

VOLUME 4 | JANUARY 2021

MTEA

MUSICAL THEATRE
EDUCATORS' ALLIANCE



CONTENT

WELCOME

- 04 Letter from MTEA President Stacy Alley
- 07 Letter from Editor-in-Chief Amelia Rollings Bigler
- 08 Race, Equity, and Inclusion Webinar Summary by Tim Espinosa, Marty Austin Lamar and Gwendolyn Walker, Rufus Bonds, Jr., Leo Yu-Ning Chang, and Kim Varhola

FEATURES

THE THREAD

- 20 *Ethical Music Distribution in the Digital Age: The Writer's Perspective* by Jeremiah Downes

TEACHER'S TOOLKIT

- 26 *Introducing Tools From Michael Chekhov to Expand Your Musical Theatre Performance Pedagogy* by Brianna Lucas Larson and James Stover
- 34 *Twenty Things Transgender Performers Want You to Know* by Gwendolyn Walker

FRONT COVER PHOTO:
THE WILD PARTY | 2020
ArtsEd
Direction by Katie Henry
Music Direction by Zach Fils
Choreography by Sean Moon
Set Design by Rebecca Brower
Costume Design by Adrian Gee
Lighting Design by Nic Faman
Sound Design by Adam Fisher
Photography by Robin Savage



ARTICLES

- 44 *Considering Color-Conscious Casting* by Brian Manternach
- 54 *The Miseducation of Musical Theatre Majors: Rap Pedagogy for the Stage* by Ian LeRoy
- 70 *Musical Theatre in China: Considerations and Strategies for Teaching in a Global Context* by Tommy Iafrate, Corinne Ness, Tommy Novak, Kati Schwaber, and Xiaomin Zhang
- 86 *A Time for Something Smaller* by Michael E. McKelvey

WORD OF MOUTH

- 104 *A Conversation with Alexandra Billings* by André Garner

BOOK REVIEWS

- 114 *Reframing the Musical: Race, Culture and Identity* by Sarah Whitfield
- 117 *Rock in the Musical Theatre: A Guide for Singers* by Joseph Church

CREDITS

- 120 Subject Area Editors
- 123 MTEA Executive Board
- 126 Submission Guidelines
- 129 Photography Credits



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

The last time I saw many of you was in January at our annual conference in sunny San Diego, where we were enjoying each other's company, inspired by artists from around the world, and where I officially began my role as president of MTEA. Little did we know at the time how the rest of the year would affect us mentally, emotionally, and physically. Little did we know that our industry would shut down, forcing us to cancel performances, showcases, and graduation, while our students mourned the loss of future gigs.

What the conference made evident, however, is that a critical self-examination of the lack of diversity in our organization was both necessary and urgent. Further motivated by the Black Lives Matter Movement, MTEA began the difficult yet essential work of addressing the ways in which we may have perpetuated systems of oppression, systemic and institutionalized racism, as well as harmed our BIPOC students, faculty/staff, and community members. We created a Committee on Representation, Equity, and Inclusion and appointed Tim Espinosa as Chief Diversity Officer. We offered various resources not only to our members but also to the musical theatre community at large, including webinars focusing on REI, teaching/producing during COVID, and recruitment challenges in a virtual world. As a result, and likely due to the need for community and support during a tumultuous year, the organization has seen an exponential growth in our membership. And while this is exciting news, the Executive Board and I have appreciated your grace and patience as we navigate how best to serve our members while examining and solidifying the value of membership.

Access to the *MTEA Journal* is part of that value, so on behalf of MTEA, I welcome you to share in the exciting contributions in volume 4. I find the content to be a varied and valuable response to the current world around us as well as a testament to the resiliency and creativity of those in our field. In addition, it reflects and further affirms the need for meaningful equity work, which is imperative to ensuring a better future not only for our students but also for ourselves and our institutions. I would also like to encourage you to consider submitting an article, interview, or book review in the future so as to share your practical and scholarly research that is sure to educate and nourish our members. Lastly, I would like to congratulate Editor-in-Chief, Amelia Rollings Bigler, who has done a wonderful job during an extremely tough year.

In commitment to a more just and inclusive MTEA,

Stacy Alley, President





LETTER FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

It's officially 2021! I'm excited to present to you the fourth volume of the *Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance Journal*. What a year this has been for students, educators, universities, MTEA, and our entire industry. This past year has challenged us to grow in many ways, and one thing remains clear—we cannot go back to what we considered “normal.” We must evolve, and we must do better.

After viewing all of the submissions for the journal this past summer, I was encouraged by the efforts of our colleagues to propel us forward in the greater interest of our students, our programs, and our industry. As many of the articles in this issue mention, it is not the job of our students to educate us. As educators, we must regularly examine ourselves, our beliefs, and our actions. We must continually educate ourselves as we strive to better serve our students, especially those who are historically and systemically underrepresented.

I believe that each of the authors in this issue would agree with me—the following pieces represent a starting place from which we can continue to advance. Some of these scholarly teaching artists wrote these papers in response to a shortage of resources they encountered in their practice or after experiencing important opportunities for reexamination, innovation, and growth at their institutions. I hope these articles will spark discussion and progress in our organization and the profession at large. But most of all, I hope they will encourage us to continue researching and writing about these important matters in musical theatre education.

**WE MUST CONTINUALLY EDUCATE OURSELVES
AS WE STRIVE TO BETTER SERVE OUR STUDENTS,
ESPECIALLY THOSE WHO ARE HISTORICALLY AND
SYSTEMICALLY UNDERREPRESENTED.**

Please consider how you might contribute to the fifth volume of the *MTEA Journal*. Our journal offers a unique pedagogical focus and many opportunities to contribute through applied teaching pieces, scholarly articles, interviews, reviews, and more. Please feel free to reach out to anyone on the editorial team over the next few months as you consider topics and organize your ideas.

To continued education and growth in the year to come,

Amelia Rollings Bigler
Editor-in-Chief

Race, Equity, and Inclusion in Musical Theatre Education

WEBINAR SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION by Tim Espinosa

THE FULL WEBINAR, INCLUDING SOME PRESENTATIONS NOT SUMMARIZED BELOW, CAN BE VIEWED AT WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?V=NBA9XI3HOIU

RESOURCES FOR RACE, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION CAN BE FOUND ON THE MTEA WEBSITE AT WWW.MUSICALTHEATREEDUCATORS.ORG/REI-RESOURCES

Over the past several months, there has been a powerful movement taking place in our theatre community. Students from across the country and across the globe have been engaging with their professors and mentors to fight for common solutions to achieving greater equity in musical theatre education. As educators, we have a responsibility to rise to the current moment and begin the process of systematically uprooting the history of inequity that has plagued many of our theatrical institutions. MTEA's newly formed Committee on Representation, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) was created to develop and implement immediate actions and solutions to address these challenges in our industry. Over the next few months, you will begin to hear more about the important work that this committee is dedicated to accomplishing in order to create a more equitable and inclusive learning environment for all students, faculty, and staff in both the classroom and in production experiences.

On July 15, 2020, MTEA hosted a webinar, titled, Race, Equity, and Inclusion in Musical Theatre Education. This webinar was dedicated to introducing the MTEA community to the REI committee members as well as beginning the necessary conversations about our current educational climate. Following is a summation from the July webinar with contributions from many of our committee members. Some of the work cited in this webinar summation may challenge your preconceived notions about your current pedagogical practices. Some of what you read in this summation may open your eyes to new ideas and inspire you to implement further positive change in the classroom. Some of what you read may ask you to quietly sit in a moment of discomfort as we begin to peel away the layers of inequity that have existed in our industry for far too long. It is our sincerest hope that some of the discomfort you feel after reading this summation will be transformed into positive action.

It is also important to acknowledge that while the July webinar was dedicated to specifically addressing racial inequity, the REI committee acknowledges the intersectionality of inequity that exists in many other areas including sexual orientation, gender, mental health, disabilities, and neurodivergence. We are dedicated to addressing the inequities in all of these areas and are looking forward to expanding our committee representation within these specific areas as MTEA develops future webinars and workshops.

MTEA PRESENTS

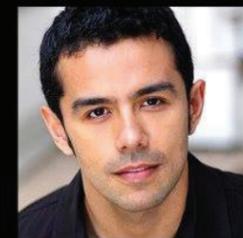
MUSICAL THEATRE EDUCATORS' ALLIANCE

**JULY 15, 2020
7-10 PM EST**

A ZOOM WEBINAR ON

RACE, EQUITY, & INCLUSION' IN MUSICAL THEATRE EDUCATION

STRENGTHENING RACIAL LITERACY IN YOUR INSTITUTION



WILSON MENDIETA
CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY



TIM ESPINOSA
FULLERTON COLLEGE



RUFUS BONDS, JR.
SYRACUSE UNIVERSITY



MARTY AUSTIN LAMAR
HOWARD UNIVERSITY



LEO YU-NING CHANG
MARYMOUNT MANHATTAN

RACIALIZING MUSICAL THEATRE CURRICULUM



KIM VARHOLA
KEIMYUNG UNIVERSITY



GWENDOLYN WALKER
PENN STATE UNIVERSITY



ELLEN LETRICH
THE FUND FOR
COLLEGE AUDITIONS



BRITTANY C. JOHNSON
HOWARD UNIVERSITY



AUTUMN WEST
OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY
OCU CARE

PROMOTING EQUITY WITHIN REHEARSAL & PRODUCTION PROCESS

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Tim Espinosa is a professional director, educator, actor, and electric violinist who currently serves as the head of musical theatre and department coordinator at Fullerton College. Tim has directed many diverse productions ranging from classical literature in Spanish to conceptualized contemporary musicals. Tim also serves as the Lead Diversity Officer for MTEA and is a member of the Committee on Representation, Equity, and Inclusion.

DID YOU KNOW? by Marty Austin Lamar and Gwendolyn Walker

The Committee on Race, Equity, and Inclusion (REI) was formed to ensure that the work toward achieving justice in training programs and the musical theatre industry moved beyond apologies and empty promises of change. Marty is a Black man leading the BFA musical theatre program at Howard University—a historically Black college/university (HBCU), and Gwen is a White woman in the BFA musical theatre program at Penn State—a predominantly White institution (PWI). It was imperative that we honored our racial and cultural differences while uniting our voices to encourage lasting impact. Together, we acknowledged the ways we had been complicit, the ways that the academy continues to support racist practices, and the lasting effects of racist practices on BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color) students and faculty.

We determined that our conversation must be centered on the historical understanding of systemic racism and its continued impact on the theatre industry and training institutions. Our conversation was guided by the inquiry, “Did You Know?” We agreed that posing the question rather than making assumptions would provide a reflective space for our colleagues and allies in attendance. We discussed topics including the origins of the minstrel show, the impact of Jim Crow on our industry, and the absence of equitable hiring practices within the theatre industry and the academy.

