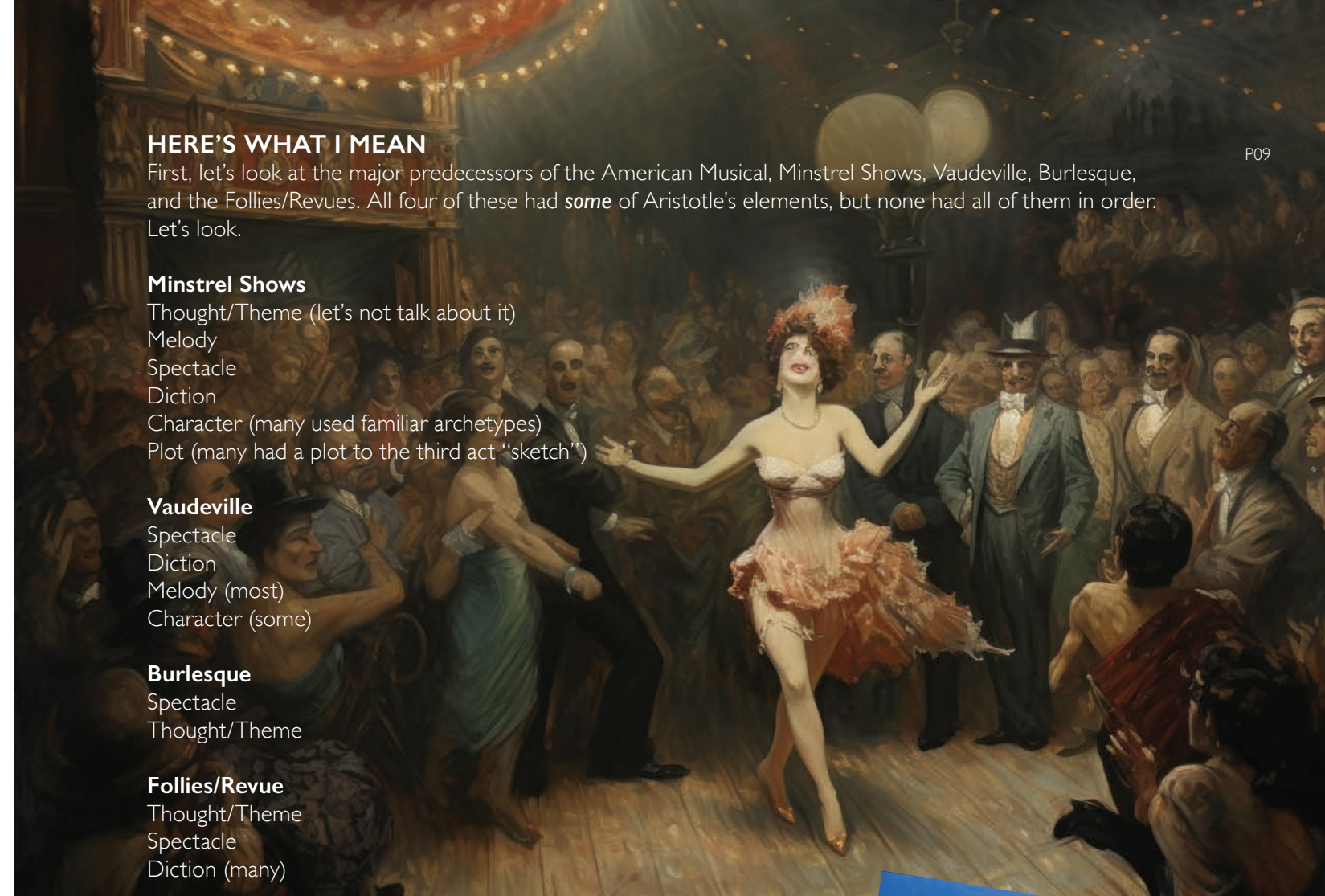
Thought/Theme
Spectacle
Diction (many)

From there we transition to the early Musicals (or Musical Comedies), when the music and dancing were tied together by a light and fluffy plot that could arguably be seen as an excuse for the songs to be showcased. Removing *My Funny Valentine* (arguably the greatest song ever written) from *Babes in Arms*, for example, would not have affected the storytelling but that storytelling was secondary to the reason that people attended. With the early musicals, all six of Aristotle’s elements were present but not found in the order of importance. They would look something like this.

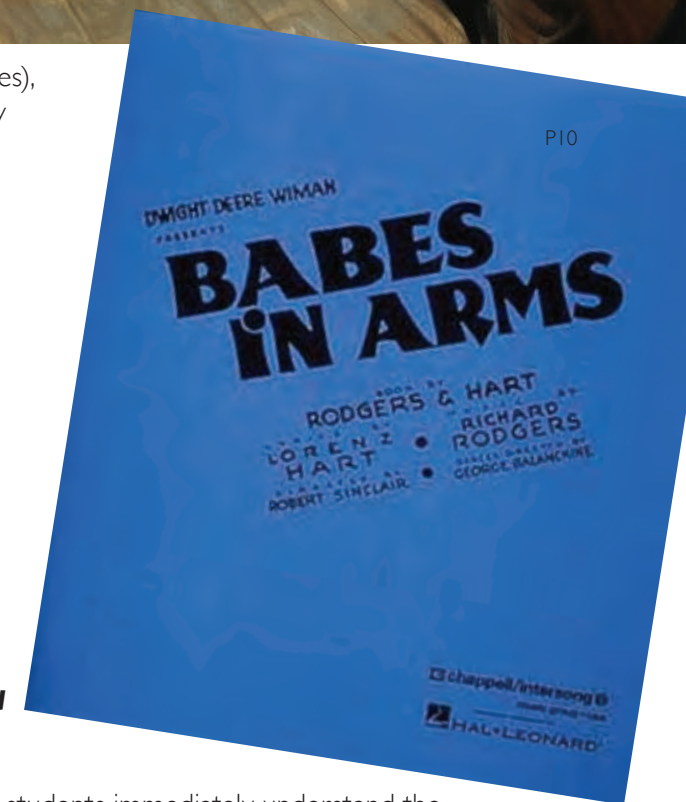
Musical Comedy

Melody
Theme
Spectacle
Character
Diction
Plot

It was not until *Oklahoma*, when all six elements were present **and** in the correct order, which was when Musical Theatre was born (we can debate if *Show Boat* was the first piece of Musical Theatre sometime... neither of us are wrong). Using this explanation, I find students immediately understand the transformation that occurred the moment *Oklahoma* opened on Broadway. When you explain this in this way, there is instant and immediate comprehension by students in the classroom.



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Likewise, it is easy to understand some of the other major style shifts and movements within Musical Theatre History. When students already understand that the presence of the Six Elements of Drama in order of importance made Musical Theatre Musical Theatre, it is very easy to explain some of the major trends of Musical Theatre styles.

The Concept Musical, for example, can appear in a variety of ways, but in its basic form, like this.

Concept Musical

Thought/Theme
Character
Diction
Melody
Spectacle
Plot (if there even is one)

Or the Mega-Musical trends spawned by the British Invasion of the 80s.

Mega Musical

Spectacle
Plot
Thought/Theme
Melody
Character
Diction

There are so many moments of instantaneous light bulbs when you use Aristotle's Six Elements of Drama in order of importance in the Musical Theatre History classroom. It is well worth your time, and absolutely serves your students and their needs. So, cancel a couple of your listening tests and those long lectures filled with facts they do not need to memorize, and use this little tip to help your students understand what makes Musical Theatre, and how it has evolved over time. And shoot me an email to let me know if it works.

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Recitativizing the Song: Empowering the Singing Actor

by Nicole Stinton



Conservatory training has relied largely on the separation of singing and acting classes (Burgess & Skilbeck, 2000, pp. 9-11). The separation of discipline-specific classes may be one reason why the singing-actor can lack authenticity in performance (Burgess & Skilbeck, 2000, pp. 111-112; Moor, 2018, p. 264). Authenticity, in this context, refers to the character being believable and where the actor appears to *not* be acting (Moor, 2018, p. 258). When learning a new song, most students start by practicing the notes and the vocal technical challenges, then investigating the meaning of the words, and only then exploring character (Lucca, 2007, p. 108). Sometimes, as many singing teachers have experienced, students resort to learning a song by listening repeatedly to a production recording. This often results in them simply copying the original (von Germeten, 2021, p. 74). Imitation in this approach is not restricted to pitch and rhythm, but typically includes the duplication of singing style, vocal quality, musical expression, etc. (Edwards & Hoch, 2018, p. 187). Whether learning a song by copying another artist's recording or by working with a teacher in a singing-specific technical class, I argue that the muscle-memory that is acquired through these isolated singing processes is so strong that, at worst, it prevents or at best, limits the actor from accessing their own creativity and imagination.

When the artist eventually starts working on the acting of the song, the previous somatisation of their singing makes it difficult for them to enable their vocal communication (their sung notes) to organically emanate from an internal (characterization) or a situational (given circumstances) need to make sound. In turn, this impedes the actor from creating an embodied and connected character, contributing to inauthenticity in performance. In order for actors to meet contemporary audiences' expectations of authenticity, believability, and truthfulness in performance (Moor, 2018, p. 257), more integrated acting and singing techniques must be included in conservatoire curriculums. Over the past year and a half, when working with acting students at the National Institute of Dramatic Art (NIDA) in Sydney, Australia, I have utilized a number of integrated singing-acting processes when working with music theatre songs. One of these is a process that I have designed which borrows from the recitative musical form and singing style of the opera genre—something I have come to term **Recitativizing the song**. This sequential process requires the actor to holistically integrate their acting and singing from the beginning of the song learning experience and, as such, positively contributes to authenticity in performance.

The Need for Integration

While many leading scholars do advocate for an integrated approach (such as Deer & Dal Vera, 2016; Kayes, 2004; Moor, 2018; Taylor, 2012; Wilson, 2011), there is a lack of definitive, practical, and systematic techniques available to actors and educators on how to do so. Many singing teachers do use embodied exercises when working with students, but these are largely relegated to individual singing instruction and are typically studied in isolation to the rest of the actor's training (Harrison & O'Bryan, 2014). Therefore, for the last year and a half when working with students at NIDA, it has been necessary for me to think creatively in order to uncover, adapt, and create new effective integrated tools. I utilize a range of integrated activities with actors across their training, such as **Monologuing the music** (see Stinton, 2018) and **Embodying the vowels**, but the focus of this article is the process of **Recitativizing the song**.

While there are different types of recitative, I have been inspired by the speech-like form of 18th century western opera. This type of recitative is unmetered, offers notation as a guide, requiring artists to be flexible with the rhythm, pitch, dynamics, tempo, and expressivity, so that their communication choices spring from the dramatic situation and that they effectively “convey the emotions behind the words” (Zeiss, 2004). This type

of opera is only one precursor to influence today's music theatre. By borrowing from that genre's recitative structure and singing style and merging it with acting processes such as Stanislavski's objectives and actions, Spolin's improvisational doing, Meisner's living truthfully and Donnellan's targeting, NIDA actors have been able to make significant positive developments in performing songs. Across a range of contemporary music theatre styles, they have been able to live more effectively within the given circumstances, even while singing, so they can stay connected with their scene partner, characterise with authenticity, and be believable for the audience. Although the term **recitative** comes from the opera genre, it was not through that theatre-with-music form that this process idea first surfaced for me. Instead, it was when watching a Universal Pictures promotional featurette for Tom Hadden's 2012 film version of *Les Misérables* online (2013).

Most musical movies today film the actors miming or singing along to pre-recorded vocal and instrumental tracks (if the latter the on-set sound is then removed in post-production). Conversely, in Hadden's production the actors sang live on set for every take, and it was their live vocals that the sound team recorded and used in the film. This meant that later, during post-production, it was the orchestra in a recording studio that needed to follow the actors' singing and not vice versa. This process ensured "that all the tempos and all the musical ideas are set through the way the actors act and perform, rather than being clinically set months before the actual shoot" (Allen, 2013). Hopper claimed that "Singing live [on film] has such a profound effect on the power and the realism of this story" (Universal Studios, 2012)."

Actor Anne Hathaway, when reflecting on the songs of her character Fantine, said that

"There seemed to be something selfish about going for the pretty version. She's devastated, she's literally at the bottom of a hole looking up and realizing she's never going to climb out of this. So, I just decided to apply the truth to the melody and see what would happen (ibid.)."

Actor Eddy Redmayne (playing Marius) watched an edit of Hathaway performing 'I Dreamed a Dream' and said, "That song, which I thought I knew pretty well, suddenly I listened to the lyrics for the first time" (ibid.). Redmayne acknowledged that it was the live recording process that "allow[ed] the spontaneity of normal film acting" (ibid.). Actor Amanda Seyfried (playing Cosette) revealed that in the live singing-acting moment "You have complete freedom, complete control. Now you hear the piano in your ears, now you are the music" (ibid.). Actor Hugh Jackman (playing Valjean) admitted that

"Singing live is daunting, but what it gives you is this freedom...I can take a little break, I can move on, I can speed it up, I can slow it down. Which means I just have to worry about acting it" (ibid.).

The "Soliloquy" excerpt that Jackman shared in the promotional video was originally written by Alain Boublil and Claude-Michel Schönberg using an operatic recitative style. Although both the second example Jackman offers in the promotional video and his final performance of it in the film include many rhythmic and melodic inaccuracies when compared with the score, from an acting perspective he is authentically connected to a rich inner life. When I compare live professional stage versions of this same song, the singing is usually of an incredibly high quality, but the acting is rarely as sophisticated. That is, the characterization seems less connected, layered, and specific when compared with Jackman's film version, and thus often appears inauthentic. Freedom, control, and spontaneity are what the *Les Misérables* film actors experienced; I wanted to transfer to live contexts at NIDA, so that our students' acting would drive their singing, enable them to integrate the two disciplines effectively, and thus help to create authenticity during performance.

Mindful of Jackman's demonstrations, I first explored with the NIDA students recitative-like sections of through-composed music theatre texts, such as excerpts of *Les Misérables*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, and *Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*, experimenting with free-timing and approximate pitch. We then applied recitative elements and principles to more lyrical, structured, and/or strictly-timed music theatre songs. We found that in this approach the actors could create multiple internal layers of characterization and then maintain access to this inner life when performing. Anecdotal feedback from students was that they were not as worried about difficult jumps in pitch (intervals) or long (sustained) notes as they had been when working with similar musical text in the past. From my perspective, it seemed that many forgot they were singing

altogether. They shared that using this integrated recitative approach certainly helped them to stay focused on their scene partner(s) or the audience as appropriate, and that their change-journey across a song was active, purposeful, and dynamic. I observed that all of this enabled authentic performance to occur. Intriguingly, although students embraced my mantra of 'sing less, act more' and thus didn't focus on their vocal technique, usually their singing quality improved and their breath-body holism became more effective than when they were focusing foremost on their vocal technique. By self-reflecting immediately after performance, they were able to acknowledge many of these changes in their vocal instrument use.

After much experimentation I developed a structured, sequential **Recitativizing the song** process of eight steps for the actor to explore and embody a song:

1. A register is composed of contiguous pitches.
2. Pitches within any given register are produced in the same physiological manner.
3. Pitches within any given register share the same basic timbre. (McCoy, 2012, p. 143)
4. Monologuing the lyrics.
5. Speaking with musical impulse.
6. Improvising the lyric.
7. Improvising on a single pitch.
8. Recitativizing with rhythm.
9. Improvising within melodic arc.
10. Recitativizing with pitch.
11. Living in the moment.



Each of the steps in this process are cumulative, whereby the experimental focus of the previous phase is

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expanded on or added to in the consecutive one. Because each step requires the actor to focus on one new component, over time they accumulate a nuanced, deep understanding of a song's lyrical and musical texts. That the titles of all eight recitativating steps start with an action-verb is intentional. This is to remind the student that **acting** is about **doing**, and though there is value in analysing and reflecting on one's discoveries, the recitativating process is designed to be experiential. Kinesthetic, somatic, embodied experimentation is a valid cognitive process that "involves a deep connection between perception and action" (Stolz, 2015, p. 476). Director and acting specialist Declan Donnellan reminds us that the senses, the body, and the imagination are all interdependent (2005, p. 9). An embodied approach to recitativating promotes an internal life-and-physicalization connection, once again paving the way for connected, authentic performance. As a fortuitous byproduct, students typically learn the song without ever having to rely on rote or imitative learning practices.

THE RECITATIVATING PROCESS

In a recent core acting skills unit, twenty-six second year NIDA students undertook a module called **Recitativating the song**. All students had already completed three semesters of spoken and sung voice training and had acquired strong vocal technique foundations through, on average, three voice classes per week. In this **Recitativating** six-week program of two classes per week, students worked with five song excerpts from music theatre works. The first, "Everything About You" from **Groundhog Day** by Tim Minchin, is stylistically and structurally similar to the western operatic recitative of the 18th century. As we experimented with the song, we also studied and drew comparisons with excerpts from Mozart's operas **Marriage of Figaro** and **The Magic Flute**. Thus, Minchin's song became a vehicle for the students to concurrently learn about theatre-with-music history, genre, form, structure, style, and the alike, as well as the recitativating acting-singing integrated technique. The other four songs we worked with are listed here in order of most to least scored vocal flexibility:

1. Excerpts of "Soliloquy" from **Les Misérables** by Claude-Michel Schönberg, Alain Boublil, and Herbert Kretzmer, which uses a recitative-like chordal cadence structure and rising monotone vocal phrasing;
2. "If I Didn't Believe in You" from **The Last Five Years** by Jason Robert Brown, which has a free **colla voce** style in the opening section and adopts speech-patterns across the piece, so that the instrumentalist's sparse chords can easily follow the elastic vocal timing of the actor;
3. "Just a Housewife" from **Working** by Craig Carnelia, which, although scored with a strict, evenly-timed instrumental part, is thin in sound texture with sparsely spaced notes in each bar. This easily allows for some elasticity by the actor in the vocal timing, whilst the instrumentalist conversely remains in time and drives the song forward; and
4. "You Can Have the TV" by Craig Carnelia, which also has a strict, constant evenly-timed instrumental part that drives forward, but is denser in sound texture than "If I Didn't Believe in You" with the inclusion of notes on and between the beats in each bar. This means that both actor and instrumentalist need to stay in-time. Therefore, from a recitativating perspective the vocalist has to be strict with the timing, while finding flexibility and range in their vocal quality, expression, etc. Some of the ways the NIDA actors found fluidity and spontaneity was by changing the way they used breath, note duration, and silence (i.e. shortening but not usually lengthening notes), dynamic range (volume), approximate pitch placement, speech qualities, etc.

Although I introduced all of these songs in the first few weeks, we then continually swapped between the texts across the term module, iteratively exploring each new recitativating process step through some or all of the songs. Which texts we used depended on the differing needs of each student: Some students were ready to work sooner with material that was stricter in the timing (i.e. songs 4 and 5) than their peers.

Step One: Monologuing the Lyrics

Renowned acting specialist Sanford Meisner said that "Acting is the ability to live truthfully under given imaginary circumstances" (1987, p. 63). One of the barriers students find to being able to live truthfully is that they are singing, because human beings rarely, if ever, switch between speech and song in everyday conversation (Jones, 2019, p. 137). Thus, this first step requires students to remove the music from the song and explore it as a spoken monologue. Monologuing the lyrics in this way is an established acting-through-song

activity (see Clark, p. 84; Craig, p. 1; Dunbar, pp. 66-67; Henson and Pickering, pp. 55-56; Kayes, p. 175; Lucca, p. 42; McWaters, pp. 49-50; Moore, pp. 160-164; Richardson, pp. 12-13; Spivey, p. 485) which helps the actor to both understand and connect with the material. This step works best if the students, where possible, have no prior knowledge of the song. Working with an unknown text can help position the piece psychologically as a monologue that is enacted, rather than a song that is sung. It also means the actors are not locked into known patterns of and expectations for the song. During this phase, drawing on the work of acting specialist and director Constantin Stanislavski, students focus on bringing the verbal text to life as truthfully as they can within a given set of circumstances. They strive to uncover the problem that their character is experiencing in this particular situation, at this point of time and in this place, so that they can then take action to solve their problem (Stanislavski, 2008, pp. 149-150). Students are encouraged to definitively answer, through research and imagination in as much detail that time will allow, important fundamental questions, including "Who am I?," "Where am I?," "What time is it?," "Why am I here?," and "What has just happened?."



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Step Two: Speaking with Musical Impulse

When singing on stage, is too easy for the actor to become passive in articulating each phrase and allow themselves to be carried forward submissively through the song by the instrumental sounds of the piano or orchestra, in a similar way that a raft floats along on a river. When this occurs, even though the actor may know their cue as to when to make the next sounds, their character often lacks a connected need to make sound. "In Stanislavsky-based training, there needs to be the connection between the mental concept of pursuing action and the physical connection to sound" (Moor, 2018, p. 264). Meisner claims that it is the actor's job to pick up the impulses in any given moment on stage (Meisner & Longwell, 1987, p. 72). Actors Christina Gutekunst and John Gillett warn that when the voice

"is not connected to the impulse of the actor when acting, if done separately, the result may be a richly vibrating and physically committed sound, but it will not communicate the experience of the actor as the character within the given circumstances—and again we hear a gap between the actor and the text (2014, p. 150)."



Internationally renowned actor Philip Quast advocates that “All acting is interrupted thought” (2022). To help the actor uncover such interruptions and impulses, in the second step, the actor actively uses the music as a prompt to propel them into their new next thought. Although the actor continues to work with the spoken lyrics, the process is slowed down considerably to enable them to focus specifically and clearly on one phrase at a time. Once they have articulated a phrase and before they speak the next, the instrumentalist plays an appropriate chord from the score for the upcoming phrase. Quast argues that “Musical theatre needs slow acting, but quick thought changes.” When singing, an actor often needs to hold a thought for longer than they would in real life because of the length of the melodic line, yet their change to a new thought is as lighting-fast as it is in reality. Students are challenged to stay completely focused on the chosen action and/or visualized image that they are associating with the current phrase, until the new chord from the piano interrupts that thought process, allowing them to be catapulted into the new phrase/thought. That is, they practice **slow acting** with their current thought and a **quick thought change** with the sound of the recitative-like chord. Synergistic with Amanda Seyfried’s (Cosette) belief that the character *is* the music, the new chord *is* the actor’s new thought, thus they draw breath **on** the chord and then immediately respond to their new impulse to speak. As such they are integrating their internal life (acting technique) with their breath-sound production (singing technique). Importantly, at no point across the recitativating process is the person playing the piano doing so simply as an accompanist or repetiteur, but rather as an instrumentalist who is integral to the song’s musical texture. In a similar way, when referring to the sounds from the piano (or orchestra), the term **accompaniment** is never used and instead we refer to **the music**. This is to reflect that the character *is* the music, all of the music, and that all the music *is* the character.

Step Three: Improvising the Lyric

Recitativating steps three, four, and six embrace improvisation as a useful tool for the actor to explore a given text,

uncover subtext, create layers of characterisation, engage the imagination, and help paint the complex inner world of the play. Improvisation in this context refers to unplanned and unscripted scene work where the actor creates original text as a route into the character they are playing (Leep, p. 140). In reality, what a person says with their words is rarely neutral and there are almost always complex intentions, meanings, and perspectives behind their vocabulary (Burton & Dimpleby, 1998, p. 24). Therefore, an actor’s given verbal text, at least partially, is almost certainly inadequate, incomplete, and/or inaccurate in fully expressing what the character is thinking, feeling, and/or experiencing. In step three, the actor goes off-script and improvises their own spoken text, striving to uncover insights about their character’s meaning, objectives, actions, obstacles, motivations, perspective, etc. In order to be successful, actors work with improvising expert Viola Spolin’s principles of embracing spontaneity and renouncing approval/disapproval (Spolin, 1963, p. 7). The actor and instrumentalist endeavour to **dialogue** together, avoiding improvising paralysis by abandoning notions of good/bad and right/wrong. The two artists bounce off each other’s verbal and musical offers, mindful that “the intuitive can only respond in immediacy—right now... Spontaneity is the moment of personal freedom when we are faced with a reality and see it, explore it and act accordingly” (ibid., p. 4). As in step two, the instrumentalist plays chords to prompt a new idea between phrases so that when the instrumentalist changes chords, the actor is propelled into a new (improvised) thought. However, this time, the instrumentalist also can use repetition of a chord to challenge the actor to expand on or dig deeper into their current idea. That is, they can keep the actor in the current moment/idea to help them investigate it more deeply and imaginatively. Whether at the beginning of or during this exercise, some actors also benefit from side-coaching questions, such as:

“What does the character want to say, but can’t/won’t?”

“What if they think of a new idea right now?”

“What are they most afraid of/inspired at this moment?”

Or simply,

“What else?”

Sometimes the actor may change thoughts without being offered a different inciting chord and then the instrumentalist usually plays catchup by adding a new chord under the actor’s speech. It is at this point the real shared exchange-dance begins; sometimes the character receives the impulse **from** the music, and sometimes they provide the impulse **for** the music. In the same way that, depending on what the actor uncovers, the new dialogue may either stay close to the realm of the original text or it may go off on a tangent, the instrumentalist’s chord range may also stay within that of the original composition, or it may diverge into new territory. In this phase, similarity or divergence is irrelevant because the artists have abandoned notions of right/wrong. Across step three, and indeed all three improvisational stages, the actor is likely to uncover more information about other Stanislavskian fundamental questions; “What do I want?”, “What must I overcome to get it?” and “How will I get it?”. In addition, they are operating **with, through, and in music**, thus strengthening their relationship with it and consolidating their integration of acting and singing. Both of these notions will help to create a rich, connected inner life that will help eventually contribute to authentic performance.

Step Four: Improvising on a Single Pitch

While the actor continues to verbally improvise in this next stage, the instrumentalist utilizes only the accurate chords of the song. Ideally some of these are offered as inciting impulses in-between verbal phrases; others follow the thought changes of the actor. The ratio of this combination is dependent, at least to some degree, on where the composer has written the chord changes within the score. The instrumentalist is at liberty to take some license with the timing of their chordal offers, while keeping within the spirit of the composition. After some exploration of spoken words and song chords, the actor is encouraged to adopt a speech-singing quality and in each phrase to use a single pitch to sing some of the words. Using bars 252 to 258 of **Les Misérables** “Soliloquy,” i.e. the “What have I done, sweet Jesus what have I done?” section (Boublil et al., 1985), is a particularly useful starting point because each of the musical phrases are already clustered on or around a single note and allow for easy pitch approximation. Given that the “Soliloquy” excerpt uses a small pitch range of the actor, the singing technique demands are relatively low. This makes working with given pitch accessible both technically, as well as psychologically, for less confident singers. It is important to note that what often surfaces at this point is resistance by some students as to the applicability of a Stanislavskian approach to our work. Some students argue that because the actor is singing, not speaking, the situation is unrealistic and



therefore realistic acting approaches cannot be effective. Most students are unaware that what has come to be known today as Stanislavski System of Acting has roots in his groundbreaking early career work with operatic performers at the Bolshoi Opera in the early 1900s:

The focus of Stanislavski's work was the marriage of truthful acting and musical interpretation, while the rest of the operatic profession was continuing on a path of beautiful singing and gesture- and pose-based acting (Hicks, 2011, pp. 19-20).

Stanislavski worked with singing actors "to combine the art of living a role with its musical form and the technique of singing" (Stanislavski & Romyantsev, 1975, p. 2). At NIDA, after much discussion and practical experimentation, once actors feel confident with improvising around a series of monotones in "Soliloquy," we apply the same principle to other non-recitative songs: The instrumentalist uses each chord from the song, while the actor improvises verbal text on or around a key note from each chord. If the actors have not already started to link their improvisational work with objective, action, and obstacle explorations, then they are side-coached to do so. They are also challenged continually to identify clues and possibilities about the emotional life of their character and their change-journey across the song.

Step Five: Recitativng with Rhythm

This is the stage when the song's actual rhythm is offered to the student. Returning to the given verbal text, the instrumentalist verbally demonstrates the rhythm, one phrase at a time on a monotone/monotone cluster. They use a single note, or close cluster of notes, chosen from a relevant chord to vocalize with a speech-singing quality, while concurrently playing that chord(s) on the piano. The actor then vocalizes the phrase back in return. For each musical phrase, this process is repeated at least several times; instrumentalist first and student second, before moving onto the consecutive phrase. However, with each repetition, a slightly different vocal interpretation is offered. Differences could include changes to breath, speech-quality, duration, silence, dynamics, emphasis, and other expressive qualities. Typically, after the first few phrases are explored in this way, the actors become proactive in their own interpretative experiments and the instrumentalist needs to only demonstrative a phrase once because the actors are likely to autonomously take control of the experimentation process in the repeats. One of the challenges that can arise at this point is that the actors get locked too quickly into their first successful interpretation. They need to be continually reminded to find the spontaneity by leaning into the areas they can change (breath, quality, duration, silence, dynamics, emphasis, etc.) and letting the acting drive their vocalisation.

In addition, side-coaching may be required to return the actors' attention to uncovering insights about character objectives, actions, obstacles, and journey across the sung monologue.

Step Six: Improvising Within the Melodic Arc

Improvisation can enable the actor to both uncover insights about the character and their situation, and help promote an embodied, connected, empowered performance. Thus, rather than simply give the actors the complete melody at this point, this step offers them just enough pitch variation information so that they can confidently and creatively improvise the rest. If actors can successfully improvise *what* they say (words), then I argue that they can also improvise *how* it is said (music). Whether singing or speaking, actors need to have access to and dexterity with their full pitch range, if they are going to thoroughly explore and effectively embrace the emotional demands of any type of text (Gutekunst & Gillett, 2014, Ch. 6). "If the pitch range is dull, meaning and intention cannot be communicated. The result sounds lifeless and cerebral" (ibid.). Moving away from monotonous pitching of the earlier stages to a more varied and dynamic pitch range here enables the actor to focus specifically on the song's changing emotional journey, while continuing to integrate the acting and singing. For many actors, this stage can be the most daunting of the recitativizing process. However, if the early steps have been thoroughly explored, then I have found that students are not merely ready but usually enthusiastic to undertake this phase. Now, using the given lyrics, the instrumentalist accurately pitches (sings) only the key words and speaks the rest, thus alternating continually between speech and song within a phrase. As previously, the actors first vocalizes back exactly what they hear. They then, in between the given pitched key words, replace the spoken words with their own improvised melody. Once again, in order to keep their options open and uncover a range of insights about each phrase, the actor is encouraged to pitch the non-key notes differently in every iteration. As the song exploration progresses, I find that the teacher needs to offer students fewer repetitions of each new phrase, as well as fewer pitched notes within each phrase, because students once again take ownership of the improvisation process. As this independence becomes stronger, the instrumentalist shifts away from using only simple chord progressions and towards playing most of the scored components of the original composition, with very flexible timing.



Step Seven: Recitativizing with Pitch

Similar to step five, the instrumentalist offers the actors accurately pitched rhythm one phrase at a time, that the students echo back. Now the experimentation shifts to changing the vocal quality, dynamics, emphasis, resonance, breath, singing style, etc., rather than alternating between speech and song. The instrumentalist is accurately playing all of the scored components of the song, yet with slight flexible timing to allow the actor some elastic push and pull. Through this phase they kinesthetically investigate why the character uses these pitches (the scored pitches), rather than any others they may previously have experimented with. Importantly, the actor is always encouraged to stay cognizant of the recitative

approach, ensuring they abandon the pursuit of a pretty sound, strive to let the acting drive the singing (i.e. sing less, act more), be spontaneous in their impulses, and avoid judgements of right/wrong.

Step Eight: Living in the Moment

Finally, the actor is ready to rehearse with the combined verbal and musical texts of the song, with strict timing, embedding all the insights discovered in the earlier steps, and live truthfully in each moment whilst singing. They allow the acting to drive the singing, always remembering to "act more, sing less". From the beginning of this phase, the instrumentalist plays the score with 100% accuracy and, if it's appropriate for the song, does so with an even, strict, forward moving sense of time. The actor is ready to go on a change-journey across the song, wrestle with layers of internal conflict, and discover each moment as it occurs authentically. The song should feel spontaneous and free both to the actor and to any scene partner(s) and be believable for the audience.

Conclusion

While NIDA is yet to graduate students who have been trained in integrated acting-singing approaches such as *Recitativizing the song*, initial feedback about the direction the conservatoire is taking from industry professionals is encouraging. For example, after watching the performances at the culmination of the *Recitativizing* module late last year, actor Philip Quast said that even though the actors were singing, "that was some of the best acting I have seen at NIDA for a long time." Broadway Musical Director David Gardos said that he has often "encouraged the actors to go as far away from the written rhythm as possible to find the most natural expression and also to reveal unexpected choices" (2022). After sharing this *Recitativizing the song* process with Gardos, his response was that it is a very useful tool, one that he will utilize when working with professional actors in the future (2022). However, given that the practice of separating singing and acting classes still dominates in conservatoire training today, change is required in the design of at least some areas of actor-training. Musical Director Kristof Van Grysperre argues that performers typically have

"the whole process backwards... The choice of words and notes in a score is entirely dictated by the character. Acting is not something that you add at the end of the learning process, instead it should be the starting point. Discovering and shaping a character begins with the opening of the score. The more we explore the [verbal] text and music, the more the character will grow. And the better we understand the character, the better [verbal] text and music will be portrayed" (Lucca on van Grysperre, 2007, p.108).

It is, of course, unreasonable to expect that the inclusion of integrated acting-singing classes will guarantee that actors will be believable and authentic in sung performance all of the time. What has become clear at NIDA, however, is that integrated approaches and techniques, can have positive impact in this area. In particular, when utilizing the *Recitativizing the song* process, students are more likely to sing with both technical ease and dramatic purpose, while remaining authentically in-character, than previously. Given that music theatre today relies on audiences suspending their disbelief and accepting that the characters in front of them are "authentic" (Cuny, 2018, pp. 7-8) teaching *through* integration, as well the process *of* integration, is a valuable tool.

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Diversity in Arts Administration...

or Lack Thereof

By Neophytos Ioannou

Arts Administration encompasses a diverse range of art forms, people, values, and cultures united by a collective mission to promote and share the arts. Due to this shared mission, it is crucial for institutions to ensure their programming, staff, and overall establishment resonate with their audiences and the social climate these viewers are experiencing. When there is a misalignment between an arts organization and its audience, whether that is through its offerings, opportunities, or internal representation, it directly affects the viewer's experience and can indirectly impact their beliefs, values, and decisions about the world around them.

With a population of approximately 8.3 million, and more than three million foreign-born residents from over 200 different countries (NYC Department of City Planning, n.d.), New York City is known as one of the most ethnically diverse cities in the United States (Silver, 2015). According to the 2022 U.S. Census Data, statistically, the city's demographics are approximately 32% White, 23% Black or African American, 14% Asian American, 0.1% Pacific Islander, 7% Two or More Races, and 29% Hispanic or Latino (U.S. Census, 2022). In an ideal and equitable world, all industries, particularly the arts and entertainment sector, would always mirror these statistics in their workforce, mission, programming, and services.

While it is, rightfully, assumed that the arts administration field and the over 1,000 cultural organizations in New York City (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2016) would represent the same diversity and demographic as the city's population, it, in fact, does not. A 2015 survey by the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs (DCLA), aimed at investigating the arts organizations throughout the five boroughs to understand how diversity is reflected in the workforce of these institutions (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2016), revealed a significant disparity. With a final data set including over 48,000 records, comprising numerous staff, board, and volunteers at various company types and sizes, the data showed that 62% of staff in cultural organizations were white non-Hispanic, while 38% represented various underrepresented racial and ethnic groups (Schonfeld & Sweeney, 2016). These statistics were quite shocking,

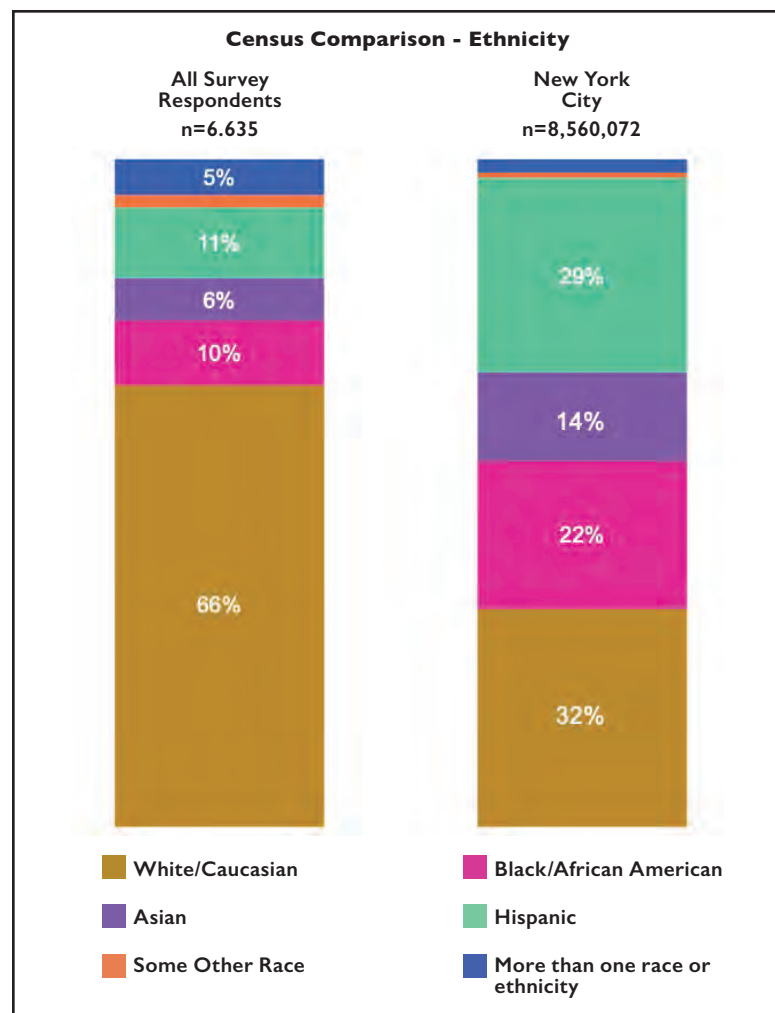


especially with the city's population being approximately 32% white, non-Hispanic or Latino and approximately 67% other racial groups (U.S. Census Bureau, 2022). The fact that the data reflects white staff nearly double their actual population percentage demonstrates the severe disproportion in the arts & entertainment industry.

This imbalance persists across all levels of staff and becomes more pronounced as one progresses to senior and executive positions. The DCLA data shows that 55% of junior staff were white, increasing to 68% of mid-level employees, and a shocking 74% of senior staff being white. The fact that three-quarters of the people at the highest level of arts administrators are white, means that there is a severe lack of representation in these decision-making rooms (Schonfeld, & Sweeney, 2016).

When comparing the DCLA data with the 2022 U.S. Census data of New York City, the differences further illustrate the lack of representation. The DCLA report shows Black or African Americans constituting 15% of arts administrators, compared to their 23% population representation in New York City. Asian American administrators represent around 7% of all staff, whereas they make up 14% of the city's residents. Perhaps most shockingly, Hispanics hold only about 10% of positions in arts organizations, despite constituting nearly 30% of the city's population. The numbers expose a severe lack of representation and diversity in the Arts & Entertainment industry in New York City and illustrate a disconnect between the arts organizations and the society it is supposed to support (Schonfeld, & Sweeney, 2016; U.S. Census Bureau, 2022).

FIGURE 2.



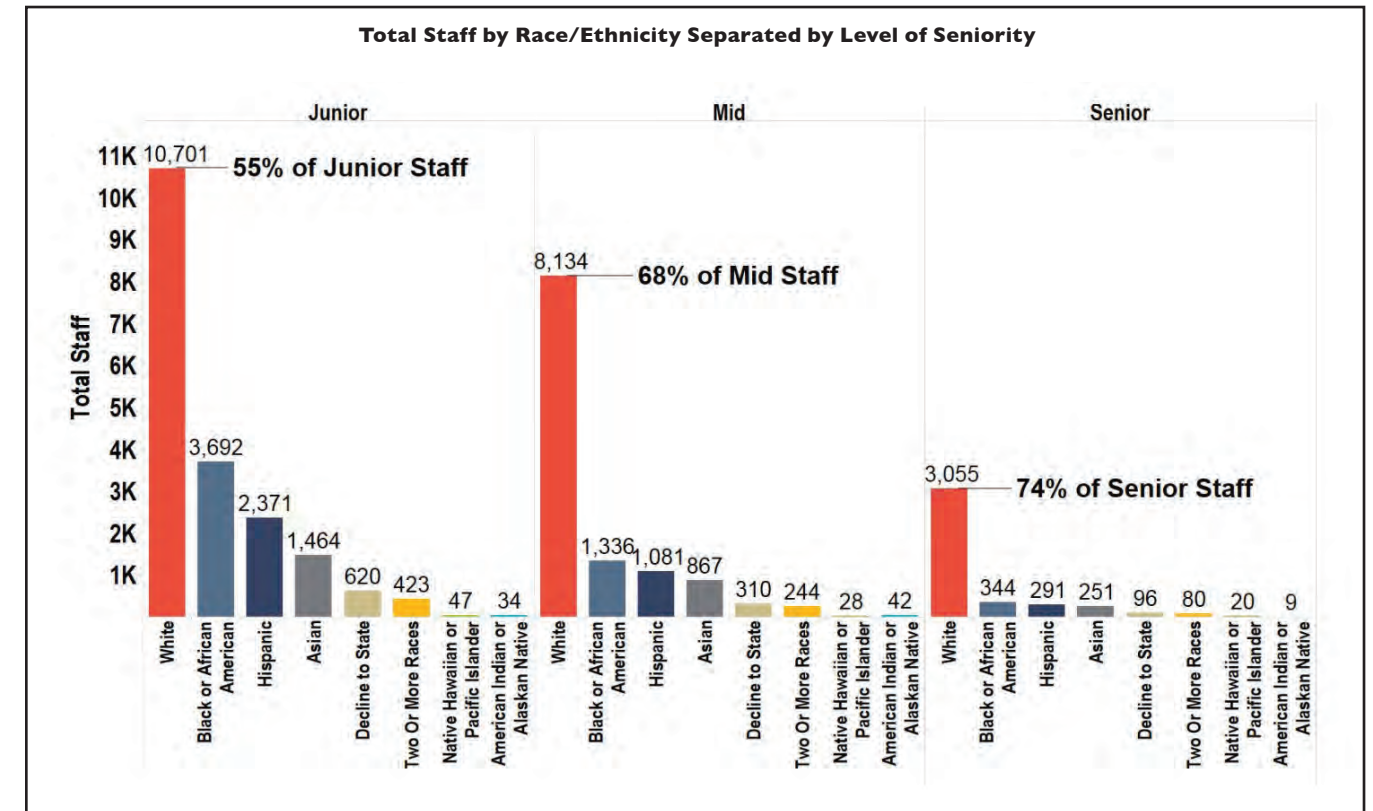
In FIG.2 we show a breakdown of the racial and ethnic heritage of study respondents compared with that of new York City residents overall. Looking at NYC DCLA organizations represented in this study, a high share (66%) of cultural workers identify as White (non-Hispanic), compared to just 32% of New York City's population. In contrast, Hispanics and Blacks/African Americans are underrepresented—10% of cultural workers identify as Black/African American, compared to 22% of the city's population, 11% identify as Hispanic, compared to 29% of city residents; and 6% identify as Asian, compared to 14% of city residents.

The 2015 DCLA data clearly demonstrates the need for arts and cultural institutions to re-examine the diversity of their workforce. Unfortunately, the 2019 Workforce Demographics Pilot Study further underscores the need for change. White individuals still dominate the arts workforce, accounting for 66% of positions (SMU DataArts, 2019, p. 3). In addition to this, Hispanics, African Americans, and Asian Americans are all still underrepresented; 11% of Hispanic arts organization employees compared to the 10% in the 2015 DCLA data, the 6% of Asian Americans in the 2019 study versus the 7% in 2015 report, and the most surprising drop of representation, the 10% of African American arts organization employees in the 2019 study, contrasting with the 15% of employees in the 2015 DCLA data (SMU DataArts, 2019, p. 3).

Another point this more recent data touches upon is the notion of demonstrating the kinds of work that people of various races perform in these arts organizations. The statistics reflect that service personnel, such as security, are primarily people of color (71%, compared

to 20% of white employees, with 37% of employees being African American alone), while executive roles and board positions are 68-70% non-Hispanic, white (SMU DataArts, 2019, p. 11). This evidence, therefore, not only questions the lack of diversity in arts institutions but also how they are truly represented within the organizations and the type of work they perform. Ultimately, this report portrays how Arts Administration is, still, not progressing, and its stunted growth is directly affecting the entire industry.

FIGURE 14..



As positions move from junior to senior the total number of staff shrinks. Notice in FIG. 14 how the bars representing minorities flatten out from left to right. Positions become significantly more white non-Hispanic as they become more senior: 55% are in junior positions, 68% in mid-level positions, and 74% in senior roles.

to 20% of white employees, with 37% of employees being African American alone), while executive roles and board positions are 68-70% non-Hispanic, white (SMU DataArts, 2019, p. 11). This evidence, therefore, not only questions the lack of diversity in arts institutions but also how they are truly represented within the organizations and the type of work they perform. Ultimately, this report portrays how Arts Administration is, still, not progressing, and its stunted growth is directly affecting the entire industry.

Recognizing the blatant lack of diversity in the field of Arts Administration, we must delve deeper into the questions of why this underrepresentation exists and how we can foster more diversity, equity, and inclusion in arts organizations. This is particularly crucial in New York City, one of the most diverse cities in the country. One possible reason for this disparity in arts organizations is the unequal access to arts education in marginalized communities. A study performed by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) titled, "Arts Education in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools," reported that Hispanic students, despite being the largest minority group in the public school system, have fewer opportunities to obtain an arts education, A 2008 study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) revealed that only 26% of Hispanics ages 18-24 reported receiving any form of arts education; a striking contrast to the 59% of their Caucasian counterparts (Mellander, 2017). These statistics, therefore, demonstrate that marginalized communities in the U.S. are already set up for a significant deficit in career prospects in arts administration and opportunities in the arts and entertainment industry, solely based on the inequitable education system established in our society.

Another factor for the evident lack of representation in the current state of Arts Administration in New York City is the institutional practices and policies of arts organizations. Ultimately, it is up to senior and executive-level staff to critically assess their organizations both internally, through their staffing and employment opportunities, and externally, through their programming and services. The statistics illustrate a severe lack

of representation and these arts and cultural institutions must create more opportunities and advocate for a more diverse, multicultural, and inclusive work environment. Arts organizations should examine their hiring practices to ensure an equitable process. They should provide programs and resources that support all employees in order to combat the current lack of representation. By authentically representing all racial and ethnic groups, arts administrators can foster inclusive conversations and effectively spread the much-needed, progressive change to the future of the field.