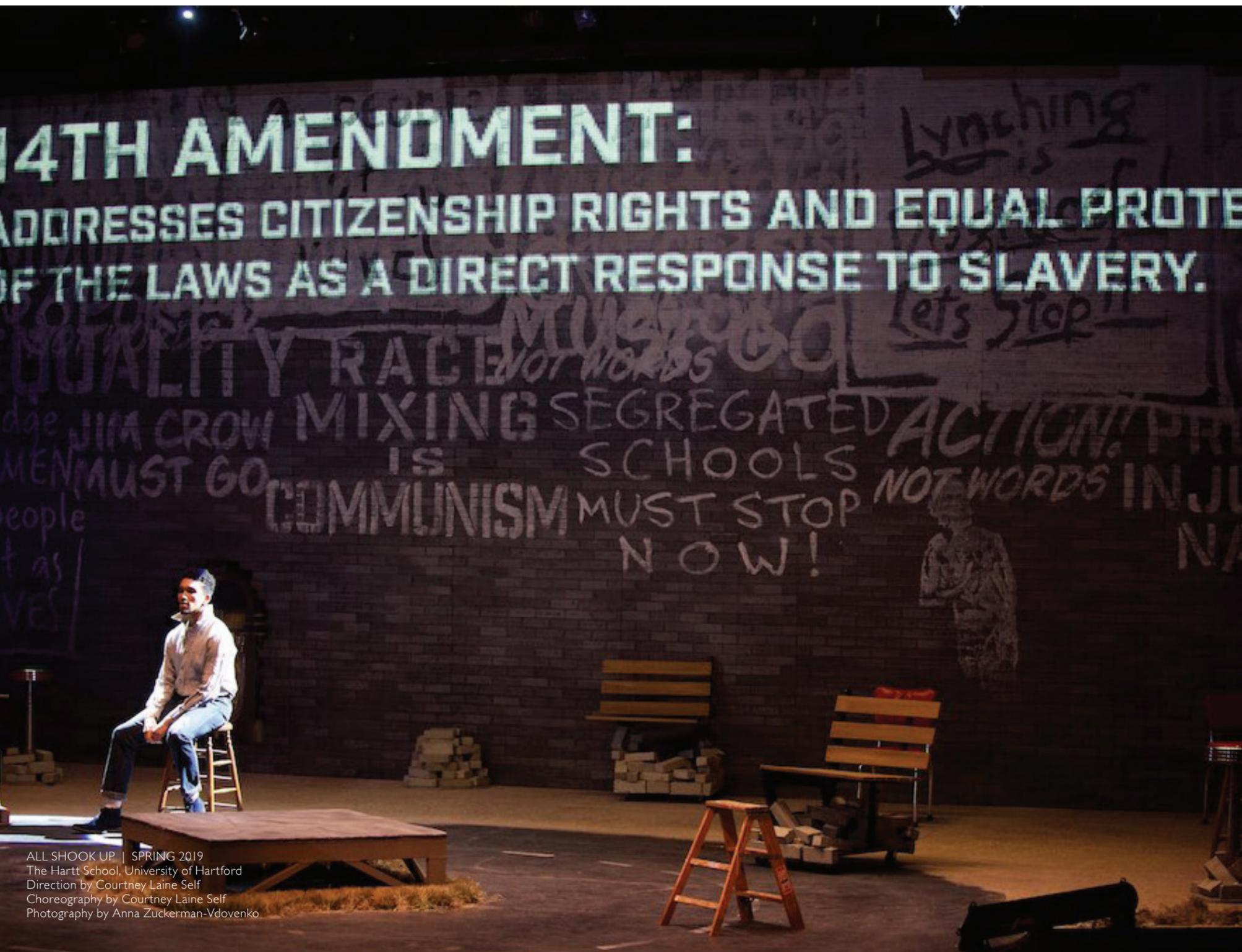
Ultimately, our work sought to mirror the necessary collaboration needed to move beyond the assumptions of equity and equality. Our industry must become an industry of justice that regards all art, all culture, and all artists. The entertainment industry and the organizations that advocate on behalf of the industry have been silently complicit for far too long. It is time for all of us to now hold organizations like the Musical Theatre Educators’ Alliance accountable for the work of diversity, equity, and inclusion. Continued opportunities, like the REI webinar, offer artists, teachers, advocates, and students the space for honest conversation and education.

No more moments! We must now do the urgent work of ensuring a lasting movement of change. This change can only be achieved when truth is met with action. The result is impact.

The following transcription summarizes the historical, political, and statistical information shared during the webinar.

Marty: This is intentional—my name is Marty Austin Lamar. I use he/him pronouns, and I am a Black, male-identifying, musical theatre artist and educator.

Gwen: My name is Gwendolyn Walker. I use she/her pronouns, and I am a White, female-identifying, musical theatre educator and artist.



ALL SHOOK UP | SPRING 2019
The Hartt School, University of Hartford
Direction by Courtney Laine Self
Choreography by Courtney Laine Self
Photography by Anna Zuckerman-Vdovenko



M: We understand that our work together is more powerful than our work would be separately.

G: Our diversity is our strength, and we have so much to learn from each other.

M: For many of us, much of our work is listening and educating ourselves.

G: Did you know that the first known professional performance of a musical in New York was John Gay's, *The Beggar's Opera*, in 1750 (Griffel 45)? This was 130 years after the beginning of slavery and 113 years before the end of slavery.

M: Did you know that the oldest recorded form of synthesized musical theatre (acting, singing, and dancing) in the United States was the minstrel show, first seen in the 1830s (Mates)? The minstrel show is a uniquely American art form because it has no roots in Greek, Roman, or European theatre.

G: Did you know that blackface is the act of using burnt cork ash or black shoe polish to darken a performer's complexion to caricature and dehumanize persons of African descent? Blackface was worn by White performers beginning in the 1830s and didn't start to decline in popularity until over one hundred years later in the 1930s. Blackface enforced a range of negative stereotypes and further ignited racial unrest over a White supremacist political system. While blackface experienced a decline in popularity by White performers after the 1930s, African American performers continued to use blackface to ensure employment and exposure. Musical theatre in the United States has frequently turned a blind eye to the lasting effects of blackface in theatre training, hiring, and production (Clark).

M: Did you know that Thomas Rice, a White American actor, is considered the "daddy" of the minstrel show (Lhamon 2; Clark)? Rice introduced the character of Jim Crow in the early 1830s. Rice sang and danced in blackface, caricaturing the religious practices and traditions of enslaved Africans on the plantation. Jim Crow laws harshly mandated the segregation between Black and White citizens in public schools and restrooms and at water fountains and restaurants. These laws were in effect from the end of the Reconstruction Era (the period after the Civil War, approximately 1865-1877) to the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—roughly 100 years (Kousser).

G: Did you know that almost all musical theatre history textbooks used in musical theatre education were written by White men?

M: Did you know that according to a 2019 survey conducted by The Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC), 95% of the shows on Broadway in the 2016-2017 season were directed by White directors or written by White playwrights and that shows rarely focus on the contributions of BIPOC, women, and minoritized communities? In this same survey of Broadway and non-profit actors, 66.8% were Caucasian, 18.6% were African American, 7.3% were Asian American, and 5.1% were Latinx (*Ethnic Representation*).

G: These non-White percentages were much higher than in previous years due to a little musical called *Hamilton* and August Wilson's play, *Jitney*, both on Broadway the year this survey was taken. Additionally, 86.8% of all shows produced in the 2016-2017 season were written by White people, and White directors were hired for 87.1% of all New York productions (*Ethnic Representation*).

M: Did you know that according to a Pew Research Center survey published on July 31, 2019, postsecondary faculty are predominantly White? Professors are 81% White and 19% non-White (including Blacks, Hispanics, Asians, Pacific Islanders, American Indians, Alaska Natives, and those of two or more races). Associate professors are 76% White and 24% non-White (Davis and Fry).

G: The theatre industry reflects the current hiring practices and diversity disparities within higher education. If we use our combined power to challenge and diminish the disparities in higher education, the industry will change as a result.

G: Our goal this evening is to build a community where we can be brave enough to have difficult conversations and be uncomfortable together.

M: We celebrate you for being here with us this evening. My name is Marty Austin Lamar, and I have been complicit.

G: My name is Gwendolyn Walker, and I have been complicit.

M: It's my job to educate myself...

G: It's my job to educate myself...

M: ...and not put the burden of that education on my students.

G: ...and not put the burden of that education on my students.

M: Thank you for listening.

Both: Together, we must do better.

Gwendolyn Walker is an assistant professor of musical theatre voice at Penn State University. She is certified by the Contemporary Alexander School as an Alexander Technique teacher, and she maintains a busy New York City studio. Her students can be seen in most shows on Broadway today.

WORKS CITED

Clark, Alexis. "How the History of Blackface is Rooted in Racism." *History*, 15 Feb. 2019, www.history.com/news/blackface-history-racism-origins. Accessed 8 July 2020.

Davis, Leslie, and Richard Fry. "College Faculty Have Become More Racially and Ethnically Diverse but Remain Far Less So Than Students." *Pew Research Center*, 31 July 2019, www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2019/07/31/us-college-faculty-student-diversity/. Accessed 9 July 2020.

Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages, 2016-2017. The Asian American Performers Action Coalition, Mar. 2019, www.aapacnyc.org/uploads/1/1/9/4/11949532/aapac_2016-2017_report.pdf. Accessed 9 July 2020.

Griffel, Margaret Ross. *Operas in English: A Dictionary*. Greenwood, 1999.

Kousser, J. M. "Jim Crow Laws." *Dictionary of American History*. 3rd ed., vol. 4, Charles Scribner's Sons, 2003, pp. 479-80. *CaltechAUTHORS*, authors.library.caltech.edu/41165/1/jim%20crow%20laws.pdf. Accessed 8 July 2020.

Lhamon, W. T., Jr. *Jump Jim Crow: Lost Plays, Lyrics, and Street Prose of the First Atlantic Popular Culture*, Harvard University Press, 2003.

Mates, Julian. "Some Early American Musical Stage Forms." *Popular Music and Society*, vol. 13, no. 2, 1989, pp. 67-75. *Taylor and Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/03007768908591353. Accessed 8 July 2020.

SEEING THE STUDENT AND ENCOURAGING THEM TO WORK FROM THEIR CULTURAL POINT OF VIEW

by Rufus Bonds, Jr.

In DRA 261:Musical Theater Practicum—Acting the Song, a course offered at Syracuse University, investigating culture is used as a vehicle to acknowledge the student's ancestral heritage. On day one, the students share with the class the culture of their families. As they share, the students recognize their classmates' various ethnicities ranging from German to Irish to Australian to Nigerian.

The students are always encouraged to bring themselves and their culture to their work. For the first unit, The Song You Know, the students sing a selection of their choice. We discuss why they selected the song and how it represents them. This unit continues the idea of seeing the student. The second song in this cycle, "Something's Coming" from *West Side Story*, reminds the students to dream. After

the student sings the lyric, "with a click, with a shock, door will jingle, door will knock, open the latch," the following questions are posed to the student: "Using those lyrics, what could happen right now in your life that would set you on fire?" and "What dream do you see coming true?" With these questions, the students come alive, place themselves in the situation, and the moment is activated. The next song, "Who Can I Turn to When Nobody Needs Me" from *The Roar of the Greasepaint the Smell of the Crowd*, guides the students to the opposite end of their emotional life. The assignment requires the vulnerability of the students as they reveal their most painful moment. These two songs provide a space for the students to be seen while giving them the freedom to reveal themselves in their work.

The final unit, Breaking the Box, uses *Once on This Island* as the vehicle to investigate culture. Students read *My Love My Love* by Rosa Guy—the book that provides the cultural and historical foundation on which the musical is based. Research begins on the history, historical timeline of the play, and the people of Haiti. We discuss the racial and economic divide between the characters to understand one of the play's themes. We compare and contrast the storyline and character's intent between the book and the musical. Once students compile their findings, the songs are assigned.

One semester, as I began to assign the songs, a very talented young lady approached me and stated that she did not feel comfortable singing material that was not from her culture. I replied, "If I thought that way, I would not have a career. For my entire education and most moments in the business, I did not sing material from my culture." After class, she expressed that she understood and thanked me for hearing her. I also spoke to her and the class, explaining that this would not be material to sing out in the world, but it was a moment to learn about another culture and sing beautiful music. I continued to reiterate that one cannot sing from another culture until you understand their voice. In that quick moment between the young lady and me, space developed for me to speak about the inequity of the musical theatre canon, the system of racism, and the fight I encounter as a Black man.

We must see our students. When a student feels invisible and as if nothing about who they are culturally exists in their work, they feel unwanted and sense they are viewed as less than. In this cry of invisibility, the student believes their training expects them to assimilate and blend in while leaving themselves behind. We must begin to truly see our students from all walks of life and teach them to investigate the world as a whole. When this happens, not only will the classroom shift, but also concurrently, a change for humanity will emerge.

BEAST MODE CHAMPION: THE PRO-WRESTLING ROCK MUSICAL | November 2020
Elon University
Direction by Kirby Wahl
Music Direction by Dan Gibson | Choreography by Deb Leamy
Set Design by Natalie Hart | Costume Design by Jack Smith
Lighting Design by Bill Webb | Sound Design by Mike Smith
Photography by Dan Gibson and J McMerty





Rufus Bonds, Jr. is an assistant professor in the Department of Drama at Syracuse University. Mr. Bonds performed the title role of Porgy in *Porgy and Bess* in London. He has performed as the baritone soloist for *Duke Ellington's Sacred Music* at Carnegie Hall and on Broadway in *Rent*, *Once on This Island*, and *Parade*, for which he won the Drama Desk Nomination, Best Supporting Actor. He is also an Eugene O'Neill semifinalist.

TRIAL AND ERROR: HOW LEARNING ABOUT RACISM AND MICROAGGRESSIONS CAN BE LIKE LEARN- ING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

by **Leo Yu-Ning Chang**

A week before the webinar, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) unexpectedly announced that international students with F-1 and M-1 visas could not

remain in the United States if their schools went entirely online in the fall semester. Though this controversial policy was rescinded a week later after numerous complaints and lawsuits, many international students are still left with uncertainties about their future visa status and the fear of deportation.

On top of that, students studying musical theatre suffer from racism. According to a survey that I conducted for my presentation, "Surfing the Waves with International Students in Musical Theatre Programs" for the 2020 MTEA conference in San Diego, 70% of participants (current and alumni musical theatre majors) were BIPOC and spoke English as their second language. Almost all international students reported experiencing racial discrimination in their musical theatre programs because of their skin tone, accent, appearance, and cultural background (Chang).

To adapt themselves to a foreign land, these international students must learn the nuances of language, culture, and traditions through intense study and by making mistakes and being open to suggestions from others. Their courage to learn through trial and error serves as an excellent example of how we need to examine and learn about racism and microaggressions in our industry and society.

To ensure an equitable environment for all students and increase fluency in incorporating inclusive actions and language, we have to treat these issues as if we are learning a new language. I've included two core actions to start.

LISTEN AND LEARN

First and foremost, we have to unlearn the habit of making assumptions. What we perceive from the outside does not always align with what may be true. Our BIPOC students should not be responsible for our own education as teachers. Instead of putting them in the spotlight to share their pains and experiences, we can:

- *Invite students to correct us if our language or behaviors are not inclusive or appropriate.*
- *Prepare a student questionnaire before the first class.* The purpose of this questionnaire is to have a better understanding of the students' backgrounds and future goals. Students should always have the right to answer questions as they feel comfortable. Using open-ended questions and inclusive language tends to be more successful in obtaining responses from students.
- *Incorporate the students' voices in choosing scenes and repertoire.* Ask students if they are passionate about any specific materials or if there are any they want to avoid. Opening up the conversation about choosing materials gives students a sense of authority in the educational process and encourages them to think outside of the box when considering what kind of characters they aspire to play.

EXPAND AND REACH OUT

The history of musical theatre has predominantly been told through the lens of cisgender, White males. We cannot deny the merit of their contributions. However, these authors and writers present one point of view and select what information to include or leave out. To offer more inclusive perspectives, we can implement the following actions in both performance and lecture courses:

- Choose reading materials written by authors who identify as BIPOC.
- Feature a larger percentage of BIPOC theatre creators and performers in the curriculum.
- Reach out and collaborate with BIPOC composers and playwrights to expand the repertoire your students learn.
- Invite BIPOC creators and performers to be guest artists, share their experiences, provide feedback, and mentor BIPOC students.

We have to challenge what has been told about our history; we have to challenge the "norm"; we have to challenge ourselves, our colleagues, and our institutions. We will undoubtedly experience many trials and make many errors throughout the process; we can only own up to them and continue to learn.

Leo Yu-Ning Chang is a bilingual performer and educator born and raised in Taiwan. He currently teaches at Marymount Manhattan College and New York City Center. Leo also serves on the Committee on Representation, Equity, and Inclusion for MTEA and is committed to being a strong advocate for international and BIMPOC artists. He received his MFA in musical theatre from San Diego State University.

WORK CITED

Chang, Leo Yu-Ning. "Surfing the Waves with International Students in Musical Theatre Programs." Riding the Wave of Musical Theatre, 2020 Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance Conference, 3 Jan. 2020, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA. Conference Presentation.

PRINCIPAL ROLES, PRINCIPLED DECISIONS

by Kim Varhola

Aspiring young artists need more than formal academic training in our field to become professional practitioners. *They need meaningful stage experience.*

American musical theatre is an overwhelmingly White art form. Historically, creative teams and casts have been predominantly White in the professional theatre. Furthermore, White actors are often cast in roles that do not require the character to be White. This results in fewer opportunities for actors of color. Additionally, actors of color have not only had fewer opportunities for meaningful participation on the American musical stage in general, but they have also often been denied their own ethnic-specific roles. This system is called whitewashing. Despite recent increases in representation and diversity on our stages, actors of color still seem to be relegated to supporting roles or ensemble tracks and are often subject to a system called tokenism.

Many times on our school stages, we make casting choices based on the appearances of the original, professional cast. We may refer to this as “traditional casting.” If we are, in fact, casting our school stages according to a traditional look, and American theatre has a precedence of being predominantly White, then how are we providing meaningful opportunities for our students of color? If we do not provide meaningful stage opportunities for our students of color, the outcomes are as follows:

- Students of color will not be prepared for the professional realm.
- Students of color may be overlooked or considered “not quite good enough.”
- Students of color may not work professionally.
- Audience members of color will not see themselves reflected on stage.
- Young artists of color may have doubts about working in the field.
- Young artists of color may not apply to academic theatre programs.

What happens on the professional stage is related to what happens in our university programs and other training arenas. To illustrate this point, let’s take a look at a few key events leading up to the casting of the original Broadway production of *Miss Saigon*.

In 1990, after a successful opening in London, Cameron Mackintosh announced *Miss Saigon* was coming to Broadway. This was an incredible opportunity for the Asian American theatre community; *Miss Saigon* was a huge production with dozens of available roles for Asian Americans. Mackintosh later announced that British, White actor, Jonathan Pryce, would reprise his role as the Vietnamese character, The Engineer, in the production. The announcement spurred a public outcry from the Asian American community and prompted an objection from the Actors’ Equity Association (AEA). Mackintosh fought back, cancelling the production since Pryce was not given clearance to play the role. AEA quickly reconsidered their position, and the show eventually went on as planned (Lee 177-90). The insistence of using Pryce seemed to center on the creative team’s inability to find an “Asian actor suitable for the role . . . who could both act and sing” (Rothstein). In other words, Mackintosh couldn’t find an Asian or Asian American actor he considered good enough.

In preparation for the London production, the creative team conducted a worldwide search for the role of Kim, traveling to New York, Los Angeles, Honolulu, and finally, Manila, Philippines, where they eventually found Lea Salonga. Salonga’s alternate, Monique Wilson, was also cast out of Manila (*The Heat Is On* 3:50-25:25). And although Wilson was not selected to transfer to the Broadway production, the fact that three top slots for this new, Broadway-bound musical were filled with non-Americans is rather distressing. Frankly speaking, what does this imply about theatrical education for Asian Americans?

According to figures from the United States Census Bureau, there were only approximately 320,000 Asian Americans living in the US in 1950 (19). Consequently, when Rodgers and Hammerstein’s, *The King and I*, opened on Broadway in 1951, none of the other principal Asian roles were played by Asian actors with the exception of Yul Brynner (who has some Mongolian ancestry) (“*The King and I* [1951]”). In 1970, the Asian American population had increased to approximately 1.5 million (United States 19). Thus, for the 1977 Broadway revival of *The King and I*, both the role of Tuptim and the role of Lady Thiang were cast with Asian actors (“*The King and I* [1977]”). The remaining principal characters were played by White actors. In 1980, the Asian American population had risen to 3.5 million (United States 19). And yet, for the 1985 Broadway revival of *The King and I*, none of the principal Asian roles were played by Asian actors (“*The King and I* [1985]”). It is discouraging to see that during this time when the Asian American population was increasing, representation of Asian American actors on the Broadway stage was decreasing. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the Asian American talent pool was so small by the time *Miss Saigon* arrived in New York; Asian American actors couldn’t even get roles that were written for them. Rather than helping to cultivate the Asian American acting community, the powers that be often hinder it.

In the documentary film, *The Heat Is On—The Making of Miss Saigon*, Chloe Stewart, one of the young actresses from Honolulu, is encouraged by the team to keep working on her craft. They said, “We’d like to suggest you go on working very hard . . . We’d like to keep in touch with you” (*The Heat Is On* 13:50-14:20). Stewart eventually went on to have a successful professional career in musical theatre. She also eventually played the role of Kim. If there are viable opportunities, young artists of color will train. If there are viable opportunities, young artists of color will take a class. If there are viable opportunities, we will see more young students of color entering our programs—and thriving.

Kim Varhola appeared on Broadway in *Rent*, *Flower Drum Song*, *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, and *Pacific Overtures*. A former marketing manager for Center Theatre Group, Kim is currently a professor of drama at Keimyung University in South Korea. She holds a BS in theatre from Northwestern University and MA degrees from Columbia University and New York University.

WORKS CITED

The Heat Is On—The Making of Miss Saigon. Directed by David Wright, Fremantle Home Entertainment, 1988.