Arts organizations looking to create a more diverse staff can look to the innovative work being done at The Telsey Office, one of the industry's top casting directors, with their innovative program the Miranda Casting Fellowship. Established in 2021, the fellowship provides professional development and training opportunities for individuals who are from historically underrepresented groups who are interested in casting by establishing a two-year, full-time, salaried position (The Telsey Office, 2023). Through the financial support of both The Telsey Office and Lin-Manuel Miranda's Miranda Family Fund, this innovative program breaks down barriers, particularly for BIPOC and marginalized communities, by equipping them with the professional skills and networking opportunities needed to excel in the field. The creation of this fellowship illustrates how cultural institutions can proactively begin changing their companies' lack of representation by offering opportunities that provide individuals from marginalized communities the tools they need to become innovative arts leaders and, ultimately, bring a more equitable and inclusive industry.

While being celebrated for its rich cultural and ethnic diversity, New York City arts organizations do not adequately represent the community they serve. Whether this discrepancy stems from a lack of access to arts education in marginalized communities or is a result of inequitable hiring practices at major arts and cultural organizations, this cycle must end. With both older and newer data reflecting the same lack of diversity, equity, and inclusion, cultural institutions are facing identity crises that are only further dividing the gap between

audiences and the New York City arts organizations. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of arts administrators to contemplate the present processes and statistics at their establishments and assess what can be improved to conclusively reflect diverse, equitable, and inclusive representation in the field to bring progressive growth to the arts administration industry.

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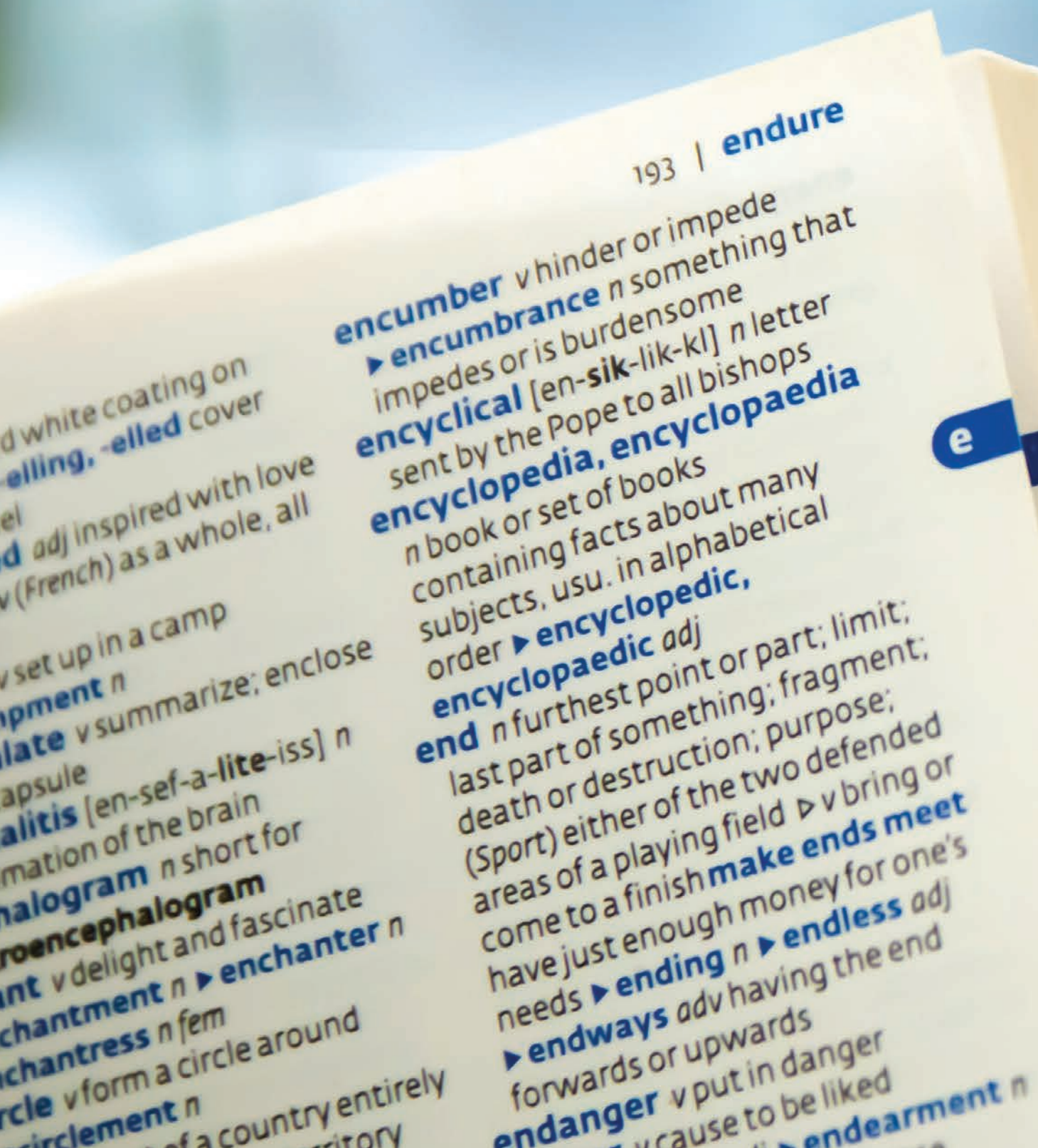
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Introducing MTEA Voice and The Development of a Musical Theatre Singing Voice Glossary: Registration.

Dale Cox Ph.D., Raymond Sage, and Joseph Mason



This article has a dual purpose: first, to introduce the Musical Theatre Educators Alliance (MTEA) membership at large to MTEA Voice, and second, to present a user-friendly initial glossary of singing terms for musical theatre educators and performers. MTEA Voice is a collective of musical theatre voice educators who are members of MTEA focused on teaching musical theatre singing. Historically, voice teachers have met and exchanged pedagogical information through larger organizations which work within many singing genres. Prior to the 2018 conference in New York, Raymond Sage (Penn State University) contacted the MTEA Executive Committee about the possibility of establishing a specialist group of musical theatre voice teachers. The goal in creating MTEA Voice was to develop a group focused solely on styles of singing found in musical theatre without requiring constant comparison with or positioning towards other genres. The Executive Committee approved this idea, and a meeting was held at the 2019 New York conference with strong support from the MTEA membership involved with voice teaching.

This inaugural gathering of what was to become MTEA Voice was followed by a dedicated MTEA Voice half-day conference in San Diego (2020). Expressions of interest in creating an Advisory Board were sent out to MTEA members who attended the New York conference. Members who responded were appointed to the initial MTEA Voice Advisory Board. Founding members include Raymond Sage (Chair), Dale Cox (Vice-Chair), Joseph Mason (Secretary), Steven Chicurel-Stein, Edrie Means Weekly, Corinne Ness, Gwen Walker, and Amanda Wansa Morgan. More recent appointees are Melissa Foster and Deonté Warren. MTEA Voice believes that musical theatre voice performance, synthesized as it must be with acting and dance, is a specific artform with its own unique requirements in terms of technique, style considerations, skill acquisition, and stamina.

Feedback from the MTEA Voice membership in New York and San Diego indicated the desire for a highly accessible user-friendly glossary for teachers, students, music directors, coaches, and directors, and in rehearsal rooms. MTEA Voice members were specifically interested in clarification of terms that may be misused, misconstrued, or confusing to collaborators in the industry and educational contexts. The initial glossary provided here is intended to be a working document and resource for all members of MTEA. The hope is that many more contributors will add definitions and descriptions, making this a fluid, living document representing the most relevant and up to date practices and research.

MTEA Voice hopes that we, as educators, can help each other navigate the complexity of styles associated with our artform using the best research available, drawing on the skills, experience, and industry knowledge of our members in order to remain current and address the ever-evolving requirements of the industry. The goal of this article is to promote further discussion and inquiry in a collaborative and cooperative spirit.

The terms that MTEA Voice members considered requiring most clarification included those related to registration, the singing styles of legit and belt, and speech-style diction for musical theatre singing. The following definitions include an introductory statement, followed by more detailed explanations, which may include an historical context. Links to examples representative of the term discussed are also provided. The authors note that the examples provided are purely perceptual in nature, highly subjective, and may be contested by the reader, or indeed, the performer in question. In particular, singers and teachers may perceive a sung sound in any particular moment to be a different registrational adjustment than the term accorded to the exact same sound by another listener. Registration terminology is a notoriously contested ground in voice pedagogy—indeed, recent literature referred to registration in singing as “The Snake Pit of Voice Pedagogy” (Herbst, 2020; Herbst, 2021).

However complex registration may be, the fact remains that it is a central pedagogical issue in the voice studio and fundamental to understanding style parameters in musical theatre singing (Hall, 2013, p. 123). At the risk of over-simplifying registration, we have tried to provide our membership with a document which might be useful when discussing these issues with singers, other teachers, and other discipline specialists. The MTEA Voice Advisory Board look forward to discussing these examples with the membership as we continue to develop this glossary.

REGISTRATION

MTEA Voice consider a voice register as a group of pitches or notes that has the same vocal production, quality, or texture. MTEA Voice considers the terms of most commonly occurring registrational events as being chest, head/falsetto, and a perceived co-ordination between the two—commonly referred to as mix. Registration involves both physiological events and acoustic strategies (Bozeman, 2013, p.104) which are highly influenced by the individual performer's physiology and ability (LeBorgne and Rosenberg, 2019, p. 123). Registration has traditionally been a highly controversial area within voice pedagogy due to differences in classification based on historical usage, various teaching methods, proprioception, psychoacoustic perception, understandings of laryngeal physiological processes, and acoustic considerations (Herbst, 2020, p. 176). Terminology can vary between voice teachers, voice scientists, and speech pathologists (Hoch & Sandage, 2017, p. 647). Additionally, differences in voice production between classical, musical theatre, and other commercial styles of singing may involve specific registrational negotiations which currently have limited empirical studies for support. While acknowledging these controversies, the authors have provided a definition, a brief overview of the literature concerning registration, and audio examples of each registrational sound below.

Registration in voice pedagogy and research: a brief overview.

The authors recognize that there is significant research into the physiological and acoustic elements of registration in singing; however, much of the literature regarding registration focuses on classical voice production. Here we provide a brief, and by no means definitive, overview of the general literature surrounding voice registration followed by an overview of research into registration in musical theatre singing.

Examinations of the definitions of registration have historically begun with Garcia's 1841 definition:

By the word register we mean a series of consecutive and homogeneous tones going from low to high, produced by the same mechanical principle, and whose nature differs essentially from another series of tones equally consecutive and homogeneous produced by another mechanical principle. All the tones belonging to the same register are consequently of the same nature, whatever otherwise may have been the modifications of timbre or of the force to which one subjects them. (Garcia, 1841/1984, p. xli)

More recently, McCoy wrote:

1. A register is composed of contiguous pitches.
2. Pitches within any given register are produced in the same physiological manner.
3. Pitches within any given register share the same basic timbre. (McCoy, 2012, p. 143)

Thurman et al. proposed a science-based theory of registrational phenomena in the singing voice promoting five vocal registers—pulse, lower, upper, falsetto/flute and whistle (Thurman et al., 2004, pp. 1-64). Roubeau et al. suggested that there are four **laryngeal mechanisms** (physiological activities) present during phonation (making sound) from the lowest pitches to highest pitches: M0 (fry or pulse), M1 (chest, heavy, thick), M2 (falsetto, thin, light, head, loft), and M3 (whistle) (Roubeau et al., 2009, pp. 436-437). In addition to these mechanisms, the authors comment that mix registration is M1 in lower-voiced singers and M2 in higher-voiced singers.¹ Research has also found that there were distinct sub-registers of chest mix and head mix, with distinct acoustic parameters and specific laryngeal muscle activity. Notably, the authors in this study found that trained CCM (Contemporary Commercial Music) higher-voiced singers use chest dominant production with strong vocal fold closure when singing in mix registration (Kochis-Jennings et al., 2012, p. 190).

Nix compiled known terminology to clarify the various names, functions, and perceptual characteristics of six registrational events in singers (Nix, 2012, pp. 552-553). These include gendered descriptions of registration and were classified in the following way:

- Vocal Fry, strohbass, creak, pulse, straw, and **Mechanism 1**.
- Chest, modal, heavy mechanism, **Mechanism 2**.
- Belt.
- Female specific: Middle voice, mixed voice, middle register, voix mixte.

¹ Participants in this study included both trained and untrained singers. Singers who were trained performed in the western operatic tradition (426).



- Male specific: Head voice, full head register, upper extension.
- Head register, head voice, light mechanism, **Mechanism 3**, falsetto, loft.
- Whistle, flageolet, bell, **Mechanism 4**.

In this compilation, each of these descriptive terms are associated with particular vocal tract properties, laryngeal properties, acoustic properties, perceptual descriptions, and approximate range guides.

Research studies have confirmed that registration is a laryngeal event (Ecthernach, 2008, 2010; Kochis-Jennings, 2012). In addition to the physiological registrational events, research exists indicating that singers undertake acoustic adjustments during registration changes—a performer may adjust the resonating space of the vocal tract as they move through various pitches and vowel shapes, resulting in “timbral transitions” (Bozeman, 2013, p. 104).² Because each singer has “unique individual anatomical and physiological differences” (LeBorgne & Rosenberg, 2019, p. 123), not all singers are able to negotiate registrational changes with ease or in the same way with the same result. Skillful registrational negotiation requires “dynamically adapted fine control of the intrinsic laryngeal musculature (potentially in close co-ordination with minute adaptations of subglottal pressure and supraglottal vocal tract configuration)” (Herbst, 2021, p. 347).

Understanding registrational properties is essential for voice teachers working with musical theatre singers, particularly the registrational uses of chest and head registers in higher voiced singers which is the “*defining difference* between musical theatre and classical singing” (Hall, 2013, p. 69, italics in original).³ In research solely focused on musical theatre singers, specific, measurable physiological and acoustic characteristics have been observed in higher-voiced performers singing legit, mix, and belt (Bourne & Garnier, 2012) and lower-voiced musical theatre singers when performing belt (Bourne et al., 2016). The MTEA Voice Advisory Board acknowledges that registration is a highly technical area of voice training, and we intend to present interested membership with ongoing professional development opportunities focused on research and considerations regarding the application of registration training in the teaching studio with specific regard to musical theatre singing.

CHEST REGISTER

Chest register in musical theatre usage refers to the speech-like sound commonly found in the lower pitches of an adult singer’s range. This register may also be referred to as low register, voce di petto, ring register, thick folds, TA dominant, modal register, heavy mechanism, and Mechanism 1 (M1). Physiologically, chest register is associated with strong contraction of the thyroarytenoid (TA) muscle, located inside the vocal folds.⁴ The vocal folds are thicker and shorter in horizontal length in chest register compared to singing in head register.

EXAMPLES:

- Brian Stokes Mitchell, “Make Them Hear You,” *Ragtime*: <https://youtu.be/q5x0ips0gE8?t=39>
- Liza Minelli, “Mein Herr,” *Cabaret*: <https://youtu.be/lxmz3RcNNBE?t=99>
- Liza Minelli, “Maybe this Time,” *Cabaret*: <https://youtu.be/yMpSQVI-bsA?t=34> to 0:43, 1:48-2:08
- Idina Menzel and Kristin Chenoweth, “For Good,” *Wicked*: <https://youtu.be/TZ0pXUb5jVU?t=17>
- Lilli Cooper and Lauren Pritchard, “The Dark I Know Well,” *Spring Awakening*: <https://youtu.be/SQDEsxl86E?t=5>
- Michael Rupert, “Blood in the Water,” *Legally Blonde*: <https://youtu.be/RiX-EJA8n4w?t=1668> to 28:10

FALSETTO/HEAD REGISTER

Head register/falsetto in musical theatre usage refers to lighter (than chest register) singing which is generally found above the chest register in the higher pitches of adult singer’s range. In current musical theatre pedagogy, the terms “falsetto” and “head register” are often used interchangeably to promote a “gender neutral” approach to singing. However, the term falsetto was traditionally used in classical music

² The difference between acoustic/resonance shifts and the laryngeal mechanistic change see Herbst, 2021, p. 351. Examples of laryngeal transitions may be found in Herbst, 2020, pp. 185-186.

³ The authors refer interested teachers to recent articles on registration published in the Journal of Singing (Herbst 2020, 2021) which provides more detailed and specific overview into research into proprioception, psychoacoustic perception, and the laryngeal mechanisms involved in of chest, head, and mix in the singing voice.

⁴ To see how the thyroarytenoid muscle works see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GEMquo7xpg>

and voice science when referring to the higher sung pitches in lower-voiced performers. Physiologically, head register/falsetto singing is typified by longer, thinner vocal folds, the relaxation of the thyroarytenoid muscle (inside the vocal fold) and the strong activation of the cricothyroid (CT) muscle.⁵ It is produced in the same way in both higher and lower singers (Herbst, 2020, p. 186).

Other names for falsetto/head register include high register, head tone, soprano, thin fold, mechanism 2, head voice, head resonance, light mechanism, CT dominant, upper register, and upper mechanism. The term head register traditionally refers to a singer's perception of the resonance of the sung pitches in or around the head. In contemporary music theatre, head register/falsetto singing may be produced using a mixed function, where additional thyroarytenoid muscle (chest register, mechanism 1) may be present. Specific acoustic tract modifications may also assist with the bright, clear tone and speech quality associated with this singing. This sound is also referred to as **reinforced falsetto** in contemporary music styles (e.g., rock, pop) sometimes heard in contemporary musical theatre productions.

EXAMPLES:

- West End Cast/ Ryan Molloy, "Walk like a Man," *Jersey Boys*: <https://youtu.be/VfdTJRk6nMA?t=117>
- Reeve Carney, "Epic III," *Hadestown*: <https://youtu.be/K77nr8-uhZ8?t=33>
- Aaron Tveit, "I'm Alive," *Next to Normal*: <https://youtu.be/ZAhgX7RleDQ?t=142>
- Colm Wilkinson, "Bring Him Home," *Les Misérables*: <https://youtu.be/qsYnhVITf9E?t=14> to 1:00 and 2:41 to end.
- Sierra Boggess, "Think of Me," *The Phantom of the Opera*: <https://youtu.be/ncvnA8p4lww?t=64>

MIX

Mix is a perceived registrational blend of chest register and head register which has a strong speech quality and is used throughout musical theatre. Mix has many permutations, many of which are subjective to the listener and performer in the way they are classified. While initially theories about this type of vocal production supported the concept that transition between registers had a basis in a specific functional mechanism, mix is produced either using a dominant chest (Mechanism 1, M1) or head (Mechanism 2, M2) voice production (Roubeau et al., 2009, pp. 436-437).⁶ Within the mix family of sounds, chest mix and head mix describe a "chest dominant" or "head dominant" style of mix singing, often represented as a continuum between registers which overlap each other (See Figure 1).

Research into mix singing is ongoing (Titze, 2018, p. 50). Perceptually, singers may experience a different type of voice production during pitch changes as the singing voice shifts towards a change in registration—singing is almost always mixing and rarely purely one register or another. This may be due to the amount of thyroarytenoid (TA) activity inside the vocal folds—chest mix has been shown to have significantly increased TA activity when compared with head mix (Kochis-Jennings et al., 2012, p. 191). There are also significant acoustic strategies (shaping of the pharynx, oral cavity, jaw, tongue, and lips) used in mix singing which may differ from singer to singer. Herbst (2021) notes that there is a "tendency (for voices) to 'like' to stay in the actually produced register, rather than facilitating a timely register transition" which requires training using "dynamically adapted fine control of the intrinsic laryngeal musculature" (Herbst, 2021, p. 347) to negotiate, depending on the requirements of the singing style. Herbst suggests the use of varied dynamics, subglottal pressure and vocal tract configuration as suggested tools to fine-tune this transition.

Mix singing may also vary depending on the type of training a singer receives. Classically trained higher singers may be more likely to produce head mix and head register, while singers with contemporary training are "more likely to produce chest, chest mix and head but not head mix" (Kochis-Jennings, 2012, p. 192). Due to the perceptual, subjective nature of mix, and the lack of extensive research in this area as it relates to musical theatre voice production, we look forward to further debate, discussion, and dissemination of research on this issue with the MTEA voice membership.

In application, when using the term mix in the rehearsal room, asking for a "mixier" production might be

⁵ To see how the cricothyroid muscle works: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lqeDLsPII5E&t=163s>

⁶ This study used a variety of data bases, with a variety of trained, amateur, and untrained singers. Trained singers performed in the western operatic tradition.

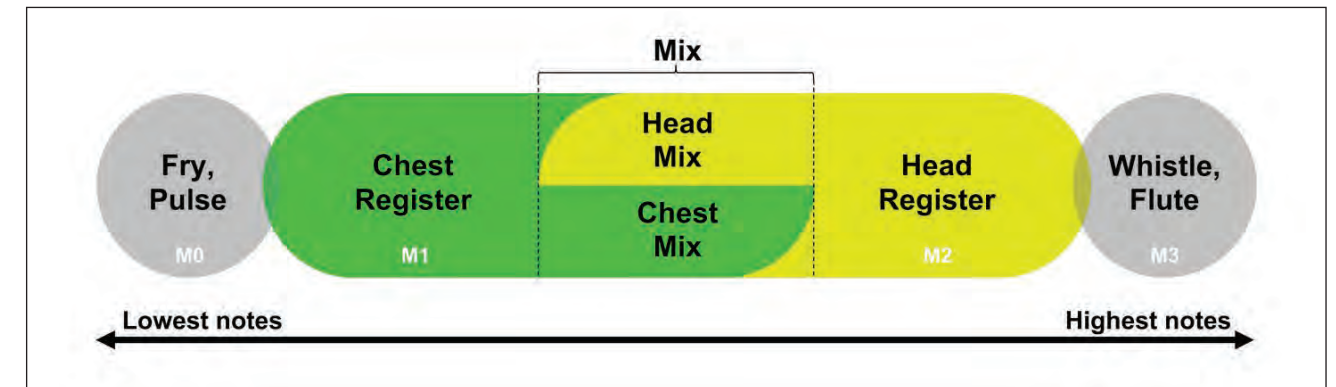


FIGURE 1. A diagrammatic representation of general registration concepts.

confusing for the performer depending on their training and the language they have encountered in their teacher's studio. Making a sound "more mix" might indicate a lighter, less chest dominant production if the sound the singer is producing is perceived as "having too much weight," too chest-dominant, or too belted. If the singer is producing a head-dominant sound, making a sound "more mix" may indicate the action of adding more chest register to the sound, moving closer towards a belt, or even using a stronger speech quality. Clarification of what quality of sound the MD, vocal coach, or voice teacher is requesting might require further discussion between performer and teacher/coach/MD about the vocal quality they are producing. It is hoped that the following examples might assist to provide some aural guideposts for these issues. Using the terms "a headier mix," "a chestier mix," "a more belted sound," or "a stronger articulation of speech" (consonants / speech vowels) might produce the required response in the singer.

EXAMPLES:

- Alison Morrooney, "Some Things are Meant to Be," *Little Women*: <https://youtu.be/AcOgyQIKWPI>
- Stephanie D'Abruzzo, "There's a Fine, Fine Line," *Avenue Q*: <https://youtu.be/PTFI9sQdpGo> to 1:00
- Emma Hunton, "Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens," *Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens*: <https://youtu.be/6LIMS-Zd2Bk?t=14> to 1:35

HEAD MIX

Head mix is a term used for music theatre singing that is not pure head register production, often produced in the middle to top ranges of a musical theatre performer's range. In head mix, the head register dominates, but a small amount of chest register may also be present—head mix has considerably less thyroarytenoid activity than chest mix (Kochis-Jennings et al., 2012, pp. 191-192). How the musical theatre head mix sound is produced is under-researched. Perceptually, head mix is characterized by a bright, clear, speech-like tone which moves easily into higher notes and bends seamlessly with both head register and chest mix. The speech quality used in musical theatre head mix requires specific acoustic strategies which influence the registrational adjustments required for this seamless movement between registers.