“*The King and I* [1951].” *Internet Broadway Database*, www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-king-and-i-1935. Accessed 7 Sept. 2020.

“*The King and I* [1977].” *Internet Broadway Database*, www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-king-and-i-3999. Accessed 7 Sept. 2020.

“*The King and I* [1985].” *Internet Broadway Database*, www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/the-king-and-i-4357. Accessed 7 Sept. 2020.

Lee, Esther Kim. *A History of Asian American Theatre*. Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Rothstein, Mervyn. “Union Bars White in Asian Role; Broadway May Lose ‘Miss Saigon.’” *New York Times*, 8 Aug. 1990. www.nytimes.com/1990/08/08/theater/union-bars-white-in-asian-role-broadway-may-lose-miss-saigon.html. Accessed 7 Sept. 2020.

United States, Census Bureau, Population Division. “Historical Census Statistics on Population Totals by Race, 1790 to 1990, and by Hispanic Origin, 1970 to 1990, for the United States, Regions, Divisions, and States.” *Working Paper No. 56*, by Campbell Gibson and Kay Jung, Sept. 2002, www.census.gov/content/dam/Census/library/working-papers/2002/demo/POP-twps0056.pdf. Accessed 7 Sept. 2020.

ETHICAL MUSIC DISTRIBUTION IN THE DIGITAL AGE: THE WRITER'S PERSPECTIVE

The Thread

The Thread is a multi-voice conversation between several interested parties. This will be a recurring feature for the journal. If you would like to propose an idea for *The Thread*, please contact the editor.

Today's topic is Ethical Music Distribution in the Digital Age: The Writer's Perspective. The topic was proposed (and is moderated here) by **Jeremiah Downes (JD)**, assistant professor of musical theatre and head of the BFA in musical theatre program at West Virginia University.

Also participating are the following composers and lyricists:

- **John Bucchino (JB)** (*A Catered Affair, It's Only Life, Urban Myths, Lavender Girl*)
- **Craig Carnelia (CC)** (*Is There Life After High School?, Sweet Smell of Success*)
- **Joey Contreras (JC)** (*All the Kids Are Doing It, Forget Me Not, Heartbreakers in Hell*)
- **Adam Gwon (AG)** (*Ordinary Days, Scotland PA*)
- **Kait Kerrigan (KK)** (with Brian Lowdermilk: *The Mad Ones, Henry and Mudge, Unbound*)
- **Chris Miller (CM)** (with Nathan Tysen: *Tuck Everlasting, The Burnt Part Boys, Fugitive Songs*)
- **Ryan Scott Oliver (RSO)** (*Jasper in Deadland, 35mm, Darling, Mrs. Sharp*)
- **Will Van Dyke (WVD)** (*The Gravedigger's Lullaby, Chasing the Day*)

As is the case with any comment thread, the opinions expressed below are solely those of the contributors and do not reflect any official stance or opinion held by MTEA. (Content has been edited for length and clarity.)

It's no great secret that in this digital age, access to sheet music, scripts, video and audio resources online is like the Wild West. Piano vocal scores, librettos, vocal selections, scripts, and more are shared brazenly on platforms like Scribd, Reddit, Tumblr, DropBox, social media, and good old-fashioned email in ways that often violate copyright laws and show a blatant disregard for the rights of authors and their representatives. Let's begin by acknowledging this secret and agreeing it is a problem.

Nowhere is evidence of this culture more readily apparent than in our respective theatre programs. We rely on these questionable exchanges of copyrighted content to support our voice lessons, studio and performance classes, season selection committees, literature and history courses, and production programs. Sometimes, all it takes is a simple Google search to find the content you need free of charge, and it's unlikely that the artists who created that intellectual property will benefit when you download it.

Since there has been little advocacy for writers, composers, and lyricists as it relates to this systemic cultural problem within musical theatre training programs, I was interested in hearing from the writers themselves about their thoughts relating to their work in the classroom and on stage. For this conversation, I reached out to musical theatre writers representing two distinct generations: those artists who were writing before the internet changed the world and those artists who came of age during this digital landscape. Here are excerpts from my conversations with Broadway composers and lyricists John Bucchino, Craig Carnelia, and Chris Miller, and some of the next generation of musical theatre writers, Joey Contreras, Kait Kerrigan, Ryan Scott Oliver, and Will Van Dyke. Like their writing, the answers and insights were varied and surprising.

JD: How do you feel about educators, students, and/or staff in theatre programs using your music (and copies of your music) for instructional and educational purposes?

JC: As someone who went to a BFA musical theatre program, I know very well the thirst for sheet music accessibility, and I remember the lengths to which we students would go to find affordable options. And now as a writer, I am, of course, supportive and very happy to be included in any educational purposes at these programs. However, because I am in the business of creating content that is easily duplicated and passed around for a variety of occasions, I hope schools and educators will encourage students to pay for sheet music. I also ask that programs not take a cavalier approach to the distribution of their own sheet music purchases. Buying a one-time download to create multiple copies per student over "X" amount of years can be a catastrophic loss of income for an independent musical theatre writer like me.

CC: Here's what I wish: that in an educational situation, students could have access to the music they wish to explore and work on, but once they decide to perform the song publicly or make the song part of their "book" of audition music, they buy the music.

AG: I think it's a great idea for schools to have a library of sheet music for students to access for educational purposes, and it was certainly an invaluable resource for me when I was in school. A program can invest in purchasing a copy of published music (published digitally or otherwise) and make it available for students to use. That way, the writer gets paid, even if the access is broader via the institution. I generally encourage music to be shared with students in hard copy form to limit the number of digital copies flying around willy-nilly. I also see a need for students to be educated about copyright and digital piracy.

KK: It's important to me that my work is purchased legally, which I try to make easy to do by selling it on NewMusicalTheatre.com and MusicNotes.com. Once you have the sheet music legally, it can be used to sing in school settings or in cabarets.

CM: I love and am thrilled by educators, students, and/or staff in theatre programs using legally obtained copies of my music for educational purposes.

WVD: I am excited about the prospect of educators and students using my material in an educational setting . . . While it makes perfect sense for someone to make a copy of music to distribute in a course setting, when everyone starts making copies of things, it gets tricky. Just like the students who are trying to make their way as artists, there are many composers who are trying to make a living by writing. Anytime music is copied instead of purchased, it makes it that much harder for the writer to support themselves by writing.

JD: In our increasingly digital age where the distribution of scripts, scores, and sheet music is more and more difficult to monitor, what are some "best practices" you would recommend for educators and students?

JB: The most important act of support is to pay for our work. In my case, it's purchasing sheet music through my website, either in the form of my two songbooks or as individually downloadable sheets and accompaniment tracks. The next thing would be to treat the material with respect, i.e., to present it accurately. We songwriters sweat over every word, note, and rhythm. In my work, each rest is a chance to breathe, and more importantly, an opportunity to think before singing the next word or phrase. Each note is there to illuminate the lyric. Each word is chosen to shade and deepen the meaning. So—singing through a rest; making an eighth note a half note because it sounds good in one's voice; choosing a different note because you aren't sure of the correct one; replacing a word with a synonym; or dissipating the power of a melodic line by inserting some vocal gymnastic are all disrespectful to the writer and diminish their work.

JC: I can't speak on the bigger entities and titles, but I am very connected online... I definitely encourage people to reach out on social media and through any kind of contact forms on websites.

AG: One-off performances of single songs, like inclusion in concert programs or recitals, are fine; most university venues have a license with someplace like ASCAP, which covers general performance royalties for the writer. (Pro tip: If you notify the writer that a song is being performed, they can get it counted toward an annual royalty payment from their rights organization, if it isn't automatically.) For productions, you must license the score from the author or the show's licensing representative. Full stop.

KK: I think that education about copyright is important—especially in college settings. I'm a member of the Dramatists Guild Copyright Committee, and we've found that there are *tons* of professors who don't understand copyright. There's a lot of great information on our website (dramatistsguild.com/copyright); David Lindsay-Abaire wrote a great piece on how copyright impacts a school's ability to change the words. We also have lots of information about sheet music. Many students don't know what they're doing is illegal. Copyright is what makes it possible for someone like me—who makes very little money for long, long periods of time—able to keep writing. The sheet music I've sold has sustained me while trying to get shows produced. But it's not just about supporting the little guy—it's the actual, literal law. American copyright law is also the reason that we have such a robust creative economy; the erosion of that makes it impossible to make a living as an artist. As an artist, I strategically give away *a lot* for free—I was a poor student too. But you have to think about the countless hours that went into making something. If you deem it valuable enough to use, you should be willing to pay a small amount for it. A song that's in your "book" costs less than a glass of wine at a bar, and you get to use it for as long as you hold onto it.

CM: I think it's imperative for educators and students to have some kind of component to their process that encourages them to seek out new work. By finding new work that excites and interests them, they can begin dialogues with living and emerging writers, which is helpful if they spend most of their time studying the canon or less accessible writers. It's very exciting for writers to be in contact with students and educators because that is the only way new work gets out there—if there's a rising tide of interest. I think educators should stress the importance of using properly obtained materials, though. Artists need the encouragement, and students shouldn't simply feel entitled to the work for one reason or another.

RSO: I think an initial copy should be purchased, or someone should be able to track it back to someone who has purchased it. If you have access to a .pdf and you don't know who paid for it initially, I believe the *right* thing to do is pay for it yourself. This is just a private rule. If your friend bought the copy, if the university bought the copy, then I think, like in the old days, the student has the right to it. And, continued acknowledgement and engagement with the writers on social media is an excellent way to offer back.

JD: How do you feel about your work being performed and distributed online (YouTube, facebook, Instagram, etc.)?

JB: I have mixed feelings about my songs being shared through online formats. On the positive side, it's great to have them reaching farther into the world. On the negative side, they're sometimes not presented in their best light—most often, it's the accompanist who falls short. My piano accompaniments are complex and difficult to play well... Another unfortunate byproduct of inaccurate online vocal performances is that other singers watch them, learn the mistakes (often these are added riffs), and make them part of their own subsequent performances.

JC: I encourage it! I love being tagged in covers and performances. If I were to come across any large-scale performances that were illegally obtained or drastically rearranged my music, that would maybe be a different issue, but I don't tend to see a lot of that. I love the bedroom covers, the cabaret performances, and these days, the friends getting together and doing virtual duets.

CM: I appreciate all performances of my work in any medium!



THE BEST THING WE CAN ALL DO IS TO CONTINUALLY ASSESS OUR ADVOCACY FOR WRITERS, BOTH IN THE CLASSROOM AND ON STAGE, AND INSTILL IN OUR STUDENTS A STRONG DESIRE TO SUPPORT THE ARTISTS WHO CREATE THE ART FORM THEY PRACTICE.

AG: I think it's great. As I mentioned above, single song performances are no problem. Full productions need to get permission from the licensor.

KK: I love having songs that are legally available for purchase performed on social media. I think it's always helpful to tag the writers of the songs. This isn't just to give credit where credit is due; it also gives the singer the possibility that the writer will promote a great performance. It can be the beginning of a relationship sometimes—I've met several singers through social media.