EXAMPLES:

- Sierra Boggess, "Part of Your World," *The Little Mermaid*: <https://youtu.be/3RdrQy0j39E?t=16> to 2:10
- Jennifer Simmard, "I Will be Loved Tonight," *I Love you, You're Perfect, Now Change*: <https://youtu.be/JSBSqlgVgEo?t=9> to 0:28
- Laura Osnes, "Reflection," *Mulan*: <https://youtu.be/IB4CAME-C1M?t=157> to 2:55
- Denée Benton, "No One Else," *The Great Comet*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OL6GLr3k_Vo

CHEST MIX

Chest mix refers to a register used in musical theatre and contemporary singing that is not pure chest register production, nor head register production often found in the middle range of a singer's voice. In this sound the chest register dominates—the thyroarytenoid muscle is more active in chest mix than in head mix (Kochis-Jennings et al., 2012, pp. 191-192). This type of speech-like singing is found throughout musical theatre and commercial styles of singing.

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EXAMPLES:

- Laura Bell Bundy, "Legally Blonde," *Legally Blonde*: <https://youtu.be/RiX-EJA8n4w?t=6076> to 1:42:40
- Derek Klena, "My Petersburg," *Anastasia*: https://youtu.be/_hVaGhGLKqQ?t=1 to 2:19.
- Patti Murin, "For the First Time in Forever," *Frozen*: <https://youtu.be/mHd8Ug4IjN4?t=48> to 1:45

BELT

Belt is a bright, energized sound based on speech production and is used when expressing heightened emotional intent. Belt has been commonly used in musical theatre singing since the 1920s. Belt singing was initially identified as connected to the female voice; however, all genders produce belt singing (Edwin, 1998, p. 53). Belt is produced using Mechanism 1, or chest register, with strong vocal fold closure (Bourne & Garnier, 2010, p. 4), and elite musical theatre belters possess ring and vibrato which contribute to a perception of loudness (LeBorgne et al., 2012, p. 685). Belt is generally accepted to be produced using chest and chest mix registration, strong vocal fold closure and high sub-glottal pressure, although this can vary with each individual singer. High belting (Eb5-F5 in higher-voiced performers) requires specific and highly variable acoustical strategies (Flynn et al., 2020, p. 5).

EXAMPLES:

- Jeremy Jordan, "Santa Fe," *Newsies*: <https://youtu.be/uy4jytRUCtk?t=184>
- Aaron Tveit, "Goodbye," *Catch Me if You Can*: <https://youtu.be/xxQ-xblzCUY?t=263>
- Steven Pasquale, "It All Fades Away," *The Bridges of Madison County*: <https://youtu.be/UVEkCujOHkg?t=178> from 2:58-3:26
- Eva Noblezada, "On My Own," *Les Misérables*: <https://youtu.be/MHeid6YECno?t=101>

- Cynthia Erivo, "I'm Here," *The Color Purple*: <https://youtu.be/3k2xzQyT2bk?t=177>
- Jai'len Christine Li Josey, "Daddy Knows Best," *SpongeBob SquarePants*: https://youtu.be/39xM9_gpE?t=97
- Denée Benton, "No One Else," *The Great Comet*: https://youtu.be/OL6GLr3k_Vo?t=201
- Idina Menzel, "Defying Gravity," *Wicked*: <https://youtu.be/MslDnwerQRA?t=148>

LEGIT

The characteristics of legit singing are a classical approach to registration and resonance, and the presence of legato and vibrato. Traditionally this refers to the gendered roles of performance—higher-voiced singers' legit voice production is a head register dominant style of singing, and for lower voices, a chest register dominant style.⁷ Contemporary legit musical theatre singing has speech-like diction and may be produced using a head mix (higher voices) or chest mix (lower voices) singing voice production. In earlier Golden Age musical theatre productions ingénues were often the "legit" singers. Legit, as a term, emerged from these roles which were performed by classically trained, or "legitimate" singers, unfairly implying other types of singing to be "illegitimate." "Legit" is now widely used in music theatre and is often used as an adjective to describe the body of repertoire sung in legit style as well as a term to describe specific vocal sound.

EXAMPLES:

- Kelli O'Hara, "The Light in The Piazza," *The Light in the Piazza*: <https://youtu.be/5ODVHV5W3U0?t=122>
- Denée Benton, "No One Else," *The Great Comet*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OL6GLr3k_Vo
- Bryce Pinkham, Lisa O'Hare, Lauren Worhsam "I've Decided to Marry You," *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*: <https://youtu.be/VtlcEvPDkfM?t=71>
- Anthony Warlow, "This is the Moment," *Jekyll & Hyde*: <https://youtu.be/9KiX2Wgo7hg?t=63>
- Norm Lewis, "Music of the Night," *The Phantom of the Opera*: <https://youtu.be/4hV7QNtap-k?t=63>
- Phillip Quast, "Stars," *Les Misérables*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=urxk4mveLCw&feature=youtu.be>

SPEECH

Speech in musical theatre singing involves performing with speech-like patterns and production appropriate to both the musical style and the acting circumstances. A clear, speech-like production is common to all the different types of singing styles associated with musical theatre: "Singing is text driven: enunciation of the text dominates singing" (Hall, 2013, p. 66). Practically, diction in the musical theatre context involves a co-ordination between a speech-like sound in the voice (usually with some activation of chest register) and strong articulation of consonants as well as speech-like vowels. This may involve dialect considerations and adjustment of the performer's usual or trained accent. Additional consideration of the way speech is articulated in various CCM styles may be required for authenticity in many contemporary musical theatre productions.

EXAMPLES:

- Autumn Hurlbert, "Omigod You Guys," *Legally Blonde*: <https://youtu.be/CCNcAv3Muss?t=22>
- Sandy Stiles, "What's Gonna Happen," *Tootsie*: <https://youtu.be/moGgvOuBeEQ>
- Lea Salonga, "Higher," *Allegiance*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-Cb2f09OS-U>
- Kate Finneran, "Not Getting Married Today," *Company*: <https://youtu.be/zRsdEcybJL0?t=10>
- Denée Benton, "No One Else," *The Great Comet*: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OL6GLr3k_Vo
- Faith Prince, "Adelaide's Lament," *Guys and Dolls*: <https://youtu.be/Dx24qZVsINk?t=16>

Readers will notice that Denée Benton's performance of "No One Else" from *The Great Comet* appears in numerous registrational examples. This performance is a particularly strong example of the artistic and skillful use of the technical requirements musical theatre singers use to negotiate the various registrational strategies and singing styles within a single performance. Ms. Benton moves from legit to belt, keeping speech quality and various mixing strategies throughout, using considerable vocal skill in service to the communication of acting intentions within a musical theatre performance.

⁷ There are exceptions to this. For example, in the song "The Music of the Night" from *The Phantom of the Opera*, the Phantom sings the final note of the song in falsetto, and falsetto singing is a characteristic of "Bring Him Home" from *Les Misérables*.

CONCLUSION

The Voice Advisory Board considers this article as a starting point for further discussion on terminology used in musical theatre. We view this as a collaborative process, guided by research and practical application, and look forward to elaborating on these topics and the continual development of these and other terms membership would like us to examine. During this process, personal preferences and individual usages of various pedagogical practices (both published and unpublished) were considered, and we intend to incorporate further discussion of these approaches in the future. MTEA Advisory Board acknowledges that as research and practice continue to evolve these glossary terms will change and grow.

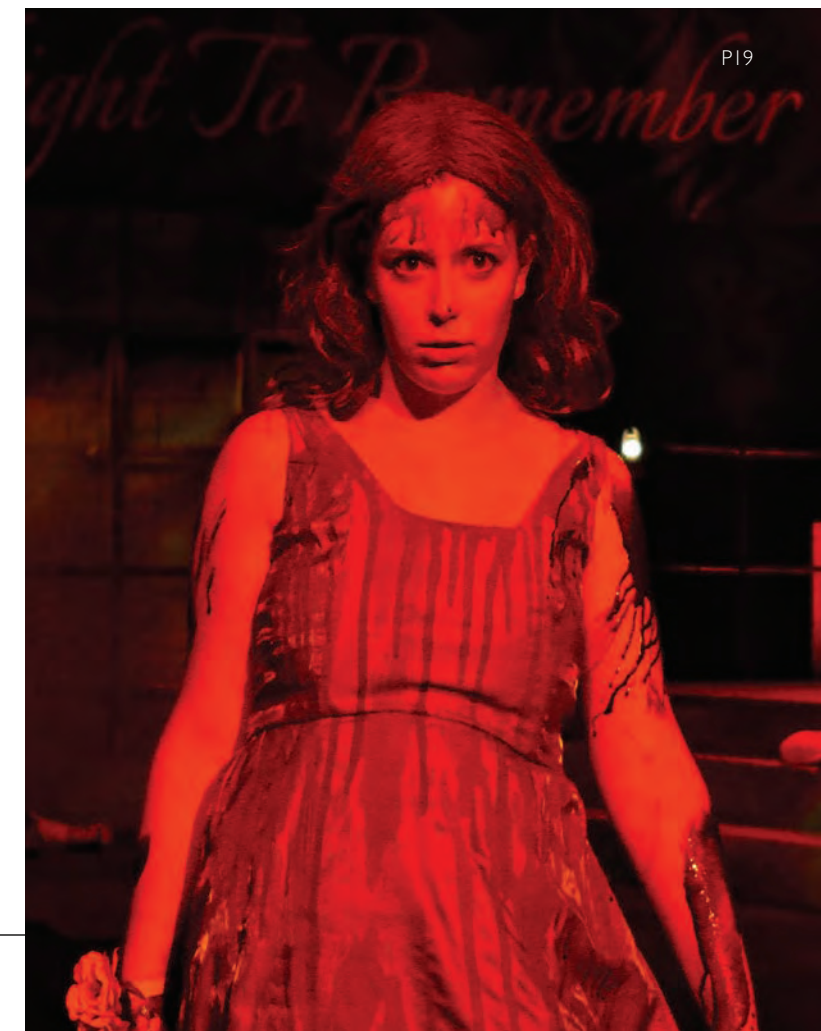
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KIMBERLEY RAMPERSAD

a conversation



Kimberley Rampersad has had a big year. From reading her bio you may say she has done it all. She's worked as a dancer, singer, actor, educator, choreographer, and director. She is currently the associate director of The Shaw Festival in Canada. This year she directed two of the biggest plays in the canon, The Amen Corner and King Lear, at The Shaw Festival and The Stratford Festival, respectively. And she's just getting started.

by Ian Simpson

Ian: I want to begin by reading your bio in the Shaw Festival program. "I was born and raised in the community of North Kildonan, in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Treaty 1, and fortunate to live in a place where the arts went hand-in-hand with hockey; where creativity was as practical as any other virtue. While excellence and education were the mantras of our home, so was generosity of spirit as my parents freely opened our home to others, and showered guests with stories, music, dance, and love. I think theatre may be a natural convergence of all these elements, and perhaps that is why I'm here at the Shaw Festival." Would you talk about that and that early time in your life?

Kimberley: My parents, June and Jerome, immigrated from Trinidad and Tobago to Winnipeg, Manitoba in 1969 to pursue their post-secondary education and to start a family. They chose North Kildonan to raise my sister and myself because it has an amazing school system. We were, as my mentor Philip Akin would say, "the raisins in the oatmeal". There wasn't a lot of diversity in our beautiful community, but [it] was an amazing place to grow up. Our parents put us in dance lessons. They wanted us to be graceful, to learn to hold our bodies, to be beautiful, to do something social. Then we found theatre, we found singing lessons, we found acting. That's how my parents made sure that I found art and art found me.

Ian: In the early part of your career, you were teaching dance at the Royal Winnipeg ballet, and you worked as a dance clinician for Winnipeg schools.

Kimberley: Yes, I taught in high schools for six years.

Ian: And you were developing curriculum for dance instructions. Can you talk about that period of your life?

Kimberley: So, dance education... Young people are my favourite group of humans, and I love teaching [them]. It fills me so much I could start crying right now. It makes me feel alive. I feel I am helping. I love encouraging their artistry and giving them space to try. It doesn't matter whether they pursue it professionally or not. It's about a higher version of themselves that emerges through the art and articulates itself as creativity. When I was in high school my first job was teaching dance, which was fantastic and empowering. I finished my dance certification while I was teaching at the Royal Winnipeg Ballet school. I taught in their general division

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and then, periodically, I would teach in their professional division, and in their summer schools. That was an amazing opportunity. Through that we had a partnership with the Winnipeg School Division where we taught young people [who] may not necessarily be exposed to certain arts. We went into the schools and worked with them. After this, I taught as a dance clinician in Winnipeg's largest school division. During this time, they pulled me onto the curriculum [team] for the province of Manitoba where I was able to contribute to our larger community.

Ian: Has your career journey as a performer and director changed how you would teach students in the theatrical arts now?

Kimberley: I believe so for I'm always revising what I'm teaching. Anytime I return to teaching something it is necessarily different as it is informed by my latest experience in the rehearsal hall, including the failures and the triumphs that I've had. There's some sort of wisdom there I should be sharing. For me, teaching is where I get to turn my failures into something good. I tell my young people they turn my coal into diamonds.

Ian: Yes, failure doesn't mean the end of the road. Failure is actually an important part of that journey.

Kimberley: That's it, and this is a challenging notion because we speak about booking the work as a measure of success. Failure is necessary to the creative process. Let's just get into the failure and the trying again. Anyway, what we do is crazy, and I love it.

Ian: Ditto. I wouldn't be here all these years if I didn't love it. The younger generations inspire me so much and they help me to view our musicals and plays through new eyes. The fact that it's always changing and we're looking at musicals in new ways is exciting.

Kimberley: That's it and it helps to avoid becoming an obstacle. If I am not spending time with young people and really listening to them and loving them and really understanding what it is I become an obstacle in this position.

Ian: Would you ever see yourself going back into education again?

Kimberley: I would love to. I'm doing my master's right now, which was on hold this year because I couldn't do it between *King Lear* and *The Amen Corner*. I do hope to end up teaching more. It fills my heart. It's spiritual. But I'm lucky in this position here. I head up the Slight Academy [an artist training and development wing of the Shaw Festival repertory theatre]. One of my favorite things is getting the young people in. First and second year ensemble actors have a two-week intensive where we pay them to come in before rehearsals, which is delightful. It takes the pressure off, and we just get to work.

Ian: What is the Baillie Cohort?

Kimberley: The Baillie Cohort are young people we met during general auditions, who have promise but would benefit from a year of intensive work, while still having the opportunity to be on the stage. The most important part of the cohort is after they complete the season they must go out into the world. If we have done this correctly, they will take everything they learned and fly.

Ian: You've had a very supportive mentorship in the artistic leadership at Shaw, in your journey at Shaw. Can you describe the role of being a mentee and a mentor?

Kimberley: My mentor, [actor/director] Philip Akin, shared with me that mentorship is a part of my artistic practice. I have learned so much from him that it behooves me to be a mentor now so that his wisdom doesn't stop with me. Otherwise, I am a dead end instead of a conduit for everything he has learned and has shared with me. That's my responsibility. That's the space that I'm trying

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I BELIEVE WE DO NOT HAVE A SINGULAR VOICE BECAUSE THIS IS OUR VERSION OF WHAT MULTICULTURALISM IS—THE MOSAIC VERSUS THE MELTING POT. IF WE ARE A MOSAIC WHERE MULTIPLE COMMUNITIES CAN LIVE IN, THAT THEY DON'T HAVE TO MELT TOGETHER INTO ONE MUSHY COLOUR, BUT CAN REMAIN BRIGHT AND UNIQUE, THEN OUR THEATRE WILL HAVE ALL OF THOSE VOICES REPRESENTED. THERE WILL NOT BE A SINGULAR CANADIAN VOICE, BUT A CHORUS. WHEN WE CAN TALK ABOUT THIS PERHAPS WE MIGHT LIBERATE OURSELVES TO TALK ABOUT SOMETHING ELSE.

to create. Here at Shaw, I arrived as an actor, and then I participated in their Neil Munro directing internship. Once completed, both TC [Tim Carroll, artistic director, Shaw Festival] and Tim Jennings [executive director, Shaw Festival] approached me saying, "We think you're an artistic leader." So, they created an artistic directing internship supported by the Metcalf Foundation, where I spent a year learning from TC and [actor/director] Kate Hennig, who was the associate artistic director. [When] Kate left her position, they offered it to me. These were things that I had not dreamed of pursuing. This organization saw something in me, created space me, and now I have this portfolio.

Ian: Your career has been a really successful progression from a teacher to performer to director, including directing some of the most challenging works ever written. It's obviously hard work, but did it happen organically, serendipitously, or was it a little bit of everything?

Kimberley: A little bit of everything. I love hard things. Hard things are exhilarating. My first love is ballet. I don't know much that's harder than ballet. It's so difficult, and I love it so much. I don't know much harder than musical theatre. To master not one but three disciplines. Hard is demanding to be considered for my talent, and not by the narrow interpretation of my black and brown skin by countless decision makers. So hard things don't scare me. And hard things are thrilling because you need to do them with other people. That being said, I would have never, at the time it was presented to me, chosen [Bernard Shaw's play] *Man and Superman*. "Your second Bernard Shaw play, Kimberley, is going to be a six-hour epic." Never. As my first Shakespearean play to direct at the Stratford Festival this season, I would never have selected *King Lear*, the heart of the Canon. And even here at Shaw, directing *The Amen Corner*, which is a three-hour epic play by James Baldwin, is

titanic. Though he has written two plays, he is a wild playwright, and this piece is more of a theatrical treatise. These things have been presented to me. But once I have prepared well and have the right people around me, I feel capable.

Ian: I was at the opening of *The Amen Corner*, and I was blown away. I knew James Baldwin as an author, but I didn't know him as a playwright. How did it come about that you would direct this play at Shaw Festival?

Kimberley: TC and I have both been very interested in Baldwin. I love him because of how similar he is to Shaw. These are two people who are autodidacts, who have created and learned on their own. They are multilingual. They are activists. They are artists. They are social commentators. They are provocateurs. They're orators of the first degree and they are absolutely political. And what's fantastic is that they articulate their politics through their art. They are both about liberation. You notice the parallels between the Fabian Society on the other side of the pond of which GBS was member of consequence, and the Harlem Renaissance in America, which birthed Langston Hughes, which then birthed James Baldwin. You can see all of these connections of movements of liberation coming out of leftist communities where art is happening and art is a provocation, manifest in "The New Woman" in Bernard Shaw's work and "The New Negro" articulated in the literature of the Harlem Renaissance. Both TC and I were interested in James Baldwin because of the affinity that he and Shaw have for one another. And then we were interested in doing *The Amen Corner* over *Blues for Mister Charlie* because *Blues for Mister Charlie* is done more often. If we would like to offer our audiences something new and unique, and also offer our company to work on something unique, we thought we should program this play. So that's how we chose *The Amen Corner*.

Ian: *The Amen Corner* is not a musical per se...

Kimberley: No.

Ian: ...but it's a play with a lot of music in it, which looms quite large in the story. It's especially apparent with the character of David who's the young, gay son of Sister Margaret because he's caught between the worlds of gospel music and jazz music.

Kimberley: Yes.

Ian: In your director notes, you talked about the rhythm of Baldwin's use of language and how it harkens back to the way Shaw used it. Their words are musical as well.

Kimberley: I believe the beauty I find in their use of language connects with my background in musical theatre. To me, plays are music-word compositions. That's how I crack into them. *Man and Superman* or *King Lear*... that's all music to me. If you look at my script you'll see it broken down: "Here's this Aria, this is a three four, this is a two four, this is a mazurka, this goes into cut time, this is double up" It's all music and it's all scored to me. What's great about *The Amen Corner* is how does music function in a tragedy in particular? How does the music plunge us further into the depths.

Ian: Another thing I thought was really interesting about *The Amen Corner* in your director notes is that you talked about the connection between that play and directing *King Lear* and the commonality between Sister Margaret and Lear.

Kimberley: You meet them both at the top of their game! Here are two tragic heroes. You meet Lear—his kingdom is still together. You meet Sister Margaret—she's at the top of her church and the pastor of her church. And we don't see a lot of that represented, right? Here is a female leader of a church, a single, black mom at the top of her game. Then you have their children. Lear has his three daughters, Cordelia in particular. Sister Margaret has her son, David. You see them say "I don't want this kingdom" and "I don't want this to be in church anymore." They both are seeking emancipation from their parents. You watch this king and queen respectfully free fall until the end. You can see these fantastic parallels—the fool, the knights, the congregation. It goes on and on and on. Even though Baldwin has not written a lot of plays he has absolutely written a Shakespearean tragedy and you can see how knowledgeable and brilliant he is. He's used all that structure.



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Ian: Incredible! Shaw Festival is very unique in the sense that there isn't a musical company and an acting company but an ensemble. Do you nurture everybody singularly in that sense, not labeling them?

Kimberley: Regardless of the plays they are working on, we value actors who can sing, play an instrument, and move. TC really values an actor who can hold the tune. It is an asset to the work if the artists can do these things. Being musical is probably one of the most important things in our company as an actor right now because all you want [is] the text to sing. You want the plays to pulse and move. You need all that facility in order to be any of those characters, whether you're singing it or whether you're just singing it in your spirit as text.

Ian: It seems really important that young students in theatre schools are able to work on all the disciplines even if you think "I'm just an actor" or "I'm just a dancer."

Kimberley: Look at our season this year at somebody like Allan Louis or Tom Rooney or Deb Hay. All three can play Shakespeare, or Shaw, can perform in a musical, can do anything they wish, or TC asks, and have and that's what we want to be able to nurture and promote. If you work hard and you can be flexible, we want to offer you as much range in your experience as possible.

Ian: Over the past few years, we have seen that theatre is now starting to become more inclusive, more diverse. It's been a long time coming. How have you experienced this in your career and what are the things that we still need to change?

Kimberley: I've certainly noticed more representation on the stage than there was when I started. Fantastic, but it is late. Thankfully, I was not discouraged by the lack of it in my formative years. I am glad some theatres are beginning to try. They are still late, but good for them. I think you can verify the sincerity of an organization in embracing this work by who works there permanently, in all aspects of the organization. This demonstrates where their heart lies. It is somewhat easier to have representation amongst people who are contract workers. It is much more profound to have people in there permanently who are making homes in the community, which makes them feel welcomed. Show me your permanent staff and I'll show you where you're at.

Ian: Period.

Kimberley: Period. And this takes time because many places have not reflected the world historically. It's going to take about as much time to invite people in as they have spent excluding to build trust and make a

difference. You cannot invite people in if the spirit of your company hasn't changed. You are now inviting them into danger. I'd like to see more educators from all backgrounds, too. This will take time like anything else.

Ian: Yes. Do you think theatre today is connecting with younger generations, younger audiences?

Kimberley: I think there are young people that love and thrive on it. There are droves of young people heading to *Rent* right now at the Stratford Festival. Young people attend, young people are interested, young people will buy tickets. It flies in the face of the people who say, "oh well, you know that generation doesn't..." They do! You've just got to connect with them, and you've got to be unapologetic, and it needs to be excellent. Theatre must grab them otherwise they will make other choices, which many made during Covid. If we want to reintroduce ourselves to those people, we have to be excellent, otherwise they will choose something else.

Ian: What is the uniqueness of being a Canadian in theatre and what is our Canadian voice? It feels like we're always trying to find our identity.

Kimberley: Interesting—because we are such a young country we have not had time, to define a voice. And at this moment of time the idea of us even being a country, or what that even means is questionable. I believe we do not have a singular voice because this is our version of what multiculturalism is—the mosaic versus the melting pot. If we are a mosaic where multiple communities can live in distinctly, that they don't have to melt together into one mushy colour, but can remain bright and unique, then our theatre will have all of those voices represented. There will not be a singular Canadian voice, but there is a chorus. When we can talk about this perhaps we might liberate ourselves to talk about something else—about just getting into the art, the work, and how we do it. I think we have regional voices informed by the land like a Newfoundland piece of work, something that comes from the prairies, that comes from the West Coast. There is a sensibility, a dryness that comes from Canadian work. A darkness that comes from...I don't know?