WVD: I think my work being produced and performed online can always be very exciting. I've never experienced any problems in this realm, and my hope would be that if I ever had an issue, I could reach out to the person who posted and have a dialogue about it. Ultimately, the composer owns the copyright to their material and should be able to control where it lives, and people need to respect that if they are asked to take something down.

JD: How do you work with educators in securing your work for their students, be it in the classroom or on stage?

CM: For me, I prefer the secure [acquisition of] the music from whatever outlet that sells it or from the correct licensing organization (for me, MTI or Concord Theatricals/Samuel French). Naturally, I can facilitate communicating with these organizations if educators approach me first. Before I was lucky enough to have distribution and administration of my work, I would freely and liberally just send the music out to folks who requested it. This was long before cash apps existed, so it was just easier. I regret that to a certain extent, because it felt like I was sort of subconsciously devaluing the work, but at the time, it just made sense to spread the work far and wide and see what stuck around in the zeitgeist.

KK: If a song of mine isn't available for purchase, I might send someone a copy of it provided that I feel like it's ready to be used for that purpose and they have a specific affinity for that song. For the most part, however, if something isn't available online for purchase, it's because I'm not releasing that song yet, and I don't want it to be performed because of some relationship with producers or the process that the show is in.

CONCLUSION AND BEST PRACTICES

Based on what I've learned from conversations with writers, licensing agencies, educators, students, and performers, I have formulated a short list of best practices to guide educators and usher in a new way of handling music acquisition and distribution online. This list is by no means absolute, and as technologies and the art form continue to change, new and unimagined challenges on this front will surely arise. The best thing we can all do is to continually assess our advocacy for writers, both in the classroom and on stage, and instill in our students a strong desire to support the artists who create the art form they practice.

- Include specific policies, expectations, and learning outcomes in your syllabi, course materials, and program protocols that foster a culture of ethical use and distribution of scripts, scores, vocal selections, and librettos.
- Find ways to encourage the importance of the composer, lyricist, playwright, and author in *all* of your coursework, production, and rehearsal processes; make continual pedagogical connections between construction, performance, and craft.
- In all instances, advocate for legal and ethical acquisition of materials. This will require some effort and tenacity! Do not exchange vocal scores, sheet music, or scripts illegally. The sharing or exchange of materials between colleagues and students should always involve a conversation about the ethics and expectations of the materials' usage.
- Understand that different writers and the individuals and organizations who represent their work may have different opinions, policies, and practices. When in doubt, ask! In most cases, the writers (especially younger, accomplished, but less established writers) and their representatives want to work with you to ethically and legally use their material for both pedagogical and performance purposes.
- If you see something, *say* something. Don't allow your students or colleagues to perpetuate the illegal and unethical use of copyrighted material. In the case of your students, use each opportunity as a "teaching moment." With your colleagues, don't just comment on the instances of misuse, but also offer constructive and easy solutions. Remember, you're trying to create a culture, not just more rules for everyone to follow.
- Finally, make sure you invite writers, composers, and lyricists to speak with your students and colleagues. Putting a human face and voice to their work is the most transformative way to create a culture of advocacy and respect for the art and craft of writing words and music.

There are a number of additional, exceptional resources available online, including:

- Carnelia, Craig. "Dramatists Guild Launches Link to Sink Piracy." *The Dramatist Blog*, 10 Aug. 2015, www.dramatistsguild.com/thedramatist/dramatists-guild-launches-link-sink-piracy.
- "Copyright 101." *Dramatists Guild*, www.dramatistsguild.com/copyright.
- "Frequently Asked Copyright Questions." *Music Publishers Association of the United States*, www.mpa.org/copyright-faq/.
- Menken, Alan, and Craig Carnelia. "Someone Wrote That Song." *YouTube*, uploaded by The Dramatists Guild of America, 27 Feb. 2013, www.youtube.com/watch?v=kPROpnf280U.
- *Owning Their Words: Understanding the Playwright, Protecting Their Work, and How You Can Help*. Samuel French, www.owningtheirwords.com.

© 1972

All Rights Reserved

HEAD OVER HEELS | November 2020
Indiana University
Direction by DJ Gray and Lauren Haughton Gillis
Music Direction by Ray Fellman
Choreography by DJ Gray and Lauren Haughton Gillis
Photography by DJ Gray

TEACHER'S TOOLKIT

Master teachers from across the country share their insights and innovative exercises.

Introducing Tools From Michael Chekhov to Expand Your Musical Theatre Performance Pedagogy

by Brianna Lucas Larson
and James Stover



If you're like us, you use a variety of acting methodologies when teaching young musical theatre performers in an attempt to find each student's path toward what Michael Chekhov calls "inspired acting" (Powers xxxvi). We use tools from Stanislavski, Meisner, Chekhov, Practical Aesthetics, and more to help engage students and aid them in developing their craft as singing actors. Given these extraordinary times, we anticipate (and have already experienced) the challenges of creating inspired acting in musical theatre performance to be greater than ever. With that in mind, if you have yet to incorporate Chekhov work into your musical theatre performance pedagogy, here are some introductory ideas that you may find useful.

We will address four tools of the technique that we find useful for our university students: *Crossing the Threshold*, *Staccato/Legato*, *Life-Body*, and *Imaginary Body*. In our experience, musical theatre students do not consistently use their bodies fully in exploring and creating characters, and they also experience difficulty connecting the psychological experience to the physical expression. Whether you are well versed in Chekhov technique or this is your first introduction, you can use these tools to explore new pathways to success with your students.

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD

More than ever, we need to help our students concentrate during their work sessions and as they approach work with their creative selves. When working on musical theatre material, we ask that the student be focused on the world of the play and the given circumstances and goals of the character. We ask students to trust their vocal technique, abstain from listening to their quality of sound, and execute their staging while existing within the framework of the story. This requires a high level of commitment, particularly for students with limited experience in the field.

This exercise from the Michael Chekhov technique known as *Crossing the Threshold* (Walsh) has aided our students a great deal in developing awareness of their artistic selves and their readiness to work. Considering Chekhov's encouragement that the technique continue to evolve and that each actor "find his own technique, his own way of working" (Petit 2), many variations of this exercise exist.

Step One: From a standing position and with a feeling of ease, imagine a small ball (approximately the size of a racquetball) floating a few inches in front of your face. The ball can be whatever color you want it to be, but it should have color. This ball represents your creative/artistic energy. When you've created a clear image of this ball, grab it, and place it between your hands.

Step Two: Begin to rub your hands together. Allow the shape of the ball to be malleable between your hands. You are warming up the energy that the ball represents and transforming it into shapeless matter. While doing this action, the color should change to signify that the energy has been activated.

Step Three: Place your hands over your "ideal center" (close to your heart) (Walsh), and allow the sensation of the energy to flow all throughout your body. If you process visually, you might also imagine the color flowing from your hands into your heart, and then up, down, and all through your inner self.

Step Four: Imagine a line in front of your toes. When you are in touch with the sensation of the energy, step over that line. By doing so, you are making a proclamation that you are ready to work with an engaged artistic mindset.

Since being introduced to the Michael Chekhov technique, we have used *Crossing the Threshold* for ourselves and our students in classes and rehearsals. For each individual, and on any given day, the actual crossing may be different—you must begin the work where you are that day. You may jump across exuberantly or simply take a step as you are guided by your connection to your artistic energy on that particular day. After all, it isn't our daily selves coming to this work, it is a heightened version of ourselves—Chekhov called it "the higher self, the real artist in you" (Chekhov, *To the Actor* 87). *Crossing the Threshold* is like putting the key in the ignition. Lionel Walsh, a Great Lakes Michael Chekhov Consortium (GLMCC) founding artistic director, states that this shift needs to read in the body. Putting the key in is just the first step.

A favorite example of Brianna's occurred while choreographing a production at Virginia Commonwealth University. The undergraduate students were having a hard time settling into rehearsal and connecting with the movement. The students all stood in a circle while she gave a brief explanation of *Crossing the Threshold*. They were asked to imagine the threshold in front of them (e.g., a painted line, a veil of fabric, or even a line of flower blossoms). Once they were ready and could feel the pull of their artistic selves, they could step over and through the threshold and begin the rehearsal. In turn, rehearsal concluded by having the students step back across the threshold into their everyday selves. Students acknowledged a collective shift in the room, both as we crossed the threshold into our creative work together, and in reverse, as we stepped back into the selves that we use in our day-to-day lives.

We have each used this exercise in various forms for many years, particularly when working with first- and second-year students. The exercise consistently aids in raising the students' concentration and commitment and the mental presence of the entire ensemble while also giving the students a tangible entrance and exit from the rehearsal process or classroom. As Leonard Petit says in *The Michael Chekhov Handbook*, "concentration is the key activity in realizing anything of value" (20). *Crossing the Threshold* brings you into a heightened readiness to create and explore your creative energy.

LIFE-BODY

While the term Life-Body is not directly attributed to Michael Chekhov, many have "adopted it as a way to describe the inner energy that we play with while practising the technique" (Petit 32). Mark



Monday, a GLMCC founding artistic director, defines the Life-Body as “your body exactly—but imagined—that precedes you in any movement.”

We *imagine* the Life-Body. Rather than seeing it, we feel it. The Life-Body precedes you in all movements. It does the physical action right before you, and since your Life-Body has already accomplished it, you know that you can accomplish it as well. While the physical body may be limited, the Life-Body can fly up to the rafters if your character is “soaring” in a given moment. The actor may rehearse scenes with physical actions in this technique that will not be present in performance. Instead, the Life-Body may still do all of these activities as your physical body does the assigned blocking.

One exercise for finding your Life-Body begins with picking a simple action, for example, raising your arm. Repeat the action multiple times by raising your arm and bringing it back down by your side. Then, begin to imagine an exact copy of your arm, made out of energy, existing in the same place as

your physical arm. Once you are ready, try lifting the Life-Body arm (the arm of energy) before you lift your physical arm. The Life-Body arm directly precedes the movement of your actual arm. You may be tempted to try and see an imaginary arm doing these movements, but remember that we want to *feel* it rather than see it. Try to focus on the sensation—the feeling. This is the beginning of finding your Life-Body. Continue expanding your awareness to create an energy copy of your whole body. Your Life-Body allows you to gesture internally and radiate your energy to scene partners, the audience, and around the room.

To illustrate how the Life-Body tool can illuminate the work of a student in the musical theatre class setting, here is an example from a recent musical theatre audition technique class. A student was performing “Can’t Take My Eyes off of You” from the musical *Jersey Boys*. When she initially presented the song for critique, she had choreographed the entire number with movement around the stage, which, in her mind, better illuminated the ideas put forth in the song. She was then asked to bring the same amount of energy to the song while stripping away the predetermined movements. When

she began the song again, she quickly became frustrated, stymied by the adjustment. Knowing she was taking an Introduction to Michael Chekhov class the same semester, the student was asked to allow her Life-Body to execute all of the movements while her physical body remained still. This simple adjustment allowed her to begin the song again with a feeling of ease while she connected to her previous movements that informed the acting choices she was making in the song. The Life-Body assisted her in being physically connected to the psychological experience of the song, which created full-bodied engagement while not relying on choreography.