Ian: We have so many great comedians that come from Canada and comedy often comes from dark places.

Kimberley: That's it!

Ian: What do you think is the value of being a musical theatre artist moving through the theatre world.

Kimberley: I know where people tend to place us if they do not understand or respect the form or its practitioners. It is born out of ignorance regarding what we do, where we vibrate. Sometimes people assume we are the jack of all trades and the masters of none. Being a musical theatre artist is a gift I draw from every day—in particular, being a dancer. Being a musical theatre artist helps me meet titanic pieces that come from outside of the musical theatre canon. I lean on it heavily to crack them open. Being multi-disciplined creates, I hope, a space for collaboration, the rehearsal hall, in the boardrooms and in organizations. That gives me the power to be hopeful and the courage to expect good things from collaboration.

Ian: What would be your words of advice to young people who are in theatre school now and who are looking for a career in theatre and musical theatre.

Kimberley: Work every day on your art. Work every day on your art. This way whether they book work or not, they feel like an artist. And then they will book work because they'll be working on it every day, so it also works out. Also, I didn't move to Toronto to make this career happen. I did the first part of my career in Winnipeg, and then I traveled the country. In today's world being somewhere where you're comfortable, where you feel yourself is so important to showing up for the work and being happy. I hope they know they can build, from almost anywhere, if they [are] able to travel and have mobility. Be where you're happy.

Ian: What a gorgeous sentiment.

Kimberley: I want people to be happy. That makes the work sustainable.

Ian: What is next for you?

WORD OF MOUTH

Kimberley: I plan on completing my MA at the University of Guelph. I am directing *My Fair Lady* with Tim Carroll at the Shaw Festival. I am also choreographing it. And I am directing in the UK for the first time next year!

Ian: If there was a crystal ball where is Kimberley Rampersad in the future?

Kimberley: I hope I am having time with my family. Planned with the people that I love the most who I leave the most to pursue my work. I hope I am creating somewhere. I hope I will be directing or choreographing one play anywhere or in a play anywhere. One, just one for the year. And I hope I am teaching somewhere. It doesn't need to be a lot. Just one gig, doesn't matter where it is. That sounds like heaven to me.

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THE AMEN CORNER AT THE SHAW FESTIVAL
Allan Louis (left) as Luke and Andrew Broderick as David
Directed by Kimberley Rampersad
Photographer David Cooper

TO BOOTLEG OR NOT TO BOOTLEG:

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How Does the Theatre Industry View Illegally Filmed Productions Today?

By James Stover

TO BOOTLEG OR NOT TO BOOTLEG: How Does the Theatre Industry View Illegally Filmed Productions Today?

As viewership of illegally filmed professional theatre productions has risen on mainstream media sites, so too has the level of discussion about participation in this practice. Audience motivations for viewing illegally filmed productions range from entertainment, professional research for an audition, or research for a work on a production. Filmed Broadway productions are often called "slime tutorials"—a name that harkens back to when they first began appearing online as a means of disguising their content. One YouTube playlist has more than 500 slime tutorials. The majority of the videos on this playlist are full-length productions from Broadway. *Dear Evan Hansen* is one of the several productions with a full performance uploaded. The performance seems to have been filmed on a phone from an orchestra seat just a few rows from the stage. The performance has been viewed more than 115,000 times.

Bootlegs of these and other shows are available to the masses, often with no charge and simply by clicking on a remote or laptop keyboard. We have all heard the curtain speeches and seen the reminders in playbills that "The taking of video during the performance is illegal under copyright law." Many have argued for years that these videos are harmful, given that the viewer did not purchase a ticket, therefore the production and all of those involved in the making and presenting of it cannot be compensated for their efforts. The Manhattan Law Firm Schwartz and Ponterio, while lobbying the government to re-evaluate the laws that protect online platforms from the responsibility of making this type of content available to the public, stated that "posting bootlegs online may seem harmless, but it is essentially taking money out of the pockets of artists" (Schwartz, 2020, para. 4). However, these videos have the capability of not only being a tool for individuals to learn more about the artform of live theatre, but for students and practitioners to broaden their knowledge of existing written work. This new level of access to theatrical work will also expand the possibilities of garnering a larger and broader fan base.

In a post-COVID-pandemic world driven by social media, is it possible that these bootlegs—that are so often engaged with—could serve the artform and its artists rather than take from them? Theatrical bootlegs, in one form or another, have existed since the early twentieth century and have helped preserve performances as well as broaden the ability for audiences to experience the works that have been recorded (Reside, 2023, p. 99). Could watching a bootleg of a Broadway production entice someone to attend that show, or a different production on the Great White Way? Could a theatre company's production being filmed and distributed actually help build its brand and broaden its audience base? While watching a filmed production, whether it be a first class recording or illegally captured on a smart phone, does not parallel the experience of live theatre, it can be used as a remarkable tool to create new audiences and to broaden the knowledge of those who regularly engage with the art of live theatre.

BACKGROUND

The term bootlegs is used to refer specifically to illegally filmed productions that are distributed online as well as productions filmed for archival purposes that are illegally released to the public (Encyclopedia Britannica, para. 1). Additional examples include productions that are professionally filmed for the purposes of public presentation (examples being productions filmed for PBS' Great Performances, Disney+, and National Theatre Live) that are then distributed illegally through unintended outside platforms. YouTube, which launched in 2005, is the most public venue for these videos, and bootlegs have appeared on their platform since soon after its inception (Hosch, 2023, para. 2).

Under section 230 of the Communications Decency Act of 1996, an "interactive computer service" is not treated as a publisher (Barr, 2020, para. 2). Therefore, YouTube and similar online services cannot be held responsible under the law for what users post via their platforms. The creators of the videos are "information content providers," and the websites cannot be held liable for making content from these individuals available to the public (Barr, 2020, para. 3).

Bringing Broadway to New Eyes

In a 2020 article for the OnStage Blog titled Broadway Bootlegs: Why We Watch Them and Finding Solutions So We Don't Have to Anymore, Meg Masseron asserts that "Broadway fandom is at its height, currently" and

that the “surge of love for theatre amongst teenagers” is due to the accessibility to the theatre established by these videos (Masseron, 2020, para. 5). Masseron also alludes to the fact that as a teenager herself, living in suburban Baltimore, she could not afford tickets to Broadway touring shows that came to the city or to the professional regional theatres in the area. Additionally, she would sometimes have issues with finding transportation to these events. Now a New Yorker, she is an avid theatregoer who credits bootlegs with building her love for the artform and creating her now habitual attendance of live productions (Masseron, 2020, para. 11).

While some may argue access to filmed New York Theatre productions have been available for decades through the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts' Theatre on Film and Tape (TOFT), these items are not regularly accessible to many individuals who are interested in seeing captured shows. This collection is housed in the library located in Lincoln Center Plaza. It is accessible to anyone who has a New York Public Library card, and, in most cases, individuals may make an appointment to view a particular filmed production within the archive (New York Public Library, 2023a, para. 3). Non-residents of the city can apply for a visitor's card in order to access these videos (New York Public Library, 2023b, para. 19). That being said, if you do not live in that particular city or have the means to visit there on a regular basis, this does not allow an individual accessibility to watching theatrical productions in the manner that bootlegs on streaming platforms or even physical copies of media can create for artists and theatregoers alike.

Filmed productions are not only giving access to potential audience members, they are also offering inspiration to aspiring writers and performers. In 2022, a Playbill.com article titled “How Bootlegs got Jordan Cooper into Theatre,” the actor/playwright (nominated for two 2023 Tony Awards for his recent Broadway play *Ain't No More*) discusses how watching illegally filmed productions created his desire to learn about the artform. Growing up in a small town in Texas, he was able to secure a bootleg of the stage version of *Madea's Family Reunion* by Tyler Perry. This led him to further explore plays from the Urban Theatre Circuit, which he cites as the foundation for his desire to pursue acting and writing professionally (Tran, 2022, para. 4).

Bootlegs of theatrical productions have existed for many decades and have proven to offer opportunities to view work by individuals not able to regularly attend live professional theatre. In his 2023 book *Fixing the Musical: How Technologies Shaped the Broadway Repertory*, Douglas L. Reside gives an extensive look at both the history of creating and the impact of the existence of Broadway bootlegs. Reside discusses how the musical *Rent* was actively bootlegged and that “arguably helped create national interest in the piece,” including the rush-ticket lines laced with *Rent*-heads vying for inexpensive front-row tickets (Reside, 2023, p.123). Reside also uses the extensive following by young people of the musical *Spring Awakening* as an example of the impact these captures make toward the overall popularity and producibility of certain titles. “Bootleg videos of the original production have become some of the most shared bootlegs on YouTube, and the musical is now part of the high school and college repertory” (Reside, 2023, p. 123). He argues that the online presence of these shows, many via illegally filmed means, aid in garnering young people's excitement toward seeing and being a part of productions of the musicals they first encounter online.

There is existing argument for not recording or sharing bootlegged videos because it is harmful to the industry, going back to the statement from the law firm of Schwartz and Ponteri that it's “taking the money out of the

pockets of artists” (Schwartz, 2020, para. 4). Antithetically, several leading industry professionals see it as a tool to increase revenue, both for current main stem productions as well as working towards the long-term financial health of the New York theatre scene as a whole.

During an interview with CNBC, *Hamilton* creator Lin-Manuel Miranda said of releasing the filmed production of the show on Disney+: “In all our estimations, it's only amplified the demand to see *Hamilton* live” (McEntee, 2021, para. 2). Miranda states clearly that the release of the filmed production “forever demolishes the idea that a beautifully shot show diminishes the demand to see it live” (McEntee, 2021, para. 2). This supports the idea that individuals watching bootlegs have been inspired to attend a production.

When discussing this issue via email with Broadway producer Ron Simons (whose credits include Broadway's *Ain't Too Proud* as well as the recent main stem revival of *for colored girls who have considered suicide/ when the rainbow is enuf*) Simon's response to whether bootlegs hurt the theatre industry was “I don't think it does. I think it helps lift the brand, so that should they come to Broadway or Off-Broadway there will be brand recognition” (Simons, 2023, para. 1). However, he does push back against the idea that theatre being too expensive is the driving force



The World According to Snoopy | September 2022
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Directed by By James Stover
Photography by James E. Whitcraft

for the creation and viewing of these online videos. "There are almost always reasonably priced tickets available for sale. If you're going to complain about spending \$185 to see a Broadway show but drop \$400 (each!) to see Beyoncé then I have nothing to say except that those are your priorities!" (Simons, 2023, para. 2).

Los Angeles-based actor and Broadway veteran Harley Jay believes the industry should champion filming productions and using them to further engage with new audiences:

In a perfect world Broadway would film every show a week or two after it's opened, then if it closes, put it on a streaming service... like they do for the live musicals that were so popular (Grease Live, Sound of Music, Hairspray Live). That way if the show closes people can still see and try to understand why it closed. Maybe that process could breathe new life into that show if people did like it but couldn't see it in person" (Jay, 2023, para. 3).

Writers, producers, actors, and theatregoers benefit from the increased understanding and excitement towards live theatre. Bootlegging allows for the ability to connect with new customers for productions.

THE MUSICAL *RENT* WAS ACTIVELY BOOTLEGGED AND THAT ARGUABLY HELPED CREATE NATIONAL INTEREST IN THE PIECE.

Exposure for Artists

The debate about taking footage during Broadway performances reached a wider audience following an incident in May of 2022. Jesse Williams, while starring in the Broadway Revival of Richard Greenberg's *Take Me Out*, was filmed by an audience member while performing a nude scene. The Story of *Take Me Out* revolves around a major league baseball player coming out as homosexual, and it includes several scenes with naked male actors set within the locker room showers. Photos and video showing Williams undressed were shared on the internet. This sparked a widespread conversation across many media platforms about how and when it is appropriate to film someone.

In response to the filming, the revival's producer, Second Stage Theatre, had created a policy for the production that every audience member's phone was to be locked in secured pouches for the entirety of the performance. They announced additional security measures following the incident and issued this statement:

Taking naked pictures of anyone without their consent is highly objectionable and can have severe legal consequences. Posting it on the internet is a gross and unacceptable violation of trust between the actor and audience forged in the theater community. We are actively pursuing takedown requests and ask that no one participates in the distribution of these images. (White, 2022, para. 6)

News of the leak spread quickly, with newspaper and online articles addressing it as early as May 10th, 2022. There was even a discussion about the footage during an episode of ABC's long-running daytime talk show *The View* (Keller, 2022, para. 1). Following the incident and the related discussion, ticket sales for the production rose by 9% the following week, with an income of additional \$100,000. The following week, attendance was up an additional 6%, now at 96.8% with revenue again going up, this time an additional \$75,000. The concluding three weeks, the final weeks of the run, revenue and attendance would remain at these higher levels. It is apparent this incident raised the profile of the production and aided in its sales for the final month of the run. (Playbill.com, 2022)

Take Me Out shows a clear example of how online videos can affect a production, but they can also generate excitement for individual performers. Jesse Williams was already an established actor, but viral videos of theatrical performances are creating opportunities for lesser-known practitioners to rise to new heights in the industry. One clear example of this is Nichelle Lewis, currently starring in the Broadway-bound National Tour of *The Wiz*, who used social media to garner the attention of casting directors for the production. It was only

after posting a rendition of the show's song "Home" on TikTok that Lewis (who had previously appeared in a National Tour of *Hairspray* and on TV's *American Idol*) was able to gain consideration and ultimately win the role. This clearly translates to opportunities created by exposure from performances being posted on social media (Kennedy, 2023, para. 1). A bootleg of a high school, college, or even professional production allows for the opportunity for a young performer to be exposed to industry professionals seeking their particular talents.

Another opportunity these videos create are theatrical moments that can become viral sensations. There are many famous stories from Broadway shows and beyond of incidents that have occurred, that if captured by a bootlegger, could become part of the history of musical theatre as we know it. Harley Jay recalls an injury he suffered while starring in the main stem's production of *Rent*. "I busted the shit out of my hand during 'Halloween' when I punched the payphone. I'd like to know if I'd played it off well enough that no one knew I broke three knuckles" (Jay, 2023).

I, myself, am featured in a bootleg of a new musical which features several prominent Broadway actors. I find it exciting to be included in the cannon of musical theatre through this medium. It's now a part of the history of musicals and as Reside states in his aforementioned book, "future scholars studying musical will find that their primary texts are found not only in renowned institutional archives but also in digital repositories assembled by amateurs" (Reside, 2023, p. 125).



Expanding the Knowledge of the Artform

The current generation of high school and college age musical theatre students are growing up with exceedingly more access to information and content than any of the generations that came before them. Many of the younger performers I encounter, through my work as an educator and performer, regularly discuss engaging with bootlegs. For some, this can be a means to learning about material they would otherwise not have the opportunity to engage with. For others, it is an opportunity to learn more about songs and shows they are working on for their training. As educators and members of the industry, we should encourage the younger generation to be versed in as broad of knowledge of the cannon of theatrical material as possible. Bootlegs offer an opportunity for students and working artists to gain knowledge about the shows for which they may be preparing to audition, direct, or perform.

When speaking with a current BFA musical theatre student from one of the highest regarded programs in the country, he admitted to watching several bootlegs, but only as a means of preparing for an audition process. He had been taught to avoid engaging with them as it could hurt the industry he is training to join. "Bootlegs do help me understand the artform of musical theatre because I am able to watch professionals use the skills I am cultivating. It is so hard to tell performers not to watch bootlegs because you can learn so much and be inspired" (Student, 2023, para. 1).

According to Ryan Scobel, Assistant Professor of Musical Theatre at West Virginia University, it is important to point out to students and young performers that while bootlegs may be a tool to be used for a variety of purposes, "unlike a movie, TV show, or book, once we experience art, the only thing we are left with is the memory of the experience" (Scobel 2023, para. 2). That being said, Professor Scobel understands that young people use bootlegs as a worthwhile tool in learning about their artform and craft. "Bootlegs can help them become more aware of history, styles of performance, a larger catalog of shows, etc." He openly discusses bootlegs with his students and encourages them to watch them, but to do so "mindfully and with the knowledge of how the practice can affect the industry" (Scobel, 2023, para. 7).

CONCLUSION

The current generation of musical theatre students and young performers have grown up with access to illegally and legally filmed professional theatre productions. They are able to see some of the finest work from Broadway and beyond, streaming for free on their laptops and phones. Through this they have gained a greater understanding and knowledge of the artform as well as found inspiration to continue training towards a career or, in some cases, became aware for the first time that working in the theatre was a possible career path. These videos can help practitioners of musicals, old and young, better prepare for and learn more about productions they are working towards presenting. Bootlegs also bring new eyes to this beloved artform, and this medium can turn online viewers into paying physical audience members, thereby strengthening the future of theatres across the country and around the world.

As Charles McNulty discusses in his L.A. Times article "In a Year of Losses, Something Gained: Theatre Artfully Filmed," it is important to distinguish between the event of live theatre and the medium of filmed performance. McNulty reminds us that "nothing can replace the feeling of a group of strangers transforming over the course of a play or musical in a collective body known as an audience" (McNulty, 2020, para. 28). However, this tool of having filmed productions streamed on accessible devices creates a desire to be a part of and to experience first-hand the uniqueness of a theatrical event. It also helps build a larger, more diverse and more knowledgeable future generation of theatre artists and attendees.

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DON'T FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCTS: Ten Ways Musical Theatre Singing Training Can Be Counterintuitive



Melissa Treinkman, DMA

NATASHA, PIERRE, AND THE GREAT COMET OF 1812 | NOVEMBER 2023
Produced by Penn State Centre Stage
Directed by Christine O'Grady
Photography by William Wellman

“FOLLOW YOUR INSTINCTS. THAT’S WHERE TRUE WISDOM MANIFESTS ITSELF.” SO PROCLAIMS OPRAH WINFREY, ONE OF THE MOST INFLUENTIAL SELF-HELP GURUS OF THE PAST FIFTY YEARS (LOWE, 2023). WE ARE COMMONLY ADVISED TO TRUST OUR INSTINCTS, AND OF COURSE, THIS IS OFTEN EXCELLENT ADVICE. HOWEVER, IS IT POSSIBLE THAT OUR INSTINCTS OCCASIONALLY LEAD US ASTRAY AND MAY NOT ALWAYS SERVE OUR BEST INTERESTS?

Authors of the book *The Invisible Gorilla: And Other Ways Our Intuitions Deceive Us* would argue that following your gut feeling can be misleading and even dangerous (Chabris and Simons, 2012). At times, opting for the counterintuitive approach rather than the intuitive one appears to yield more favorable outcomes.

Indeed, sometimes the process of learning to sing involves learning to *ignore* our instincts and train in new habits that seem counter to what we'd expect to be effective. This paper will reveal ten ways that musical theatre singing training can be counterintuitive and explore pedagogical concepts to explain why singers sometimes need to do the opposite of what seems “natural.”

#1 SINGER IS RUNNING OUT OF BREATH

Counterintuitive solution: Don't take bigger breaths! At first, this may be shocking to the singer. Imagine these two common scenarios. A singer concludes a phrase in a manner that unmistakably reveals they were running out of air towards the end. Immediately, the singer acknowledges, “I know I just need to take a bigger breath before that phrase.” Similarly, choral conductors are famous (or infamous) for saying things like, “Mark ‘BB’ in your music so that you know to take a very ‘Big Breath’ before this phrase.” Instinctively, this makes sense: If you are running out of breath, take more breath! There are certainly situations where taking a bigger breath is the solution. However, in many cases, the counterintuitive solution to this problem is to refrain from taking bigger breaths. Rather, attend to vocal fold closure and proper breath support instead.

You don't need a lot of air to sing exceptionally well, and there is evidence that highly trained singers initiate singing tasks with less air in their lungs (i.e., at a lower point in their vital capacity) than less trained singers (Lam Tang et al., 2008, p. 631). The way a singer *utilizes* the air they inhale holds far more significance than the sheer volume of air in the lungs. If the singer has poor vocal fold adduction, leading to a breathy sound, taking and using more air can become incredibly fatiguing for the singer. Thus, it is important to remember that running out of breath does not automatically indicate that a bigger inhalation is required. The amount of air is likely appropriate, but if the vocal folds are not coming together cleanly, the inhaled air won't last long. Like a leaky valve, if the vocal folds do not seal efficiently, the singer will continually feel like they don't have enough air.

Working at the vocal fold level and striving to achieve better vocal fold closure is often a fruitful pursuit in this scenario. Plosive voiced consonants (B, D, and G) can be incorporated into vocal exercises to help the student achieve firmer vocal fold closure. Vocal fry is also an excellent tool that can be used in the voice studio to train

better adduction (Behrman and Haskell, 2008, p. 104). Once the vocal fold closure has improved, the teacher and singer can better assess if taking a bigger breath may be an appropriate solution. Oftentimes, solely working on adduction solves the issue of not having enough air.

#2 SINGER IS REACHING UP FOR HIGH NOTES

Counterintuitive solution: Think down as you ascend in pitch! Many beginning singers are tempted to reach up with their neck and chin as the pitches get higher. A singer straining to reach high notes with an elevated chin position is an image that many voice teachers are familiar with. Although somewhat counterintuitive, thinking *down* as the pitch goes *up* is a great way to train laryngeal stability. It is important to deprogram the instinct to use the larynx as a primary pitch changer, which is usually a sign of suboptimal vocal technique (Miller, 2004, p. 56).

Often, when a singer strains and tilts their head and neck upwards to reach high notes, it indicates an attempt to use an elevated larynx position to raise the pitch. In fact, this instinct to reach up for the higher notes by raising the larynx makes a lot of sense. Reaching up with the chin or elevating the head position has been shown to raise the larynx, via the hyoid bone, the bone that forms the upper perimeter of the larynx (Helsing, 1998, p. 364). When the larynx raises, vocal fold adduction typically increases (i.e., the vocal folds get tighter by squeezing together more firmly) (Zhang, 2021, p. 64). This heightened tension on the folds from increased adduction can result in pitch elevation. Thus, in reaching up with the chin, the student might very well achieve a higher pitch. It is important to acknowledge that the student is doing what they are doing for a very good reason, and it will work, to a point. However, the larynx should not be the main way singers change pitch. Vocal fold lengthening through engagement of the cricothyroid muscle is a much more efficient method of changing the pitch and has been shown to be an attribute of trained singers (Lam Tang et al., 2008, p. 627).

Larynx position should mostly be about style, rather than pitch. Different vocal styles require different larynx positions, but excellent singing rarely calls for a larynx that is being pulled drastically up and down with changing pitch (Miller, 2004, p. 57). For example, opera generally calls for a lower larynx position and many contemporary singing styles tend to use a higher larynx position. It is common to see opera singers tuck the chin slightly while singing, which likely helps to encourage a lower larynx position. Contemporary singers sometimes do the opposite and several prominent musical theatre pedagogues recommend lifting the chin as a way to raise the larynx, in order to achieve a contemporary sound (Hall, 2023; The Naked Vocalist, 2017; Popeil “Head Position”, 2010). In all styles of singing, however, the larynx position should help the singer achieve the desired style, rather than the pitch. Besides being less efficient, following the pitch with the larynx often leads to jerky sounding singing and a forced or strained sound.

While reaching up with the chin to get the note might seem helpful in the moment, in the long run it is going to be counterproductive to a solid vocal technique. Counteracting this instinct can be achieved by thinking down while ascending in pitch or visualizing all the notes on the same plane. If the larynx doesn't raise for pitch, the vocal folds will be more inclined to do their job and stretch, through the action of the cricothyroid, to achieve the pitch. When it comes to hitting the high notes, stretching the folds is preferable to squeezing them. Stretching takes more skill and may require longer periods of training compared to the “quick fix” of instinctively lifting the chin as the pitches ascend.