STACCATO/LEGATO

Staccato/Legato is one of Chekhov’s exercises passed down to us through his students, among them, Lenard Petit. Petit believes that “the whole Chekhov technique is in this one exercise” (39). Start with the basics, and then as you explore more tools of the technique, you can incorporate them into your *Staccato/Legato* practice.

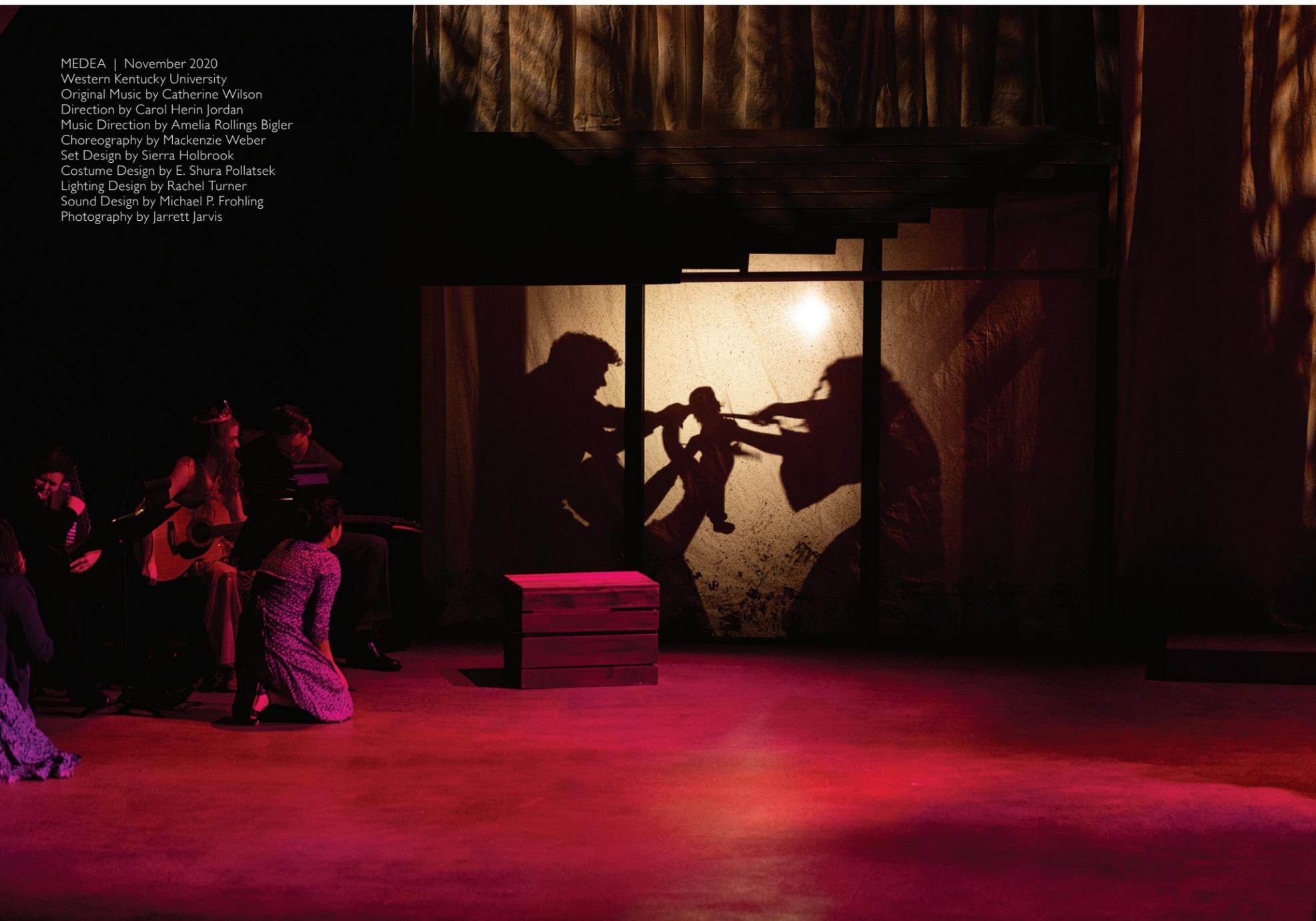
Why should we do *Staccato/Legato*? It wakes up our bodies to the six directions (right, left, up, down, forward, back) (Petit 39, 40), leads us to creating an ensemble, centers us, and warms up our Life-Body. If we do not connect our movement to the Life-Body and radiate and receive energy, then it just becomes calisthenics. “We must try to get the habit of regarding each exercise as if it were a small piece of art” (Chekhov, *Lessons* 67-68).

When doing this exercise with a group, you may begin in one large circle, allowing for the connection to one another and focusing on the energy created in the space within the circle. The exercise includes a series of six movements tied to the six directions, and the movements are connected to the breath. We repeat the series of movements six times total. The first two times through are staccato (quick and sharp), and the next two are legato (slow and smooth, without any real end). Then, we repeat one more time through staccato and one more time legato. We recommend watching the following video to better understand the physicality of the exercise.

Staccato/Legato Part I

www.youtube.com/watch?v=GcDIOWZYqjc&t=297s

MEDEA | November 2020
Western Kentucky University
Original Music by Catherine Wilson
Direction by Carol Herin Jordan
Music Direction by Amelia Rollings Bigler
Choreography by Mackenzie Weber
Set Design by Sierra Holbrook
Costume Design by E. Shura Pollatsek
Lighting Design by Rachel Turner
Sound Design by Michael P. Frohling
Photography by Jarrett Jarvis



While many will think of using this exercise for acting and movement classes, it can also be utilized in musical theatre dance courses. A dance class begins with warming up our bodies, but we should also warm up our artistic selves to be certain we are dancing the character within the piece. Chekhov started each class with this exercise and so do many who use his technique (Petit 38). For example, Brianna used it to begin rehearsals, specifically, when choreographing *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* at Arkansas State University. She began by simply teaching the physical action. Over the

CROSSING THE THRESHOLD . . . BROUGHT THEM TO A HIGHER PLACE OF READINESS TO EXPLORE THEIR ARTISTRY WITH JOY AND SUCCESS.

next few rehearsals, she introduced additional tools from Chekhov (*Crossing the Threshold, Radiating and Receiving Energy, and Life-Body*) until the students had an understanding of how to use this exercise, which brought them to a higher place of readiness to explore their artistry with joy and success.

IMAGINARY BODY

The Imaginary Body is a tool to serve the character you play, as well as an exercise that can be taught to any student of acting as a means to explore the physical life of a character. In *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor*, Petit describes this idea by having the actor imagine that “it is possible to change any part of the body into any size or shape” (77). He asks the student to imagine they have the neck of a bull, then the neck of a baby. He creates a sense of play with these ideas and allows the actor to explore the possibilities of the physical life of the character unrelated to the physical attributes of the actor.

The tool of the Imaginary Body was taught to us through an exercise at GLMCC, which we continue to explore and develop in work with our students. To begin the exercise, the students imagine a large block of clay in front of them that is at least their own physical height and width. Using their hands, they begin to move the clay around and push it away to reveal a statue-like figure of their character. You can precede this work by having students explore an image of their character in their mind’s eye (e.g., a costume rendering, a historical image, or any kind of manifestation of their character’s physical likeness). It is best to keep your eyes open when creating these images so that intellect does not overtake the imagination. As the students peel away and shape the layers of clay, they must use great detail in all of the parts that make up this physical creation while continuously following impulses to create the character. Once they have completed their sculpture, they are free to walk around and examine it thoroughly, gleaning every possible detail of their new creation. Following this examination of the sculpture, tell students that there is a zipper at the back of their sculptures. They can unzip the back and step inside. Now, they exist within the Imaginary Body—the outer layer of themselves is that of the physical character they have created. Students can then begin to explore movement from within the body of the character and interact with this layer of flesh existing on top of their own.

James offers a unique approach at the conclusion of the exercise, as he prompts students to fold up their Imaginary Body and place it in their pockets. Now, they can access it whenever they wish to explore it further.

The application of this tool gives students the freedom, both in the classroom and rehearsal setting, to uniquely define the physical life of their character. One student in particular used this exercise to help create the character of Mr. Harris in Purdue Fort Wayne’s production of Mary Zimmerman’s *The Secret in the Wings*. Mr. Harris is the monster-like neighbor that babysits the play’s lead character, a young girl. The student reflected that the exercise gave him freedom to be silly, to discover, and to play. It allowed him to create a distinction between his body and the character’s while also giving him confidence from learning about who the character is inside and out. He explained that he grew up drawing, so it was easy for him to conjure different images and then infuse those images into the physical creation. His experience is one example of how this tool can immediately be put to use in your students’ work.

In conclusion, these four tools are just a few of the many that we hope will showcase the usefulness of the Michael Chekhov technique for musical theatre performers. Musical theatre performance study requires substantial physical awareness, heightened concentration, and sustained connection to artistry. We have experienced the unlocking of imagination, the physical life coordinating with the psychological, and the boundless sense of committed play that comes from using this technique with our students.

We hope these ideas entice you to explore the Michael Chekhov technique further, and we suggest beginning with his book, *To the Actor*, or by researching the many organizations that offer Chekhov training (including the aforementioned GLMCC). We hope we’ve piqued your interest by showing you how this work enlivens our students, both in the rehearsal hall and the classroom.

WORKS CITED

- Monday, Mark. “Module One: Ensemble Exercises.” Great Lakes Michael Chekhov Consortium, Summer Conference, 6 June 2016, Mt. Union University, Alliance, Ohio. Workshop Presentation.
- Chekhov, Michael, et al. *Lessons for the Professional Actor*. Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1985.
- . *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*. Revised and Expanded ed., London and New York, Routledge, 2002.
- Petit, Lenard. *The Michael Chekhov Handbook: For the Actor*. Routledge, 2010.
- Powers, Mala. Preface. *On the Technique of Acting*, by Michael Chekhov, Harper Perennial, 1991, pp. xxxv-xliv.
- Walsh, Lionel. “Module One: Ensemble Building.” Great Lakes Michael Chekhov Consortium, Summer Conference, 16 June 2014, Kent State University, Kent, OH. Workshop Presentation.

Brianna Lucas Larson is an assistant professor of theatre and dance at Arkansas State University. She received her MFA in theatre pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University, her BA in theatre from Minnesota State University, Moorhead, and her teacher certification in the Michael Chekhov technique through GLMCC.

James Stover is an assistant professor of acting and musical theatre at Purdue University Fort Wayne. He holds an MFA in theatre pedagogy from Virginia Commonwealth University and a BFA in musical theatre from Otterbein University. He is a member of Actor’s Equity and has studied Michael Chekhov at various institutions.

Twenty Things Transgender Performers Want You to Know

by Gwendolyn Walker

Over the last ten years, I have been privileged to train many talented transgender performers, both at the universities where I have taught and at my private voice and Alexander Technique studio in New York City.

Helping these young artists has led to some of the most rewarding experiences of my career. However, I did encounter some challenges as I aimed to properly educate myself about their needs and the particular issues they face.

TEACHER'S
TOOLKIT

Through a combination of my survey of the available literature, and, more importantly, the generosity, patience, and guidance of my students who have sacrificed their comfort to educate me and the theatrical community, I have assembled what I believe is a primer of the most important information for educators to know. In January 2020, I gave a presentation at the Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance Conference at San Diego State University, titled, "Transgender Performers: What They Want You to Know." My co-presenters were two of my students: Murphy Taylor Smith, who earned her BFA in musical theatre from Penn State and who came out as a transgender woman the summer before her senior year; and non-binary artist, activist, and performer, Ezra Menas (Broadway's *Jagged Little Pill* and Steven Spielberg's *West Side Story*).

The following list summarizes the key practical and immediately applicable lessons from that presentation and my work since that time with the intention to (1) foster greater understanding and compassion among educators who are new to these issues, and (2) help facilitate new conversations about how we can better educate and create a safer environment for our transgender community in the theatrical world.

IN GENERAL

1. Do your research. Do not expect or ask your students to educate you. Often, they face some of the greatest challenges of their young lives while in college. Educating their professors should not be added to their "to-do" lists. You may understandably feel overwhelmed with how much you have to learn if you are new to training transgender, gender non-conforming, and non-binary people; however, they are no more a burden to you than your other students and should not be made to feel as such. Spend the necessary time doing your own research, and refrain from asking a lot of questions you could have answered for yourself.

2. Stop thinking that someone's gender should align with the sex they were assigned at birth. Biological sex is determined by the sex organs that the doctor sees when a baby comes out of the womb. According to Merriam-Webster, gender identity is "a person's internal sense of being male, female, some combination of male and female, or neither male nor female." Therefore, biological sex and gender identity are two different things. Because different combinations of chromosomes are possible and brain chemistry differs from human to human, it is harmful to assume that someone's gender should align with the sexual organs they have at birth.

3. Learn to recognize dysphoria and try to avoid triggering it. Gender dysphoria is an incongruence between a person's perceived identity and how they operate in the world. It is often how a transgender person first discovers they are transgender. There is body dysphoria (e.g., "My body doesn't look the way a woman's body should look") and social dysphoria (e.g., "I am uncomfortable undressing in this women's dressing room"). Not every transgender person experiences dysphoria, especially gender non-binary people, but educators should look out for and try to avoid situations that may trigger it, such as separating students by gender in rehearsal or saying words that don't align with the student's identity (e.g., using the word soprano when teaching a transgender man). Where it is impossible to avoid, try to privately prepare your transgender students beforehand and ask what you can do to make them more comfortable. Giving students the opportunity to opt out of a project and complete a different assignment is a great option as well.

4. Address bullying immediately. When you hear aggressions, be brave and be an ally. Use your privilege. Phrases like, "It's not okay to use someone's identity as an insult," or, "Science and history say that gender isn't binary," are good to have on hand. Stopping bullying includes helping educate fellow faculty members and cisgender students in private conversations. A little advocacy goes a long way.

5. Put LGBTQ and transgender ally signs on your office door and provide resources for transgender support organizations. Let students know there are safe spaces in the building. Such small gestures can mean so much and save lives. List numbers and resources on your syllabus and your office door. Some great ones include:

- The Trevor Project: (866) 488-7386, or text TREVOR to TrevorText (202) 304-1200
- Transgender-Lifeline: (877) 565-8860
- LGBT National Hotline: (888) 853-4564
- GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network): info@glSEN.org, (212) 727-0135
- National Center for Transgender Equality: ncte@transequality.org, (202) 642-4542

You can also provide numbers to local LGBTQIA+ organizations and centers on your campus and in your community.

6. Use gender-inclusive language. Gendered terms make transgender, non-binary, and gender-fluid people feel unsafe and unseen. You may be surprised at the amount of gendered language you use. "Man, I'm tired!" or, "Guys, pay attention!"—do your best to eradicate them. Here are some examples and alternatives:

WHAT NOT TO SAY	WHAT TO SAY
Boys and Girls	Friends
Ladies and Gentlemen	Distinguished Guests
Men and Women	Folks
Guys and Gals	Everyone, Y'all
Freshmen, Sophomores, Juniors, Seniors	First Year, Second Year, Third Year, Fourth Year
Actors and Actresses	Actors

7. Understand that no two transgender humans are the same. Each transgender human you encounter is different and they will have different preferences and different needs. The only way to know what they need is to have a dialogue with them. Do not assume that because you know one trans person's preferences that you know them all. Also, gender is fluid, so a trans person's preferences may change over time.

NAMES AND PRONOUNS

8. Use pronouns every time you introduce yourself and ask everyone what pronouns they use. For example, you can say, "Hi, my name is Gwen. My pronouns are she/her/hers." You can also ask, "What are your pronouns?" if you feel comfortable. Put your pronouns on your Zoom/Google Meet name tag and in your email signature. Including your pronouns is an easy way to make people feel safe, included, and visible. A study published by the *Journal of Adolescent Health* found that when chosen pronouns and names were used at school, home, work, and with friends, there were large decreases in symptoms of severe depression, suicidal thoughts, and suicide attempts in transgender youth (Russell et al. 503). In short, *using chosen names and pronouns saves lives*. Note that "preferred pronouns" is a term that many transgender people do not like because it implies that the pronouns they use are not their *real* pronouns.

9. Pass out index cards on the first day of class so students can write down their names and pronouns. If you teach online, have everyone send you an email with this information. Maintaining transgender students' privacy can be critical to their safety and mental health. Calling roll

REMEMBER THAT THIS MOMENT IS AN EXTRAORDINARY CIRCUMSTANCE BECAUSE IT IS AN EXTRAORDINARY TIME IN YOUR STUDENT'S LIFE.

on the first day may accidentally identify someone by the gender assigned to them at birth without their consent or "out" them, which can be dangerous and traumatic.

10. Use chosen names every time. Transgender people typically change their name to their "chosen name" when they come out. Many refer to the name given to them at birth as their "given name," "birth name," "legal name," or "former name." Some call it their "dead name." (However, it is important to know that not all of the terms previously listed are embraced by all transgender people.) *The Journal of Adolescent Health* study referenced above found that, for a transgender student, having even one context where their chosen name was used reduced suicidal thoughts by 29% (Russell et al. 5). Few situations ever call for teachers to discuss a student's "former name" unless, for example, they need to fill out a university form or make travel arrangements. Critically, such conversations need never be discussed in public situations such as the classroom.

11. Use gender-inclusive pronouns in your daily language. Use they/them/theirs or zi/zim/zir as a habit instead of gendered pronouns like he/him and she/her. Also, remember that not all non-binary people use non-binary pronouns.

12. Do not make a big deal about messing up someone's pronouns or name. Mistakes happen and changing how you address someone may take time. The best thing to do is apologize, correct yourself, and move on quickly. For example, say, "She...oh, I'm sorry...he," and move on. Making a big deal of your mistakes by apologizing excessively or focusing on your embarrassment unfairly puts the burden of comforting you on your transgender student.

IN THE STUDIO AND CLASSROOM

13. Examine your syllabus for opportunities to include transgender experiences. Musical theatre is a very gendered and White art form. Find ways to introduce transgender history and gender fluidity into the conversation in your classrooms and include works written, created, and performed by transgender humans.

14. Provide collaborative repertoire. Most transgender students say that the most difficult time in their lives was the first six months to two years of their transition. For singers, taking the time to choose repertoire that does not trigger them can go a long way toward easing their transition. For example:

- *Provide access to music in different keys.* In the fall of 2019, Penn State University Musical Theatre created a fund for all students to buy music in different keys. A copy of the new key is then kept in a library as a resource for future students.
- *Realize that singing some repertoire might be dysphoric for some transgender people.* In almost all standard musicals, male-presenting people sing about falling in love with female-presenting people and vice versa; therefore, we are not accustomed to hearing some repertoire sung by people with a different voice type. Know that hearing their voice for the first time on a new song may be traumatic for a transgender person.
- *Collaborate with your students instead of just assigning repertoire.* Offer choices to your students. For example, "We need to find a song that achieves this dramatic or vocal objective. Can you



listen to these and see if any of them would work for you? If not, feel free to find your own music that achieves the objectives we discussed." This may take some time, and you will need to maintain an open dialogue with your students. Also, a song that the student may have previously felt okay singing may be suddenly triggering, so again, flexibility is key. If you teach a class where you assign repertoire, consider not assigning repertoire based on gender. As my students have taught me, I may be a repertoire expert, but I am not an expert on the transgender experience. Educators need to allow students to lead here.

15. Try not to “other” your transgender students. “Othering” is unintentionally making a transgender student feel different from everyone else. This can seem contradictory because, of course, they are different, and you have to accommodate that. But consistently making someone *feel* like they are different can make them feel like they do not belong, which is harmful. For example, saying in rehearsal, “Men stand over here and women over there,” is “othering” to someone who doesn’t identify as either. Instead, find new ways to divide groups that do not include gender: green team, upstage group, etc.

16. When someone shares their gender experience with you, privately ask them: “How can I support you?,” and, “What can I do to make you feel more comfortable in this class, show, or studio?”

17. Believe your transgender students. No qualifiers. When someone tells you their gender identity, asking them if they are sure is grossly insensitive. Transitioning is not a fad.

18. Do not share your student’s gender journey with anyone unless it is a medical emergency or you have their permission. According to an article published by the National Center for Transgender Equality, murders of transgender people from January to August 2020 had already surpassed the number of murders in all of 2019. Trans women of color are the most targeted of these groups. Sharing your student's gender journey without cause can expose them to discrimination and have life-threatening consequences.

19. Be sensitive to your transgender student’s emotional state. Do not push the student if you perceive they are struggling. Instead, you could ask several different questions:

- "How can I help you at this moment?"
- "What do you need to do right now?"
- "Do you need some time?"
- "Would you like to reschedule?"

Remember that this moment is an extraordinary circumstance because it is an extraordinary time in your student’s life. Honoring your student’s transition is more important than demanding they have a normal academic year. Educative outcomes can still be achieved, but educators may need to think outside of the box.

20. Ask open-ended questions. Be mindful of the power differential between professor and student. If you say, “Are you comfortable with that?,” or, “That’s okay, right?,” the student may agree to avoid conflict. Instead, ask, “What do you think of that?,” or, “What ideas do you have?,” and then give them time to consider and respond.

THE BIG PICTURE

We have an exciting opportunity as arts educators to lead by example and provide safe spaces for our transgender, non-binary, and gender non-conforming students. Language is alive, and thoughtful and compassionate language for many transgender experiences has not existed until now. New vocabulary will continue to evolve; therefore, it is important to continue to pay attention and be open to continued learning. We are all stronger, our world is more beautiful, and our artistic experiences are deeper when we include all voices in our creative conversations.