#3 SINGER WANTS A BIG, POWERFUL BELT

Counterintuitive solution: Sing in head voice a lot! It is common for singers to want to improve the power of their “belt” voice. In the article “The Multiplicity of Belting,” belt is described as a style of singing in musical theatre that is “speech-like or yell-like” in character (Popeil, 2007, p. 77). It typically implies that a chest voice sound is being carried up higher than its native range. This sought-after, thrilling sound is frequently pursued by well-intentioned singers who persistently strain their upper chest voice to extreme limits with the misguided hope that the desired sound will eventually manifest. In this case, the counterintuitive solution may surprise the aspiring belter: “Cross-train” your voice by singing in head voice a lot. Mary Saunders Barton coined the phrase “Bel Canto/Can Belto” to describe the benefits of cross-training for musical theatre singers (Spivey and Saunders Barton, 2018, p. 17)

In many cases, singers aspiring to belt have neglected the lighter mechanism of their voices and would greatly benefit from embracing the virtues of cross-training. Most healthy belt sounds are, in actuality, a heavier version of a mix voice. Several elite pedagogues agree that to excel in a mix voice, one needs to learn to incorporate, or “mix,” elements of head voice into the chest voice sounds (Roll, 2016, p. 639.e8). If the singer has not created a solid foundation in both chest voice and head voice, the mix will likely remain elusive because the singer will not be able to access the lighter, more flexible qualities that contribute to a good mix. In other words, the voice will tend to be too heavy if chest voice sounds have been prioritized. This can be a difficult problem to solve in some singers because a vicious cycle gets created. First, a singer neglects head voice because they prefer to belt. This resulting lack of use causes the head voice to get progressively weaker. Then, even when the singer is encouraged to use head voice, it is an unappealing proposition since it is very weak and, oftentimes, unimpressive. The singer may recoil from such a sound and be inclined to use it even less, which leads to more instability of this register.

To encourage hesitant singers to venture outside their comfort zone, it is essential to find examples of successful singers who excel in both a belt sound and a head voice sound. Having role models will encourage singers to “buy in” to the teacher’s approach and make them more amenable to the potentially painstaking process of cultivating an underdeveloped head voice register. See Table 1 for a list of singers and time-stamped examples of each of them proving their mastery of cross-training. It is no accident that some of the best belters in the industry are also the most facile at going back and forth between registers.

#4 SINGER SOUNDS “SHOUTY”

Counterintuitive solution: Don’t get louder as the pitches get higher! When a singer sounds like they are shouting, sometimes the solution is simple: Use less volume and avoid getting louder as the pitches get higher. Listening to a singer with powerful high notes, it is easy to assume this sound is produced with a lot of volume. Often, however, loud and powerful singing is not produced in a loud fashion. Unconsciously or consciously, singers may give more volume than is necessary for the higher notes in an attempt to attain a strong, exciting sound. By reducing the volume, the sound often becomes less heavy, while maintaining its exhilarating quality. Plus, musical theatre singers may need to be reminded that there are virtually no situations in which they will perform without amplification (O’Toole, 1995, p. 4). Relying on the microphone to create the volume is typically a crucial element of making it through a grueling eight show week.

While using less air for high notes is a relatively simple solution, it is far from easy to accomplish for many singers. It takes a great amount of skill to keep the volume the same as the pitch ascends. When it comes to musical theatre belting, singers are often relying on a high amount of breath pressure to maintain a chesty register (McCoy, 2019, p. 237). The added breath tends to cause the vocal folds to bulk up and increase adduction, making the sound stronger and more chest-dominant. Once that breath pressure is removed, singers may flip to head voice, due to an impaired coordination of the vocal folds to maintain their strength without the added air. If maintaining the desired register is dependent on breath, this serves as an indication that some technique work will be required to ensure the vocal folds can control their own destiny. In other words, if the vocal folds are relying on volume to create the belt sound, the inevitable result will be a shouty singer.

#5 SINGER THINKS THEY SOUND BAD

Counterintuitive solution: No listening and judging yourself as you sing! For singers who possess the perfectionist “gene” and find it hard not to engage in constant self-critique, this can prove to be an exceptionally challenging proposition. Singers might wonder how it would even be possible not to listen to themselves as they sing. Naturally, the singer will still *hear* themselves as they sing but that is different from *listening* and, most importantly, listening judgmentally.

It can often be helpful to explain to the singer that by the time the sound of their voice hits their ear, it is already in the past and it is too late to change that past sound. Trying to change something that happened in the past is a futile endeavor, in singing and in life! A valuable substitute to listening to oneself real-time is the act of self-recording, which allows musicians to engage in constructive critique following completion of a practice

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session (Suzuki and Mitchell, 2022, p. 627). Many voice students shy away from recording themselves because they find it unbearable to listen to their own singing. It is imperative to be able to at least tolerate listening to oneself. Singers should record their own practice sessions and “practice” listening to themselves often, no matter how difficult it is initially. The more often singers listen to themselves on a recording, the easier it will become. Apps like Marco Polo or Voxer can be used to share practice videos and serve as a way for the teacher to check in on the student between lessons. If nothing else, it is an excuse for students to record themselves and practice self-assessment. When sending a practice video, the teacher can request that the student share one thing they liked about the recording and one thing they’d like to improve.

The willingness to make unfinished sounds during practice and lessons is essential for vocal progress. “I sound so bad” will often come out of the mouth of a student who is trying to make a sound that is new or out of their comfort zone. Oftentimes, the sounds that teachers ask their students to produce are not meant to be the final product and sounds that are not “beautiful” can be highly useful from a pedagogical standpoint. Researcher and speech-language pathologist Dr. Aaron Johnson calls these sounds “UBU”: Ugly But Useful (Johnson, 2022). Technical progress will be much slower for a singer who is terrified of making ugly, unfinished sounds and the willingness to fail is essential to learning. Like the famous pop icon Ed Sheeran said, “You learn nothing from success. You learn everything from the failures... Success happens from failing hundreds of times” (Beard, 2023).

#6 SINGER IS CRACKING ON HIGH NOTES

Counterintuitive solution: Love and welcome the cracks! Many singers avoid cracking at all costs and go to great lengths to prevent their voice from cracking, even during training sessions. This is understandable, given the embarrassment that may come from making an unintended sound. The avoidance of cracking may be compounded by the fact that some singers may believe that cracking is harmful to the voice. The opposite is often true, and singers need to be reminded that just because it sounds “bad,” does not mean it is vocally unhealthy. Many voice pedagogues build mix voice by encouraging singers to actively slide through their “break” and practice accepting the unstable, yodeling sensation that inevitably results (Rosenberg and LeBorgne, 2014, p. 99).

What if teachers could reframe cracking so that singers were able to embrace it as an important part of their vocal journey? Admittedly, this is no small feat, but it is helpful to start with an understanding of what is happening when the voice “cracks” or “breaks.” A crack happens when the voice unexpectedly flips from one register to

another. Typically, singers experience this when they are intending to make a chest voice sound (also called Mode 1) and the voice suddenly “cracks” into head voice (also called Mode 2), either completely or just momentarily, as the vocal folds experience a transition from “thick to thin” (Rosenberg and LeBorgne, 2014, p. 104).

When vocal breaks happen, instead of becoming upset and feeling like a failure, the singer should ask, “What is the crack trying to tell me?” In the case of the voice cracking from chest to head, the voice is trying to tell the singer that it is “desiring” a lighter register. The sound may have gotten too heavy due to excessive thyroarytenoid activation and in response, the vocal folds will react by letting go of their thickness, which will often result in the singer flipping into head voice. As a singer is working on the mix voice, flipping (or cracking) into head voice is a necessary part of the process in finding the balance between chest and head voice, which is the reason why many pedagogues encourage it (Rosenberg and LeBorgne, 2014, p. 99). The Goldilocks analogy proves helpful in illustrating this endeavor. The first sound is too chesty. The next sound is too heady. The winner is something in between: just the right mix! Using a combination of vocal fold adjustments and resonance tuning, teachers and singers may spend a great deal of time figuring out this part of the voice and much trial and error is usually involved. As stated in the previous section, in the process of building a voice, allowing things to be messy and unfinished is vital.

Lastly, acceptance is key. Once the singer accepts cracking as a natural part of the process and mentally welcomes it, often they find that cracks diminish or even disappear! There is a psychological aspect to cracking and fear of cracking makes it infinitely worse (Rosenberg and LeBorgne, 2014, p. 98). Cracking is just part of building the voice and the more it is avoided or prevented, the more tension will be built up in the system, making continued cracking more likely. Embracing the cracks can serve as a powerful metaphor for fostering self-love, acceptance, and granting ourselves the freedom to be imperfect.

#7 SINGER IS SINGING FLAT

Counterintuitive solution: Don’t try to correct the pitch—initially! It doesn’t take years of singing training to hold the belief that out of tune singing is “bad” singing. Contestants on popular reality singing shows often face the dreaded critique: “You’re pitchy.” Much like cracking, singing flat or out of tune is usually avoided at all costs.

Undoubtedly, singing in tune is an extremely important quality of a professional musician. However, putting

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“pitch on a pedestal” can be highly problematic when it comes to building a solid vocal technique because in attempting to correct the pitch, singers often use sub-optimal vocal technique (New York Vocal Coaching, 2013). Common solutions to correcting the pitch include pushing a lot of breath and volume, excessively lifting the larynx, tensing the tongue or jaw, and pressing the vocal folds. These aforementioned solutions to pitch correction add **tension** to the system, which can have the desired effect of raising the pitch. The pitch may be correct, but it comes at a cost: the resulting sound will often be strained, tight, or too heavy. Good technique would dictate that the vocal folds should increase their length to achieve the correct pitch (via cricothyroid activation), which adds the necessary tension to the system more optimally (as discussed above in #2).

In order to avoid ingraining bad technical habits, which can be deleterious to vocal health, the first priority in voice training should not be correcting the pitch. If the first priority is to sing perfectly in tune, the singer will likely use one or more of the “cheat” mechanisms available to them, which is often faster and easier than building the desired technical skill set. Working on singing skillfully and trusting that the correct pitch will follow in time may be counterintuitive and take a leap of faith on the part of the singer.

#8 SINGER SOUNDS TOO “NASAL”

Counterintuitive solution: First, check your understanding of the term “nasal.” There are few subjects in the world of voice that are as misunderstood as the word “nasality.” For many singers, teachers, and the general public, the word “nasality” is confused with an excessively bright tone, sometimes called “twang” (Perna, “Nasality Deconstructed”, 2020, p. 430). Fran Drescher’s voice in *The Nanny* is often labeled extremely “nasal,” for example. In actuality, the main quality that we hear in her voice is excessive brightness, due to an abundance of boosted higher harmonics. What is most likely creating this sound is a higher larynx position and/or her use of twang, caused by epilaryngeal narrowing. Both of these physiological events are created in the larynx and do not have anything to do with the nose (Saldias et al., 2021, p. 807.e3). The term “nasal” is a continued semantic problem in the world of vocal pedagogy. For example, one study showed that when asked to rate the degree of nasality in a singing voice, 88% of voice teachers labeled a sample with the **lowest** level of nasality as “extremely nasal” or “somewhat nasal” (Perna, “Do you hear what I see”, 2015, p. 7).

To clear up misunderstandings regarding nasal resonance, it can be helpful to think of the soft palate as the “nose-gate,” closing off or giving access to the nasal cavity. When the soft palate is lifted, it blocks access to resonance in the nasal cavity, confining resonance to the oral cavity and pharynx. Varying degrees of “nasalance,” wherein the soft palate is somewhat lowered, allowing airflow through the nose, is not associated with an overly bright, twangy sound. Rather, when the soft palate is lowered (allowing for nasal resonance) the resulting sound has a “humming” quality. Experiment with the sound made by the three nasal consonants, [m], [n], and [ŋ], because the soft palate must be lowered to create these consonants (Malde, 2017, p. 205).

The distinction between nasal resonance and an extremely bright sound is important because voice teachers need to make sure they are fixing the correct problem. If a teacher diagnoses a singer as being too nasal, the solution is to raise the soft palate, which blocks the air from going into the nose. However, if the bright sound is being mistaken for a “nasal” sound, then raising the soft palate is not the appropriate solution. Rather, the bright, piercing sound is probably an issue with a high larynx and an overuse of twang. Thus, some larynx lowering work would likely be quite beneficial. Lowering the larynx lengthens the vocal tract, thereby lowering the formant frequencies and making the sound less strident (McCoy, 2019, p. 67).

Voice teachers and students who think that a bright sound is an issue with a drooping soft palate will be on a constant quest to raise the soft palate. This may work somewhat, since many people will instinctively lower the larynx while they are trying to raise the soft palate. Still, even if the singer achieves the desired outcome (less brightness) this approach lacks precision and anatomical accuracy. It can also be problematic when the singer wants to **intentionally** add actual nasal resonance to the sound, which has been shown to have potential benefits to classical singers (Gill et al., 2020, p. 351; Echternach et al., 2021, p. 500.e16). Adding nasalance lowers all formant frequencies, providing a dampening effect on the sound (McCoy, 2019, p. 244). For musical theatre singers who want to make their belt sound less heavy, this is great news because the nasalance



essentially acts as a shock absorber for the voice, due to the dampening effect of the lower formants. When a singer is on the edge of becoming too strident or yell-like, a slight dampening of the sound can be extremely helpful. Brightening the sound by elevating the larynx or adding twang, raises the formant frequencies and therefore adds strength to the sound. Since these two outcomes are diametrically opposed, it is important that bright singing and nasal singing are distinguished as separate physiological events, even if they are sometimes combined and used to counterbalance one another.

#9 SINGER IS SINGING THE CORRECT RHYTHM BUT SOUNDS ROBOTIC

Counterintuitive solution: Make micro-changes to the rhythm to reflect speech! Even though it is important for singers to honor the composer's intent and learn the notes and rhythms correctly, being overly faithful to the exact, written rhythms is often a recipe for a "wooden" sounding singer. Learning to inflect the sung text as if it were speech can be the defining factor in transforming an amateur-sounding singer into a professional. Small micro-changes to the rhythm make the singer sound more organic and spontaneous, giving the impression that the singer is coming up with the words on the spot (Magaziner, 2023).

It can be challenging to maintain the same inflection when transitioning from speech to singing, but it is worth the time it takes to complete this process. Start learning a new song by speaking the text as a monologue so that the interpretation of the words can exist independently of the musical setting. Next, to build a solid musical foundation for any song, it is a good idea to meticulously learn the exact notes and rhythms. Once this work is complete, it is time to return to speaking the text so that the spoken inflections can be integrated into the sung music. Repeatedly speaking the text of a phrase before seamlessly transitioning into singing is a useful exercise, as it tricks the voice into retaining the freedom of speech. Similarly, it can be helpful to speak the text in a similar range to the actual pitches, further erasing the difference between singing and speaking.

As a bonus, speech-like singing often improves vocal technique. There is an eighteenth-century Italian voice pedagogy adage, "Si canta come si parla," which means, "You should sing like you speak" (Miller, 2004, p. 84). Speech-like singing can aid the singer in getting the proper amount of air on the inhale, helps to avoid over-breathing, and encourages a consistent stream of breath. Additionally, speech-like singing tends to appropriately regulate vocal fold thickness and can guard against excessive vocal weight. Perhaps most importantly, speech-like singing can get singers out of a perfectionist brain. Speaking usually carries less "baggage" than singing due to our familiarity with speech, allowing singers to release unnecessary tension.

Speak more, sing less. Although counter to what one would expect to hear from a singing teacher, for many, this mantra can be just as valuable as the most detailed vocal technique work they ever do. Although simple to describe, talking on pitch can be very difficult to execute. Surprisingly, incorporating more speech-like qualities into the singing voice enhances the singer's sound and the audience will tend to perceive the performance as more authentic.

#10 SINGER IS "IN THEIR HEAD"

Counterintuitive solution: Let the acting be the focus! Sometimes the acting solves the technical problems because it diverts the singer's attention away from thinking *too* technically, which can have the unintended tendency of tying them into knots (Hemsley, 1998, p. 7). Counterintuitively, this over-focus on vocal technique can cause the vocal technique to suffer. Musical theatre students sometimes become prey to this challenge when they walk into the voice studio. Since it is a *singing* lesson, they decide to focus completely on vocal technique and getting everything "right" technically. A gentle reminder in this scenario might be: There are no singers, only singing-actors. Singing and acting are inseparable for musical theatre performers and should be continuously trained together. Emphasizing the acting also encourages an external focus of attention, which has been shown to improve measures of automaticity, wherein the singer doesn't have to think about every body movement and can achieve more fluid, natural movements (Wulf, 2013, p. 77).

One simple way to bring acting into the voice studio in a simple and efficient manner is to use action words. Many acting methods employ the use of actions because it tends to be easier to act an action than it is to act

an emotion. Additionally, action words, in the form of infinitive verbs, naturally create nuanced variations in vocal color, an attribute of exceptional singing. Singers can use a thesaurus to figure out action verbs for each phrase (e.g., to discover, to delight, to jump, to yearn). Alternatively, the book **Actions: The Actor's Thesaurus** is an excellent resource to have in the musical theatre voice studio (Caldarone and Lloyd-Williams, 2004). There is also an app, making it even more convenient to quickly find action verbs that inspire the singer and help them get out of their head.

LETTING GO OF THE FAMILIAR

Raymond Lindquist said, "Courage is the power to let go of the familiar" (White, 2023). What's familiar can often feel "right" to a singer and breaking habitual patterns can be one of the most challenging aspects of training a voice. Branching outside of the familiar is often very unsettling, scary, and counterintuitive. One of the most important jobs of a voice teacher is to encourage singers to make choices that may go against their instincts. Relying solely on instincts and "common sense," singers may not pursue certain paths that could prove to be highly beneficial to their training. Cheering them on, as they courageously let go of the familiar, is a gift that teachers can give their students.

Table 1: Examples of Singers Who Show Mastery of Head Voice Singing & Belt Singing

Singer	Head Voice example (soprano)	Chest Voice example (belter)
Sierra Boggess	Wishing You Were Somehow Here Again https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_T0ME2xrP2g (2:17-2:26)	Live Out Loud https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3RzsQJHYsHI (2:22-2:45)
Eva Noblezada	With You https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B4Zt3cNsQLU (1:15-1:25)	I'd Give my Life for You https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z7gz7PIfHk8 (4:07-4:25)
Jessie Mueller	Vanilla Ice Cream https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L99a2Tl_lgE (2:01-2:25)	She Used to be Mine https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Erjqd6wwRuU (2:28-2:49)
Cynthia Erivo	Somewhere https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQ32cGqgdE (1:18-1:30)	I'm Here https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aRQ-8KzVsTk (2:54-3:20)
Laura Osnes	If I Loved You https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5ExnfSjfOMw (2:04-2:23)	Hopelessly Devoted to You https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f0dpbT3dNrI (1:10-1:30)
Phillipa Soo	Laurie's Song https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9eWdjsKy_bE (3:45-4:10)	Burn https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sShAKG6VzrM (1:18-1:35)
Sutton Foster	Morning Person https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sjf0SbpnHXI (:44-:53)	Gimme Gimme https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JUvAXGC7y5c (2:25-2:40)
Lindsay Mendez	Mister Snow https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d3CtAFAQ_FM (4:23-4:52)	The Wizard and I https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6VXwBzeGIBk (3:32-3:52)
Rachel Zegler	I Have a Love https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wdCt2Y92rkA (3:25-3:45)	What Baking can Do https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IX3CMkwbZ-4 (2:10-2:27)

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PREVENTION NOT INTERVENTION: Stewarding Healthier Singers into University Musical Theatre Programs

by Stephannie M. Moore, DMA



“If you’re gonna do it, do it right. Shouldn’t be no half-stepping—put 100 percent in it. Be diligent, do your homework, stay focused...”

—E-40 (qtd. in Edwards, *How to Rap* 312)

In recent years, singing voice research has become increasingly inclusive of non-classical styles. Studies on the risky vocal demands of contemporary commercial music are readily available, but less available are suggested methods for addressing these challenges. Voice injury **prevention** is not nearly as studied as voice injury **intervention**. The aim of this article is to open a conversation about vocal injury prevention for young musical theatre performers, one of the most vulnerable singing populations. While nowhere near an exhaustive listing, it will provide some rudimentary tools for musical theatre educators who work with pre-college-aged singers.

We now have access to quite a few studies that explain some of the key risk factors of musical theatre singing. Research on the “belt” voice has demonstrated that the vocal folds spend more time in the closed phase than in the open phase during oscillation, meaning that the cord surfaces make contact more frequently than they do in light lyric/non-dramatic classical singing or musical theatre “legit” singing. This increased contact naturally increases the potential for surface injury. In addition, belt singing requires high intensity muscular activity in both the intrinsic and extrinsic laryngeal muscles of the larynx—considerably more than in other genres (Estill, 1988). In discussing high school and undergraduate musical theatre singers, Burdick writes, “No matter how hard one must work to sing an opera aria, one must work harder vocally to belt a song, not only with the vocal folds but with the intrinsic muscles as well” (Burdick, 2005, p. 261). Even with the best approaches to safe singing and reliable vocal technique, all musical theatre singers are vulnerable.

In a study by Michelle M. Bretl et al at the University of Miami, singers across three genres—classical, CCM, and musical theatre—were evaluated via videostroboscopy and other tools at intervals during their four-year undergraduate degree. All three groups were assessed during the first semester of their freshman year and the study concluded that 32% of entering musical theatre students exhibited some form of vocal fold pathology. This was nearly double the incidence of CCM singers (18%) and among classical singers, no pathology was identified (Bretl et al., 2022, p. 3).

Voice challenges can be expected in any circumstance where there is a high intensity of vocal activity, but it’s highly concerning that nearly a third of musical theatre singers were already compromised even before the demands of college or professional careers. A prior study by some of the same authors revealed an even higher incidence—40% (Lloyd et al., 1998, 1996). If these studies represent a typical percentage of entering musical theatre undergrads across universities, then we need to take a critical look at how we are preparing—or underpreparing—musical theatre students for their college careers. What if we could pre-emptively address the risks of voice injury before they even happen, delivering healthier singers to their chosen college programs?

First-year undergraduate musical theatre students hit the ground running with voice-related coursework for many hours a day and rehearsal and performing activities that often go late into the night. These schedules impose a dramatic increase in demand on the singing voice in comparison to the schedule of a typical high school singer. All musical theatre singers are vulnerable to injury given this demand, but for the student who starts their program with a pre-existing pathology, they may be at a considerably higher vocal risk—especially if that pathology has yet to be diagnosed.

Not all universities emphasize vocal hygiene education at the outset of their degree programs and the incoming musical theatre student may face unique obstacles in finding voice care. Stigma around voice injury often prevents



students from reaching out for help, especially if vocal health experts are not readily visible. When medical specialists are identified, there may be a lack of convenient access to such facilities since student health services on campus don't necessarily include specialists in laryngology. Appointment times may be limited or not available for weeks or months, which is not helpful for a student with an acute injury. Additionally, with such rigorous class, rehearsal, and performing schedules, students have limited time for appointments or for on-going rehabilitation or voice therapy. All of these circumstances, combined with the fact that young students may not have the habit of addressing their own medical care without parental guidance, contribute to the delay in appropriate medical intervention. These complications make a strong case for the need of pre-college injury prevention. For those of us working in higher education musical theatre programs, it would certainly support the success of our programs by welcoming a great number of incoming students with a baseline of vocal fold health.

Professionals serving in directorial positions of high school musicals undoubtedly have a wide variety of skills and expertise—this is not in question—but not all teachers and coaches will be specialized in such topics as singing voice science, the fragility of the developing pubescent voice, vocal fold pathologies, or basic vocal hygiene. Production periods are high-pressure circumstances with tight deadlines and tight budgets. It is reasonable to assume that time and money are at a premium. That said, the interventions below are not costly, they are readily accessible to both students and instructors alike and could be easily worked into production timelines with little disruption.

Vocal Health Education

In many cases, singers are exposed to very little understanding of the fragility of their instruments until they face their first voice obstacle—whether in the form of a fully-diagnosed pathology or just an episode of vocal fatigue that prevents optimal voice production. For younger singers, the concepts of voice preservation, vocal hygiene, or singing with a foundation of vocal safety are not often addressed in their initial, pre-college performing environments. It would be easy to convey a basic amount of information about voice care to young singers, ideally at the beginning of a musical's production period.

Music directors are not necessarily voice pedagogues or voice scientists and can't be expected to embody all the awareness needed to keep aspiring young performers healthy. That said, there is abundant information online via journal articles, pamphlets, and videos that address comprehensive care of the voice. These sources address such areas as hydration, diet, avoiding phono trauma, and substances that are harmful to the voice (i.e., smoking, vaping, and alcohol). Those of us in the voice industry often take this information for granted and forget that what seems obvious in terms of voice hygiene is not common knowledge for young singers. There are many resources online, but here are just a few concise options that are not heavy on medical jargon and could be shared. All of these should be easily digested by a typical high school student. Links to these resources can be found at the end of this article:





Vocal Health Information: Comprehensive pamphlet published by the Duke Voice Care Center including topics of hydration, impacts of medication, voice misuse, vocal hygiene products, general vocal hygiene information, a sampling of voice-related conditions, and suggestions for frequent voice users (Vocal Health Information, n.d.).

Maintaining Vocal Health: Website of the University of Michigan Vocal Health Center including topics of voice-use environments, vocal warm-ups, optimizing posture and breath use, voice production, hydration, diet, and voice complaint troubleshooting (Maintaining Vocal Health, n.d.).

Taking Care of Your Voice: Website of the National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders including topics of laryngeal physiology, symptoms and causes of vocal problems, hydration, diet, and appropriate voice use (Taking Care of Your Voice, n.d.).

Voice Care: Website of the University of Texas at Austin Department of Otolaryngology including symptoms and suggested solutions related to topics of hydration, mucus management, irritated voice, and reflux (Voice Care, n.d.).

If resources allow, it would be ideal to invite a local vocal health specialist (i.e., laryngologist or speech language pathologist) to present information at the beginning of the musical production period. This would allow for a personalized dissemination of information that would likely have a more memorable impact on students than simply reading through written content. In addition, it could provide an opportunity for students to ask questions or share concerns and forge a human connection to local vocal health resources, should it ever become necessary to seek intervention.

Self-Administration of the SVHI-10 and the EASE

Voice clinicians use a variety of assessments to determine changes and challenges in the voice. While the majority of these assessments must be conducted in consort with a voice professional, two assessments come to mind that could be easily self-administered by any singers—the Singing Voice Handicap Index-10 (SVHI-10) (Cohen et al., 2009) and the Evaluation of the Ability to Sing Easily (EASE) (Phyland et al., 2014). Both are invaluable tools for any singer to use to assess the ongoing comfort status of their own singing voice.

The SVHI-10 assessment includes ten statements about the singer's perception of their own singing, and the singer rates their responses on a scale of 0 through 4, where 0 means "never" and 4 means "always." The ten statements include:

1. It takes a lot of effort to sing.
2. I am unsure of what will come out when I sing.
3. My voice gives out on me while I am singing.
4. My singing voice upsets me.
5. I have no confidence in my singing voice.
6. I have trouble making my voice do what I want it to.
7. I have to push it to produce my voice when singing.
8. My singing voice tires easily.
9. I feel something is missing in my life because of my inability to sing.
10. I am unable to use my high voice.

Generally speaking, a score of ≥ 20 on the SVHI-10 is considered abnormal (Gochman et al., 2023, 1), and if students are scoring 20 or above, this may indicate that there is an existing pathology and they would likely benefit from visiting a voice clinic.

Like the SVHI-10, the EASE (Evaluation of Ability to Sing Easily) is another self-assessment that is easy for young singers to administer and use to keep track of their vocal condition. The EASE is more focused on specific perceptions on a given day, rather than the more generalized statements of the SVHI-10. Responses are scored from 0 to 4, where 0 indicates "not at all" and 4 indicates "extremely." Statements of the EASE include:

1. My voice is husky.
2. My voice is dry/scratchy.
3. My voice cracks and breaks.
4. My throat muscles are feeling over-worked.
5. My voice is breathy.
6. My singing voice feels good.
7. The onsets of my notes are delayed or breathy.
8. My voice feels strained.
9. I am worried about my voice.
10. I am having difficulty with my breath for long phrases.
11. My top notes are breathy.
12. My voice sounds rich and resonant.
13. My voice is cutting out on some notes.
14. I am having difficulty singing softly.
15. My voice is tired.
16. I am having difficulty changing registers.
17. I am having difficulty with my high notes.
18. Singing feels like hard work.
19. I am having difficulty projecting my voice.
20. I am concerned about my voice.
21. My voice feels ready for performance if required.
22. I am having difficulty sustaining long notes.

Since the statements of the EASE refer to both positive and negative experiences of the voice, a score is not obtained by a total of responses. Instead, it would be useful for students to self-administer the EASE at intervals and monitor their responses to track changes in the voice—both positive and negative.

Fillable templates for the SVHI-10 and the EASE are readily found online. High school vocal coaches and music directors could have students fill out one of these assessments at prescribed intervals—i.e., weekly or bi-weekly—throughout a musical's rehearsal and performance period. The first assessment would be administered during the first week of rehearsal, providing a baseline score for each student by adding up the numbers of each response. Any changes in the score over time—in particular, a score that indicates increased vocal challenge—would be monitored with remedies applied as needed. For instance, if a student indicates that their voice is feeling more tired, more pushed, or more unreliable, the coach or director might suggest modified vocal rest, marking in rehearsal, or a review of good habits of voice hygiene to help identify any contributing causes. If the challenge persists, medical intervention might be considered.

Voice injury in young singers can come about in a variety of ways—misuse, poor or undeveloped vocal technique to name just a few—but one often unaddressed reason is a simple lack of awareness around the perception of their own instrument. Both the SVHI-10 and the EASE provide tangible information about the condition of a student's voice, but perhaps more importantly, they open the door to developing the habit of self-reflective perception of their own vocal instrument, an essential skill for all singers to embody. Self-monitoring their own voices, students will begin to develop accountability around the care of their instruments and learn about choices within their own control that may determine singing outcomes. Familiarizing themselves with the content of these assessments may also bring students new awareness about vocal sensations during rehearsal or other periods of high vocal demand, possibly leading to more cautious vocal choices.

Adequate Vocal Warm-Up and Cool Down

Vocal coaches and music directors likely devote a few minutes of each rehearsal time to a vocal warm-up, but are they choosing exercises in any kind of strategic fashion? What vocal qualities, physical ideals, or sonic results are they targeting with their chosen warm up exercises? At the very least, topics related to appropriate



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posture and alignment, minimization of tension, emphasis on diaphragmatic breathing, and the importance of singing into the resonance (and not into neck sensations) should be addressed as part of the warm up and monitored throughout the rehearsal period. It's not enough to say "sing this" or "mimic this" to a group of inexperienced teenage singers and expect that they will be able to comply with a basis of singing voice safety. Proprioceptive awareness of the vocal instrument is developed over years of time and young singers will produce unhealthy sounds without even realizing they are doing so.

The larynx of the high school singer is going through an intense developmental mutation and it's especially important that coaches and directors continually monitor for unhealthy sounds, excessive vocal effort, visible neck tension, thrusting chin position, and vocal fatigue that arises after only a short time singing or does not fully resolve over a period of days or weeks. A student's instrument will go through changes that may make the voice feel finicky and difficult at times and when voice production is not monitored by a voice professional, there is the tendency to develop compensatory habits that may contribute to injury. These habits will eventually need to be addressed to ensure healthful singing. Ideally, with proper guidance during the mutation, the student can avoid harmful habits and possibly avoid entering a college degree program with an injury.

Experienced vocal coaches and music directors are likely to have a collection of warm ups they already use for opening up the voice, but for those without significant background in vocal technique, Dr. Ingo Titze's five suggested warm ups, as published in the *Journal of Singing*, are excellent for working on vocal agility, range extension, and muscle coordination for any style of singing. The exercises and prescribed purpose are summarized below.

Exercise 1: Lip and/or tongue trills, humming, tube (i.e., straw) phonation using glides, scales, or arpeggios across a broad range of pitches.

Purpose: Engages breath mechanics, minimizes sub-glottal pressure, and encourages optimal vocal fold closure.

Exercise 2: Two-octave glides on high vowels /i/ and /u/—first descending, then ascending and descending. ("High" implies that the tongue is in an upward arched position.)

Purpose: Provides adequate stretch of the vocal folds, isolates and coordinates the thyroarytenoid and cricothyroid muscles muscle pairs to smooth out "breaks" in registration.

Exercise 3: Scales on /a/-/i/ with tongue extension and forward roll.

Purpose: Encourages independence of the mechanisms of phonation and articulation, frees tension from the tongue and jaw.

Exercise 4: *Messa di voce*, i.e., ***crescendo*** and ***diminuendo*** on a single, sustained pitch, first on high vowels and then on low vowels. (“Low” implies that the tongue is in a relatively flat position.)

Purpose: Coordinates fine motor control of the intrinsic laryngeal muscles with breath pressure/air flow.

Exercise 5: *Arpeggii* using staccato articulation.

Purpose: Rapid coordination of balanced vocal onset and offset.

For Titze’s full descriptions, consult the article directly (Titze, 2001, p. 51).

Straw phonation, as indicated by the first exercise above, has become a popular form of vocal warm-up, and there is no shortage of online examples of its practice. Many singers enjoy the perceived effects such as enhanced tone clarity and ease of phonation, but singers may not realize that straw phonation is also therapeutic for vocal fatigue and can aid voice recovery more effectively than vocal rest (Kang et al., 2020). Young singers would likely benefit from introduction to straw phonation, and Dr. Titze’s videos provide excellent examples, including Ingo Titze’s *Tip for Tired Voices: Grab a Straw!*, a five-minute video aimed at stretching the vocal folds and relieving excess pressure (National Center for Voice and Speech, 2010).

Vocal warm-ups are generally considered standard practice, but less emphasis has been placed upon the value of cooling down the voice. Music directors and vocal coaches would support the vocal health of their students by incorporating a cool down period at the end of every rehearsal. Exercises might include ascending and descending pitch glides in a comfortable range at medium volume, glides using straw phonation, and humming exercises such as [m]-[i]-[m]-[e]-[m]-[c]-[m]-[a] on a single sustained note to activate resonant voice (RV) (Ragan, 2018, p. 522). RV exercises enhance the buzzing sensations in the forward part of the oral cavity to minimum muscular hyperfunction in phonation. There is research that demonstrates that RV exercises after heavy voice use aids in reducing vocal fold inflammation (Verdolini Abbott et al., 2012).

The task of maintaining vocal health for a singing professional is an ambitious one for any style of singer, especially those who work or intend to work in the musical theatre industry. Even with a strong vocal technique and conscious awareness of protecting the voice, every singer is vulnerable. There is no reason to hold off on sharing knowledge or technical tools to potentially circumvent vocal injury—early education will benefit a singer for their entire career. The sooner we educate students about the importance of vocal self-care, the more they will understand what aspects of health are within their own control, which can only enhance their confidence upon entering the intensive training of a musical theatre degree program.

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Challenges Encountered by Female Producers on Broadway

Elizabeth Allen Turner, Ed.D.

ABSTRACT

This narrative study shares female Broadway producers' first-hand accounts of the challenges they face in the industry. All participants have served either as a lead producer or co-producer on Broadway in the past twenty years. Aspiring producers interested in learning more about specifically producing in New York City or current producers wanting to include more diversity and inclusion in their work would benefit from reading the findings. All genders will also gain insight into female producers' perspectives. This research may also be helpful to other theatre professionals in the areas of directing, acting, composing, and scenic design. People in other industries, including film, television, and radio, may benefit from reading this study.

Keywords: Broadway, producer, equality, diversity, challenges, women

This study focuses on female producers in New York City, the world's capital of theatrical entertainment, to identify the underlying causes of challenges faced by women in the theatre industry in order to help break the cycle of gender disparity. The underlying issues that serve as the study's foundation include gender equality, racial inequity, flaws in the producing system, lack of education, unequal pay, motherhood, abuse allegations, the role of the LGBTQ community, the pandemic shutdown, and the quality of life in New York. In 2019, there were 460 accredited Broadway producers, with fewer than 100 identifying as female (Henry et al., 2019). The research aims to help women continue to pursue producing live theatre and feel comfortable and confident doing so. To move towards equality, all creatives in the industry need an increased understanding of the problem's magnitude.

Ten interview questions were explored in depth, probing into the training women have received, the advantages and disadvantages of being men and women in the industry, and the level of difficulty in producing on Broadway. All identifying information about participants has been removed. However, participants' ages ranged from early twenties to late seventies and have produced at least one show on Broadway. The women primarily came from Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic, and Indigenous cultures. The African-American culture was not represented. Several of the participants identified as part of the LGBTQ community. Several of the

participants in the study have been recognized with Tony awards or nominations. All participants were very eager to discuss the questions and their personal experiences. Most of the producers are based out of New York. Below are excerpts of the female Broadway producers' accounts.

GAPS IN EDUCATION

Today, students wish to pursue several passions beyond the focus of their major area of study, including social justice, gender equality, and diversity in the classroom. Some students do not necessarily want to major in the arts as they wish to pursue more vocations in need, such as pre-med, pre-law, or business, but they may still want to incorporate the arts. This has been a shift where students who may have once attended a music and theater conservatory are now expanding their interests at public, private, and community colleges. The majority of art faculty in the United States are still predominantly white men, in which people of color and Queer students have concerns (Haymon, 2020).

One participant discussed the need for more training specifically for theatrical producers, noting insufficient training in this area for actors, theatre generalists, theatre management, and stage designers. The producer described that by working at a non-profit theatre organization, they could acquire transferable skills to other areas, such as being an artistic director at a theatre company. The producer did participate in the Commercial Theatre Institute's three-day program in New York City. Still, more than those three days were needed to cover the scope of producing commercially. The producer stated, "Institutions and training programs need to give producers the flexibility to allow producers to find their style."

A second female wished that their theatre education had included information about all the different elements of theatre. If women had more knowledge and training about roles and careers off-stage, they would make it to Broadway sooner and have more tremendous success or better experiences.



Everyone must understand “who does what” in the theatre industry, but there is no undergraduate training for commercially producing theatre; people learn the skills on the go.

One participant believes every theatre artist should be required to take an entertainment business course to learn how to read contracts and file taxes. Their education also consisted of bookkeeping for an entertainment organization. In this position, human resources and accounting skills were acquired, and they had a CPA as a mentor. The producer then transferred the knowledge of recoupment and balance of loss to the theatre industry.

“It is hard to find a degree in producing; women enter the field in a variety of ways,” stated another producer, yet as the CEO of a non-profit, they became quite familiar with budgeting and staffing. At first, the participant intended to produce a good show, not necessarily on Broadway. After the producer’s shows became highly successful elsewhere, they eventually became Broadway material. In this person’s opinion, “Broadway is a complicated and convoluted system. There are books you can read, but at the end of the day, you just have to do it.”

EVERY THEATRE ARTIST SHOULD BE REQUIRED TO TAKE AN ENTERTAINMENT BUSINESS COURSE TO LEARN HOW TO READ CONTRACTS AND FILE TAXES.

One producer came from the television industry rather than a traditional background in theatre. The producer shared that producing on Broadway is known as “The Wild Wild West” compared to film and television. This producer transferred skills obtained as a producer in the television industry to the theatre industry, including script development and extensive knowledge of working primarily with female audiences who typically make up the majority of Broadway’s highest ticket sales.

Another producer grew up passionate about acting and dancing and studied producing through the Commercial Theatre Institute’s courses and with Theatre Resources Unlimited in New York.. The producer feels they would benefit from more lights, sound, and budgeting training saying, “A good producer must know a little about every department, from the front to the back of the house.”

One producer shared they started out interning in college for reputable theatre producers. They also studied the books and courses with the Commercial Theatre Institute. While the books and courses teach “producing lingo and framework,” the investments and fundraising aspects are not discussed in depth. Their first Broadway show was a co-producer venture, and they had a mentor to help throughout the process. The mentor helped guide the producer through phone calls, emails, and meetings.

Another participant started their arts training as a dancer, diving into leadership roles early in high school and in their local community. By shadowing different shows, the producer quickly picked up terminology and practices and was not afraid to ask questions. The producer feels the need for more skills in some areas, having not started as an actor, director, or stage manager, but does feel that the hands-on experience received and reading plays and studying scripts prepared them. However, the producer sees the advantage of coming into the field with different eyes, stating that “Producing requires ethical leadership, and producers are referred to as CEOs of an organization. Many producers need more training in leadership or management, and the participant is surprised that the Broadway League does not offer training in leadership.”

One participant shared that after graduate school, they were able to gain internships and freelanced on projects on Broadway. Producing fringe festivals provided excellent training for learning to get their hands dirty. Producers who are not independently wealthy often work additional roles in the theatre. While this producer has worked on Broadway shows, most of their income comes from general managing shows. Working in either general management or company management will help a young producer understand the industry better. As a result, the producer feels trained for the industry despite the different paths one may take to get to producing on Broadway. The producer also stated that there is a stigma for being educated in the field and only known for being an “academic.”

One producer initially received professional training in Shakespeare and came from a television and independent filmmaking background. The television and film world gave the producer insight into budgets, raising money, and hard deadlines for producing on the air. The producer stated that two educators from high school guided the way in demonstrating the bigger picture of theatre and what it takes to produce a show. College productions and regional theatre are terrific ways to watch and learn about the producing process. Serving on boards is a valuable experience that helps young producers see the work and departments needed to run a theatre successfully. The producer has always kept a positive attitude about the industry: “God brought me to Broadway as a producer and not a performer, and I will take it.”

GENDER EQUALITY

Discussions with the female participants confirm that gender and racial inequalities exist on Broadway. These inequalities exist among producers and actors, composers, choreographers, directors, and designers. Many participants also stated that these inequalities exist among audiences, too.



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One producer commented that males and females do not share the same advantages or disadvantages; it is very much a patriarchy. However, the theatre industry is not alone in this disparity, and in fact, the theatre industry is ahead of some industries. On the disadvantages shared between men and women, another producer stated that everyone shares the same disadvantage of raising money. Women in the industry are taken more seriously after obtaining a master's degree. Women should not be afraid to back down, especially when negotiating offers with men. Men and women should be kind to one another and not be afraid to ask for help.

Another producer shared, "There is room for both men and women to be executive leaders, writers, and directors." However, women have not been allowed to fail creatively in theatre or film when ticket buyers are still primarily made up of middle-aged women. Women still need to claim space, time, and have unconscious bias with investments. Broadway's executive leadership, narratives, and company makeup should more directly reflect the diversity of the United States. This includes telling narratives from women, people of color, and those in the LGBTQ+ community.

As one of the respondents points out, "Producing on Broadway is unbelievably difficult; it comprises 23% women. Women have difficulty carving out a seat at the table, and the table is not very welcoming. The only way things will change is by getting more women at the table. Gender and racial equity or equality are important and need to be 50% of the Broadway producing table. There needs to be a pipeline that is created to get women into the industry."

One producer had a hard time thinking of female producers and producers of color and shared that the majority of Broadway producers are white males, ages 50 and above, with already established wealth. The women at the top are not necessarily eager to help other women. However, the older white males will be unable to produce forever, and the industry needs to adapt to the younger generations. A new crop of producers is needed with much energy to push the issues of inequalities and inequities. At the moment, there is not a single female owner of a major commercial Broadway theatre in New York.

Another producer states, "It is hard to be a woman on Broadway in a male-dominated industry. It is a clique. It comprises older white men who own the theatres, or younger men who came from wealth outside the industry." The producer has seen other women talked over or trampled over, but the more money women raise, the more credible they are: "The longer a woman stays in the industry, it will become easier." Female producers from already established wealth typically have the same open doors as men.

"Women are scrutinized and questioned more about finances than men and stated they question their own skills and self-worth as a co-producer and female in the industry. Women have to prove themselves in terms of money all on their own," expressed a participant.

Another producer has also faced the challenge of finding a female mentor at the top stating, "There is still a level of competitiveness of women helping women. Many women still feel like there is space for only one woman."

Some microaggressions exist between men and women, whether through day-to-day speech, emails, running errands, or comp tickets. "Often, the female producer is given demands from others on the creative team that would never dare ask male producers to do," explained a producer. Issues, including gender identity, are logistical problems—for example, gender-neutral bathrooms in theatres and gender-neutral dressing rooms backstage. The old Broadway theaters are physically not equipped for these changes, especially historical landmarks. The zoning and construction laws are strict. "Broadway is one of the oldest industries in the world, existing in some of the oldest buildings in the country. It is hard to be an ethical producer," said one woman.

Forward thinking is essential to addressing the challenges that female creatives face. To be effective, forward thinking must come from everyone, including men, women, corporations, and small non-profit organizations (Lefkowitz, 2020).

THE MORE WOMEN AND PEOPLE OF COLOR IN THE MIX, THE MORE INTERESTING STORIES WE WILL HAVE ON BROADWAY. CURRENTLY, THERE ARE A LOT OF GAY PRODUCERS ON BROADWAY AND SEVERAL GAY SHOWS WHICH ARE PHENOMENAL. HOWEVER, MILLIONS OF STORIES ARE MISSING FROM A WOMAN'S PERSPECTIVE OR THE LATINO COMMUNITY, FOR EXAMPLE.

MOTHERHOOD

Broadway actor Rachel Spencer Hewitt formed the Parent Artist Advocacy League (PAAL), which provides resources and ideas to theaters that want to improve the work environment for mothers and fathers. It is now considered the national network and solutions generator for caregivers in the arts and media. The organization provides grants, training, and networking events for women in the theatre (Parent Artist Advocacy League, 2021).

This organization speaks to the need expressed by one participant who stated, "The issue of performing eight shows weekly and being humane. Some shows are now cutting back to six shows a week, so performers can also have a family life. The rules around childbearing need to be rethought. Many cast members are now getting pregnant or just starting families. Actors want to get pregnant but do not want to lose their roles on Broadway. The balance of family life needs to become healthier; psychologists are also being hired to work with these casts returning to Broadway. If a woman is pregnant or nursing on Broadway, that should be an industry norm. However, that norm may not happen until there are more female Broadway producers."

Another producer shared, a typical day in the producer's life entails working in the office from 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., having dinner with a potential investor, watching the show or rehearsal, and then staying after for the director's notes on the run. It is very draining; you go home and do it all over again. Balancing family life is also a challenge. Having young children during a production is not easy. Production teams are starting to realize that families come first and are more supportive now of moms working from home or breastfeeding at work. For a woman, balancing daycare and doctor's visits, and other tasks that take a mental workload, is hard. Male producers do not necessarily understand the complete toll it takes on a woman mentally.

RACIAL INEQUITY

The biggest challenge faced on Broadway today, described by one respondent, is racism and colonialism. This producer has asked themselves and their colleagues, "What are we doing about this?" and asks every creative team their views on these issues before taking on a new project. There are significant challenges in the Broadway industry, regardless of who you are. There are even more challenges in the industry based on your identity.

According to a second respondent, the biggest challenge to producing on Broadway today is the call for equality, "Shows should promote culture and give a voice to underrepresented groups." Broadway needs to work on the demographics. Broadway needs more African Americans in audiences, and not just at historically



One producer expressed, “The more women and people of color in the mix, the more interesting stories we will have on Broadway. Currently, there are a lot of gay producers on Broadway and several gay shows which are phenomenal. However, millions of stories are missing from a woman’s perspective or the Latino community, for example.” The producer added that on every project, they personally ask the creative team, “How many women are on your project, and how many people of color?” Women of color need to feel more comfortable and welcomed coming to Broadway. Audiences should be diverse racially, geographically, and age-wise.

One producer is confident that Broadway will become more inclusive over time, while another addressed the fact that Broadway lacks diversity among producers, primarily among Black and Asian communities, “Who producers are and where they come from is a very narrow field.”

One of the participants became visibly emotional when discussing the current climate of equity and equality on Broadway. The producer stated they are elated by the inclusion and the changes made. Changes will keep coming. The Producer themselves has not experienced direct issues of gender inequality or disadvantages. They credit this to their co-producing team and expressed gratitude for their support.

FLAWS IN THE PRODUCING SYSTEM

Respondents point to flaws in the overall producing system itself, citing lack of access to venues and increasing production costs. As described by a participant, there is a challenge to theater access. The current Broadway business model also does not work or is not successful. There needs to be more commercial real estate for producers to be successful. It has become a game for people of immense wealth and power.

One participant stated that there is often collaboration with male producers; there is more of a disconnect between the inner circle and outer circle of producers that are made up of both men and women. Obtaining a lead producer spot is equally as hard for men and women. There are hundreds of shows trying to obtain a Broadway theater. There is no shortage of shows—some have taken ten to fifteen years to secure a theater. Finding investments for new narratives or voices is a challenge, especially for writers of color or who are older. Many theaters are now run by non-profit companies to which commercial productions have no access. Without access to a theater, there is no opportunity to produce a show.

Black shows. If a Black story is told on Broadway, it should be filled with a diverse audience. Underprivileged kids also deserve opportunities to see and learn about shows and not be placed in the obstructed view seats.

The producer also added that “Equity and Equality are two different things.” Each production now has a dedicated person for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) on Broadway. More companies are giving fellowships to people of color for off-stage positions that are hard to break into. However, the participant asked, “How well will this system work? Will we see positive results from fellowships? Will we see a different, more diverse world? How long will the fellowships last?” Hiring is based on merit, and the EDI effort must be sustainable on Broadway. People that are being mistreated must stand up. Witnesses should also stand up to inappropriate speech or behaviors. Producers need to work with casting directors on hiring more diverse ensembles and companies. People of color need more specific acting tracks, and potential employees should show up to an audition or interview knowing if a job or role is available to them first.

It has become much more complicated to produce on Broadway than ever. This is partly due to the rising costs and the insular group of producers and theater owners that could be more welcoming. According to one participant, the biggest problem on Broadway today is the expensive costs. No show capitalizes under 9 million dollars or typically sees a return on investment. There is at least a two to three-year wait for shows to obtain a Broadway theater. It is much different than in the '70s when theatres paid companies to bring shows.

Some shows are never able to get a theater.

Another respondent agrees, "Today's biggest challenge on Broadway is getting the economics to work out in your favor. It is not an industry grounded in data that can be pitched to investors. Producers tend to rely on pitching their emotions or the music; as there is no guarantee a show will make profit, which is not exactly enticing to investors." "The Broadway model is broken; it is hard to make money," a producer shared. Labor is expensive in the United States. due to union regulations, and tickets are too expensive. To get to Broadway, a producer must impress the four big theater owners. The show will only be performed if the theater owners deem the work valuable. The power is in the theater owners' hands. A producer must raise money for a specific production; Broadway has rules and regulations about accepting investments. Broadway must accredit investors. Investors must be deemed credible first and meet three types of criteria: they must earn \$200,000 more a year, \$300,000 with a spouse, or have a net worth of \$1 million or more. To invest on Broadway, you have to be wealthy, and it is overwhelming for younger producers.

A participant also noted that finding an appropriate stage is a big problem for a producer on Broadway. Only three theaters have a top mezzanine, and not every stage is built the same. Some stages have smaller depths, making it difficult to mount the show. Not all theaters are available and open all of the time. Some producers may wait years to get into a theater, or the opposite, they have just a few weeks to start a theater lease. Often, producers are only given a limited date or time range to work within and are limited for negotiations. There is pressure and intimidation when negotiating with theater owners. Fifteen unions on Broadway ensure that its employees make more than a livable wage when a show operates. There are pipeline issues about working conditions; every show is essentially a startup company. Most shows typically have over one hundred employees and no human resources department. Workplace safety must be a priority. A Diversity and Inclusion director can only do so much. One solution is that pipelines for producers could include schools, universities, and theatre festivals. However, most shows cannot afford an HR department from the startup. Shows typically start as readings, with no ticket sales at first even though HR is needed from the beginning of a show's life.

It seems apparent that the current Broadway model of producing and investing is not effective. The current system discourages aspiring producers who may not come from wealth or real estate knowledge from diving into the field. Other cities such as Chicago, Boston, and even London or Sydney have become easier or more enticing to produce in. Today, crowdfunding is the reality for young, new producers to mount a show successfully.

ABUSE ALLEGATIONS

In April 2021, the Hollywood Reporter broke the news of sexual allegations against legendary Broadway producer, Scott Rudin. Current and former employees started to speak up about the unacceptable behavior. The allegations consisted of decades of physical abuse, verbal abuse, and acts of intimidation (Siegel, 2021). The same month, hundreds of Actors' Equity Association members stopped paying union dues and organized a march in New York City. The members shouted, "Hey, Hey, Ho, Ho, Scott Rudin has got to go." Members furious with the union for covering up the abuse were now demanding a plan of action. While there is language in Equity contracts that denounce bullying and discrimination, there is no support when members speak up. Members have also reported using the Equity hotline to file complaints, which have gone nowhere (Tran, 2021).

One producer observed that with the removal of producer Scott Rudin from the industry, more opportunities have now opened up. Rudin was also a bully for not giving up theater space, and the fact that he is not a power player anymore is finally giving a voice to other producers.

Broadway Actress Karen Olivo of *Moulin Rouge* stated she would not return to Broadway after these allegations, saying that advocacy is more important than the stage, "Our industry is terrified, and nobody is doing the stuff that needs to be done. The silence about Scott Rudin is unacceptable. Broadway is not the place I want to be any more" (Paulson, 2021).

In the past, women were silenced or were afraid to come forward with their stories. Additional research will allow women to speak the truth and voice their fears and concerns about the industry (Tran, 2020).

ROLE OF THE LGBTQ+ COMMUNITY

A participant addressed that Broadway respectively is an inclusive environment, particularly for gay people of all genders. The gay community is beautifully represented both on and off stage and in the stories that are told. The gay community is welcomed and assumed to be a dominant force on Broadway.

Another producer strongly felt that being a white, older gay male had previously been the cultural advantage on Broadway. However, at this moment in time, not being an older white gay male is an advantage on Broadway. People are now considering diversifying their teams with women and people of color.

Statements on the role of LGBTQ+ communities were divided among the participants. This theme is also a very sensitive and an intimate topic for the producers. Discussions confirmed that a large LGBTQ+ population is working in the Broadway industry and among audience members and stakeholders. This population has found a safe haven in the arts, specifically in New York City. The LGBTQ+ community is a strong force of nature on Broadway and has made Broadway a more inclusive environment.

Some participants felt that women are competing against gay male producers more now for a seat at the table. However, others stated that straight and gay producers collaborate more than ever in teams and are more effective as they bring different perspectives. There is also a growing number of female producers who currently identify as LGBTQ+. Female producers admitted it might be a bit harder to break into the tight-knit circle of the gay community producing; however, this is not the main challenge of female producers on Broadway.

BROADWAY SHUTDOWN

In 2020, the coronavirus pandemic seriously impacted the



theater industry. All Broadway theaters closed in early March, and performances ceased. More than 15,000 employees on Broadway filed unemployment claims (Schulman, 2020). Over \$2 billion was lost on Broadway in 2020 (Mink, 2020). It was a difficult time to speak with participants in 2021: Hurricane Ida had slammed New York, the re-opening of Broadway, the postponement of the Tony Awards, and the new strict stipulations regarding COVID protocols.

Additionally, one of the women agreed that the pandemic proved that producers, actors, and directors needed to have a Plan A, B, and C to survive, "Today, Broadway is still working on how to come back as an industry after the pandemic shutdown." Not being able to execute a show during the thick of the pandemic was a challenge. "The Broadway League's focus should not be just on getting art made but should focus on developing leaders in the theatre," expressed one producer. The pandemic has brought additional challenges, including marketing a Tony campaign during a time of crisis and reminding people to vote for the Tony awards during the COVID-19 crisis in New York, which did not seem authentic or genuine when the city had other priorities. While the shutdown was sad, forty-two new committees were created to help bring theatre back, which is beautiful. Today, New York City is in full support of bringing Broadway back to the forefront of the New York cultural scene.

Another change after the pandemic is that every Broadway production company now has a BIPOC HR person or EDI coordinator on staff. For some producers, producing a show had become easier after a Tony win, but it became much more complex during the pandemic. There is a lot of added pressure on top of eight shows a week, mainly producing a national tour in red and blue states. Producers understand the need to sell as many tickets as possible. Also, the working conditions of Broadway theatres need to be improved. Many are old, unsanitary, and in need of repair. The filtration and air quality need to be healthier and more hospitable. In one producer's opinion, "Actor's Equity and the Broadway League should be working to ensure that Broadway employees are shown care." According to one producer, Broadway's biggest challenge today is ensuring everyone in the theatre is safe. There are significant concerns about safety from production teams, ensuring that everyone backstage, including the actors, musicians, and audience members, can go to the theatre safely.

EVERYONE IN THE INDUSTRY MUST BE ON BOARD WITH MAKING THE CHANGES NECESSARY TO MINIMIZE THESE CHALLENGES TO EQUALITY AND EQUITY FOR PRODUCERS OF ALL GENDERS

QUALITY OF LIFE

The female theatre producers confirmed that there are negative quality of life issues in New York City, specifically on the streets where Broadway houses are located and in Broadway theatres. Producers are aware and are thinking about how the city can help provide a more sustainable quality of life for workers in the theatre. However, producers only have some of the answers or solutions at this time. In response to the quality of life in New York question, a participant added, "The government needs to step in and help with the housing crisis and high costs of living, but that will not solve everything."

One producer stated that people living in New York City must be prepared to work hard, typically have two jobs, and have two to three roommates. It is up to the individual to balance their artistic life, and age plays a part in what the individual is willing to do. Entry-level jobs in theatre do not pay a lot and often do not entice people to stay long in the theatre industry. Many theatre people have moved to New Jersey for a better quality of life. Some residents have been lucky to find rent-stabilized apartments in the city; however, they may not be located in the safest areas of town.

Theatre provides a sustainable quality of life to New York City, which should be supported and appreciated, according to one woman. Aspiring creatives who need support are paying rent in New York City, bartending, and buying groceries. Participants concluded that universal health care might bring a better quality of life to artists of any discipline in New York City. Broadway has become the "haves and have-nots," one participant stated. Producers who come from money can afford to pay for access, leaving others out in the cold. Tax breaks should be flowing for arts and cultural organizations as the arts bring people to restaurants, hotels, taxis, and museums, thus bringing revenue to the city and state. Every city should value the arts.

"New York City today feels like the '70s with no external tourism coming in. There is a social issue of homelessness throughout the city, and the general public does not feel safe coming into the city anymore," said a participant. During the pandemic, several theaters were also made into homeless shelters. Midtown is unsafe for children or teenagers to hang around without an adult. It is a problem that audiences feel unsafe coming into the city to see a show, particularly riding on the subways.

"Entry-level jobs in assistant producing are paid very low and need livable wages in New York City," stated one producer who has always worked more than two jobs to survive and to develop leadership skills. Rent is tough; certain neighborhoods need to be affordable. Fixing the subway system would also help the industry, as slower trains at night contribute to the audience members' quality of life.

Broadway is a robust ecosystem that brings money to restaurants, hotels, and museums in New York City. Broadway helps bring money into hardworking people's pockets. One woman interviewed feels that the state and the country need to recognize this better by providing subsidies or startup money so people can get on payrolls faster: "The more theater there is, the more jobs there are, the better it is for everyone."

CONCLUSION

By starting at the top of the industry, Broadway can set an example for regional theaters, universities, and



performing organizations to rectify behavior, implement training, and remove bias from the industry. The findings of this narrative study have identified several factors that may contribute to the challenges faced by female producers on Broadway: gender equality, racial inequities, flaws in the producing system, motherhood, the quality of living in New York, LGBTQ inclusivity, abuse allegations, lack of education, wage gaps, and the Broadway shutdown. Female theatre producers are aware of the challenges, are eager to effect positive change, and are actively working to help rectify these problems. The female participants felt encouraged and elated by the study as a sign of progress for the industry.

Everyone in the industry must be on board with making the changes necessary to minimize these challenges to equality and equity for producers of all genders—from the musical theater college major to the auditioning actor to the producing team and financiers. Eventually, older producers will retire, and younger producers will have large shoes to fill on Broadway. Producers from all sides must be ready for this transition and prepared for future challenges. The industry must work together to solve the problem of gender disparity in the theatrical world.

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SONDHEIM ON SONDHEIM | 2023
USC School of Dramatic Arts
Directed by Richard Isreal
Photography by Craig Schwartz

BOOK REVIEW

by Ben Lundy

Fifty Key Stage Musicals

Edited by Robert W. Schneider & Shannon Agnew
Routledge Key Guides, 2022
\$42.95 PAPERBACK

Musical theatre history textbooks can often be lengthy, exhaustive, and anecdotal works that rarely paint the big picture for students. Inspiring a new generation of students to appreciate and commune with musical theatre history can be a daunting task for an instructor. In a post-pandemic climate, how might we, as instructors, challenge our students to infuse their knowledge of musical theatre history into their craft? *Fifty Key Stage Musicals*, edited by Robert W. Schneider and Shannon Agnew, is a refreshing musical theatre history text that illustrates Broadway's changing tides while focusing on fifty innovative musicals.

Robert W. Schneider is an associate professor of musical theatre and serves on the faculty of Pennsylvania State University. Shannon Agnew is a professional director and theatre activist. Both editors seek to legitimize the study of musical theatre history with this book. In their introduction, they explain the book's purpose, how the musicals were selected, and where you can find more information through the accompanying podcast. The introduction concludes with a brief yet clearly compelling analysis of musical theatre history in which they deconstruct the history into recognizable eras: the Beginnings (2000 BCE-1800 ACE), the Nineteenth Century (1800-1900), the Cinderella Era (1900-1930), the Champagne Era (1930-1943), the Golden Age (1943-1966), the Concept Era (1966-1981), the Techno Era (1982-2000), the Comfort Era (2001-2008), and the Inclusion Era (2008-Present). This introduction serves as an excellent summary and framework of musical theatre history for students new to this study.

One of the book's most significant features is that authors from various backgrounds write each chapter. From academics to Broadway creatives, diverse voices are presented and celebrated through this curated anthology of essays. Perhaps the most exciting author is Charles Kirsch, a thirteen-year-old podcaster and musical theatre scholar who discusses *Annie* and the role of children's theatre on Broadway.

This book unconventionally frames musical theatre through the exploration of fifty pivotal musicals. The editors define these "key musicals" as musical theatre productions that innovatively shift the landscape of musical theatre. In short, they suggest, "If it had not been for *Show A* then we wouldn't have had *Shows B, C, etc.*" (Schneider & Agnew, 2022, p. 1). Given this formula, each chapter

explores how the key musical was particularly innovative, what trends the musical established, how future works adopted those trends, and why the particular musical's vibrations continue to resonate today.

The text includes traditionally studied musicals while also incorporating some more obscure productions. For example, *Promises, Promises* included in a chapter by David Spencer (2022) discusses how the "Bacharach sound" and the work of Jonathan Tunick transformed orchestrational arrangement. The 1971 revival of *No, No, Nanette* is included by Robert Schneider (2022), who insists that *Nanette* launched Broadway's "Nostalgia Craze" and serves as a precedent for re-envisioned Broadway revivals (p. 142). *Ain't Misbehavin* is featured in a chapter by Richard Dueñez Morrison (2022), who argues the "glass ceiling on Broadway was shattered" when this small show became the first revue to win a Tony Award for Best Musical in 1978 (p. 159).

Due to the chronology of the key musical chapters, the book inadvertently serves as a history text that tracks developments in the industry. Each chapter also critically analyzes current responses to the key musicals. For example, Jeanmarie Higgins' *Miss Saigon* chapter focuses on controversial casting, and Courtney Laine Self's chapter on *Fun Home* explores the development of lesbian characters in musical theatre.

Accompanying the book is a captivating podcast that continues the conversations with Broadway veterans such as Brian Yorkey, who gives a firsthand account of the development of *Next to Normal*; Stephen Flaherty, who discusses how *Seussical* became a viral sensation in theatre for youth and community theaters; Marcia Milgrom Dodge, who expounds upon her contemporary, reinvisioned concept of *Beauty and the Beast* at DC's Olney Theatre; and even Susan Stroman, who recounts working with Hal Prince on the Broadway revival of *Show Boat*. For students, having a podcast episode for each key musical chapter provides more content, analysis, and, most importantly, interaction with the material.

Because the text only delves into fifty musicals, some notable composers, choreographers, performers, and designers typically discussed in a musical theatre classroom are inevitably absent. Additionally, the fifty musicals hailed as "key" may be a point of contention among theatre instructors. Despite these limitations, I would argue that *Fifty Key Stage Musicals* is the proper musical theatre history supplement because it inspires contemporary conversations. Beyond trivial facts and meandering anecdotes, this text reframes musical theatre history through a digestible yet comprehensive lens.

Ultimately, the concise book makes history more memorable and empowers students to interact viscerally with musical theatre history. Thanks to the diverse cast of contributors, *Fifty Key Stage Musicals* aids instructors in fostering meaningful conversations.

Fifty Key Stage Musicals: The Podcast

WORKS CITED

Schneider, R. W., & Agnew, S. (Eds.). (2022). *Fifty Key Stage Musicals* (Vol. 1). Routledge.

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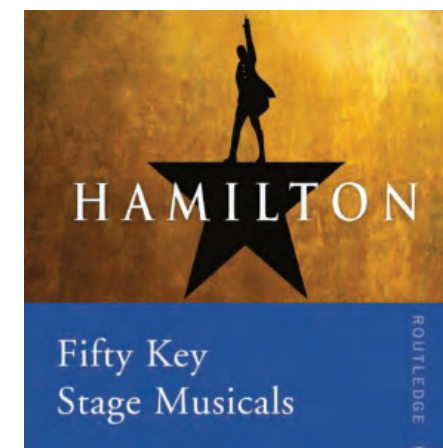
Fifty Key Stage Musicals

Edited by Robert W. Schneider and Shannon Agnew

ROUTLEDGE



KEY GUIDES



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HEAD OVER HEELS | 2023
Chico State Theatre
Directed by Matthew Teague Miller
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The Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance was founded in 1999 as a means for teachers of young professional artists to come together and exchange ideas, methodologies, and solutions to common challenges in the academic settings of universities and conservatories.

We welcome submissions in a variety of formats (written text, digital, artwork). You do not need to be a member of MTEA to submit.

SUBJECT AREAS

Musical theatre education covers a variety of subject areas including, but not limited to:

<i>acting</i>	<i>choreography</i>	<i>mental and physical health</i>
<i>singing</i>	<i>design or production</i>	<i>practicing</i>
<i>music</i>	<i>musical film</i>	<i>career concerns</i>
<i>dance</i>	<i>digital entrepreneurship</i>	<i>tenure and promotion</i>
<i>movement</i>	<i>new media</i>	<i>collaboration</i>
<i>diversity, equity, and inclusion</i>	<i>composition</i>	<i>workplace issues</i>
<i>career preparation</i>	<i>lyric-writing</i>	<i>audition techniques</i>
<i>social media and publicity</i>	<i>music theatre history</i>	<i>coaching</i>
<i>direction</i>	<i>repertoire</i>	<i>recruitment</i>
<i>music direction</i>	<i>new works development</i>	<i>industry trends</i>

Our focus is primarily the college level (undergraduate and graduate); however, we welcome submissions related to the professional career or high school level if relevant to our membership or mission. We also seek interviews with notable people as well as book, cast album, or performance reviews.



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HOW TO SUBMIT

- The deadline for submissions for the sixth volume is Monday, July 29, 2024.
- There is no limit or requirement on submission length; however, the editorial staff reserves the right to edit for length. A general guideline is 2500 to 5000 words.
- Please submit professional production photographs (minimum of 2) with your piece along with show information (place, date, director, title of show) and photographer name.
- Please follow APA style guidelines for in-text citations, works cited, and formatting. Make sure that all quoted material is appropriately cited and credited to its source. For more information, see https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/apa_style/apa_formatting_and_style_guide/index.html
- Authors are responsible for acquiring all permissions including photographs.
- Please submit in a Word (.doc or .docx) file and send via email to journal@musicaltheatreeducators.org or submit online at www.musicaltheatreeducators.org/contributors.
- Include a 50-word bio for each author.

SUBMISSION CATEGORIES

Note: When submitting your article, please indicate which category best fits your piece.

- Articles: Peer-reviewed (double blind), scholarly pieces that include citations beyond online or anecdotal sources.
- Pedagogical: Non-peer-reviewed pieces that offer specific methods or techniques for immediate classroom use based on current best practices or established methods (e.g., Meisner). Pieces will be edited for format and length.
- Interviews: Non-peer-reviewed pieces that will be edited for content and length.
- Feature Submissions: Non-peer-reviewed, topic-specific columns, subject to editing for format, style, and length. (omitted Coach's Corner)
- Book/Cast Album/Performance Reviews: Non-peer-reviewed reviews, subject to editing for length.

EDITORIAL DECISIONS

1. Accepted
2. Accepted with minor revisions
3. Accepted with major revisions
4. Recommended for re-submit after substantial rewrite for current or future issues
5. Declined

If your piece is selected for publication, you must sign a release giving permission for use by MTEA. If requested edits and rewrites have not been returned by the assigned deadline, the piece will not be published.



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Photo 02 | *Varner Act II Gala*, Oakland University, November 2023
Directed by Teri Hansen, Photography by Chuck Cloud Photography

Photo 03 | *Bright Star*, West Virginia University, April 2023
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Photo 04 | *Carrie*, Carthage College, October 2023
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Original illustration by Unknown

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Photo 16 | *Nevermore: The Imaginary Life and Mysterious Death of Edgar Allan Poe*, Fort Lewis College, November 2023
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Photo 20 | *The Amen Corner* at the Shaw Festival
Janelle Cooper (front left) as Sister Margaret
Directed by Kimberley Rampersad, Photography by David Cooper

Photo 21 | *The Amen Corner* at the Shaw Festival
Janelle Cooper (front left) as Sister Margaret
Directed by Kimberley Rampersad, Photography by David Cooper

Photo 22 | *King Lear* at the Stratford Festival
Michael Blake (left) as Edmund and Déjah Dixon-Green as Regan.
Directed by Kimberley Rampersad, Photography by David Hou

Photo 23 | *King Lear* at the Stratford Festival
Paul Gross as King Lear, with Anthony Santiago(left) as Earl of Gloucester and John Kirkpatrick as Curan
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VARNER ACT II GALA | NOVEMBER 2023
Oakland University
(Celebrating 50 years of Musical Theatre at OU)
Directed by Teri Hansen
Photography by Chuck Cloud Photography



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