My students sum it up better than I ever could:



A CHORUS LINE | March 2020
Fullerton College
Direction by Tim Espinosa
Music Direction by Nicola Dedmon | Choreography by Allison Eversoll
Set Design by Kaylee Legbandt Gieser | Costume Design by Rachael Lorenzetti
Lighting Design by Victor Amaya | Sound Design by Andrew Rivas
Photography by sphography54

Ezra Menas:

The work is individual and it has to happen outside of the physical workplace. You have to work to unlearn societal constructs that have been engrained for centuries. It is okay to make mistakes as long as you show compassion, empathy, understanding, acceptance, and respect. You do not have to understand what a transgender person is going through on an experiential level in order to extend compassion and respect. Just listen. Continue to unlearn things you thought you knew. A willingness and openness to learn and grow is one of the most important parts of understanding a lived experience that differs from your own. Every transgender person, every non-binary person, has a different lived experience from cis folks, as well as from one another. There is no 'apply all' once you've learned something about one trans person's experience.

There are so many aspects of learned gender norms and expectations that trans and nonbinary folks are unlearning for themselves in relation to their own gender identity, which can be extremely vulnerable. Offer them patience. Most of the time, folks have been forced to conform to a binary gender, and asking those big gender questions, coming into one's own authentic gender identity in a society that has a violent history (and unfortunately present) against the trans community, can be very scary. College can be such a vulnerable and stressful experience without coming to understand your gender identity; so it is vital to trans folks that there are compassion and validation. Listen to your trans students. Give them space. Refrain from passing judgment or asking intrusive questions. Do your homework outside of the space. Read books written by trans people, follow different trans folks on Instagram, and try to incorporate lots of different trans perspectives into your daily life. Believe it when you say, 'I see you, I hear you.'

Here is a clip of Ezra in the ensemble, performing with the entire cast of *Jagged Little Pill*, the song, "You Learn," on Good Morning America on December 12, 2019: www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBIZoqcmeJ4.

Murphy Taylor Smith:

It's daunting how much there is to do and learn. I understand that it isn't easy. Gender in musical theatre is a very complex and nuanced topic that is impossible to pick apart in one bullet-pointed list, as much as we would all like it to be that simple. The cool thing about this list is that there are things you can try, things you can do, ways you can shift your perspective. I can tell you that those things would make the biggest difference for people like me and also that I spend more time thinking and hurting about it than you will ever do. So even though it is an immense task, it is infinitely more immense and challenging for the transgender and non-binary people who are trying to make a go of it in this industry that does not have room for them right now. It's very difficult for us. These things that educators can do make the world of difference because they allow us the space to exist in these programs that are educating young performers. Even just my program saying that we want you here still, even that first step of saying, 'I hear you and I love you,' is enormous.

Here is a clip of Murphy singing a new Sam Salmond song that he wrote just for her at 54 Below on January 11, 2020: www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4FTwZliDRs.

WORKS CITED

Menas, Ezra. "Re: Updated Conference Presentation Quote." Received by Gwendolyn Walker, 1 Nov. 2020.

National Center for Transgender Equality. "Murders of Transgender People in 2020 Surpasses Total for Last Year in Just Seven Months." *National Center for Transgender Equality*, 7 August 2020, www.transequality.org/blog/murders-of-transgender-people-in-2020-surpasses-total-for-last-year-in-just-seven-months. Accessed 10 Aug. 2020.



Russell, Stephen, et. al. "Chosen Name Use Is Linked to Reduced Depressive Symptoms, Suicidal Ideation, and Suicidal Behavior Among Transgender Youth." *Journal of Adolescent Health*, vol. 63, no. 4, 2018, pp. 503-05.

Smith, Murphy Taylor. "Training Transgender Performers: What They Want You to Know." Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance Conference, 3 Jan. 2020, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA. Conference Presentation.

Gwendolyn Walker is an assistant professor of musical theatre voice at Penn State University. She is certified by the Contemporary Alexander School as an Alexander Technique teacher, and she maintains a busy New York City studio. Her students can be seen in most shows on Broadway today.

Considering Color-Conscious Casting

by Brian Manternach

In the spring of 2016, the show selection committee at the University of Utah Department of Theatre (where I am on the voice faculty) announced that it would be producing *Bring It On: The Musical* the following fall. At the time, conversations regarding appropriate racial and ethnic representation in stage productions had been at the forefront in the theatre world, due in no small part to that year's Broadway season, which included *The King and I*, *Allegiance*, *On Your Feet!*, and, most notably, *Hamilton*. Therefore, the question that circulated through our department was: How will we—in Utah, of all places—produce a show that prominently features actors of color?

For those not familiar with the 2011 musical, or the 2000 film on which the musical is loosely based, *Bring It On* is a story of rival high school cheerleading squads from Truman High School and the “hard-knock” Jackson High School. The lead Jackson High characters were all originated by people of color in the musical's premiere in Atlanta, Georgia as well as in its subsequent national tour and Broadway run. Music Theatre International indicates that the cast includes “ethnic roles,” and the character descriptions for both Twig and Cameron from Jackson High include the designation “hip-hop artist.”

Some might argue that *Bring It On* may not be the most logical choice for a theatre program in Utah. Although the United States population is 76.3% White, the state of Utah is 90.6% White (United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts, Utah”). Salt Lake City, where the University of Utah is located, is 73.1% White (United States Census Bureau, “Quick Facts, Salt Lake City, Utah”), and the University itself has an undergraduate student body that is 67.5% White (College Factual). According to data from 2015, the University of Utah ranks 8th among its Pac-12 peer institutions in the percentage of students from ethnic minorities, and it is tied for last place in the percentage of Black undergraduate students (“Tracking Racial Diversity”). Could our department actually produce *Bring It On* as intended, or would we need to cast White actors in roles originally played by people of color?

Ultimately, concerns over the proposed production led to a department-wide “town hall” meeting where a handful of students offered input. Monica Goff, then a sophomore acting major, read a prepared statement that provided her personal perspective as the child of a Filipino immigrant mother and a White father. Before *Hamilton*, she had not seen widespread concern in the theatre industry



SPOON RIVER ANTHOLOGY AND BEYOND | October 2020
Anderson University
Direction by David Coolidge and Brady Day
Music Direction by Fritz Robertson
Choreography by Kenny Shepard
Costume Design by Michele Mullins
Sound Design by Bailey McBride
Photography by Jack Lugar

as to whether or not actors of color were afforded performance opportunities even though she had been having those conversations for some time with culturally like-minded friends (Goff, “Personal Statement”).

She expressed that the student demographics of the department were not the only element that made *Bring It On* a problematic choice for the University season. She was also concerned that if the University cast White actors in roles that were clearly intended to be characters of color, the University would be complicit in a greater system that works against young people of color who need opportunities to both practice their art and prove their abilities as artists. She felt that producing a show like *Bring It On* with a majority of the cast composed of White students “shows young kids like myself that their stories do not deserve to be told by people like them” (Goff, “Personal Statement”).

Goff said she was never fully aware of the role that race played in her life until she moved to Utah from the Bay Area of California; although, looking back, the reminders were everywhere. “I never thought about how my tan skin and large nose set me apart from other people,” she said. “I never thought about how the reason I was uncomfortable at family gatherings was because I didn’t quite fit in—I wasn’t White and I wasn’t Filipino. I never thought about how the reason I hate the way I look is because when I was younger, my family would pinch my nose in an attempt to make it look smaller” (Goff, “Personal Statement”).

She believes that not seeing people who looked like her on TV and in theatre when she was growing up contributed to self-esteem issues that have persisted throughout her life. Had there been more diverse representation on stage during her formative years, she is convinced it would have had a profound impact not only on herself but also on untold numbers of people of color. “More people like me would pursue careers in entertainment,” she said. “More people like me would be *visible* in the entertainment industry. I am pursuing acting because I love the art, but it worries me daily that I will not be afforded opportunities simply because of what I look like” (Goff, “Personal Statement”).

The dearth of minority representation during Goff’s lifetime has been palpable. During the ten years leading up to the *Bring It On* debate during her sophomore year of college, an average of 76.3% of actors appearing on Broadway and in non-profit theatres in New York City were Caucasian, according to the *Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages* report by The Asian American Performers Action Coalition (AAPAC) (8). The highest percentage of Caucasian actors during those years was 85% in 2006-2007 with the lowest percentage still reaching 65% in 2015-2016—a number that represents nearly two-thirds of the actors hired by these theatres. During this same period, the hiring of Asian American actors like Goff never topped single digits, ranging from as low as 1% of hires (2009-2010) to a high of 9% (2014-2015) (The AAPAC, “Ethnic Representation” 8). Similarly, in 2016 (Goff’s sophomore year), 68% of Actors’ Equity Association members were Caucasian and only 2.2% identified as Asian (16% of members chose not to self-identify their race or ethnicity) (Lehrer 9).

Goff also has reason to be concerned about the present. According to The AAPAC’s most recent data from the 2017-2018 season, Broadway actors were 66.4% White and 5% Asian American. Non-profit NYC theatres were marginally more diverse with 60.1% of hired actors being White and 7.6% Asian American (The AAPAC, “The Visibility Report” 26).

Of course, mixed-race actors like Goff are sometimes believed to have an advantage in theatre casting. In an article, titled, “Generation A.E.: Ethnically Ambiguous,” Ron Berger, CEO of the New York-based advertising agency, Euro RSCG MVBMS Partners, describes how ethnic ambiguity is viewed in his industry: “Today what’s ethnically neutral, diverse, or ambiguous has tremendous appeal,” he says. “Both in the mainstream and at the high end of the marketplace, what is perceived as good, desirable, successful is often a face whose heritage is hard to pin down” (qtd. in La Ferla). This trend in advertising has impacted the theatre industry as well by perpetuating a perception that actors who are ethnically ambiguous could be afforded greater opportunities for employment by playing roles across a racial or ethnic spectrum.

Tess Nakaishi highlights some of the problems with this way of thinking in an *OnStage Blog* column, titled, “Race & Theatre: Is Being ‘Ethnically Ambiguous’ Really an Advantage?” As a half-Japanese and half-Irish and German actor, Nakaishi believes that because most people are unable to identify her exact ethnicity, she could easily blend into, for instance, a Native American role. However, as she states, “that is not what I am. If it is inappropriate for a Caucasian actor to play that part, is it really any better for me to pretend to be Native American? I do look the part more and perhaps I could bring more awareness of what it means to be non-white, but I still would feel better knowing that a Native American actress had that role” (Nakaishi).

Goff has had similar experiences where theatre professionals expended more energy on who she *looks like* instead of focusing on who she *is*. “I’ve heard the same argument my whole life: ‘Well, she looks Latina,’ or, ‘With a little makeup, she could pass as Asian.’” (Point of fact: The Philippines is, indeed, part of Asia.) Not being Latina, she would not presume to speak to the Latina experience. “But as a woman of color,” she said, “I feel that I can speak to my personal Asian American experience” (Goff, “Personal Statement”).

Goff also acknowledges that in some circles she is considered “White passing,” which allows her to navigate the world, if not the theatre world, in many of the same ways that a White person might. Even so, she said, “I am more than my brown hair and a spray tan. I am more than a White person putting on an accent and winged liner to fake smaller eyes. I am more than that. When you cast a person who is culturally White as a person of color, you are reducing an entire culture to their appearance and not their experience” (Goff, “Personal Statement”).

Nakaishi highlights another problem with the perceived advantage of ethnic ambiguity: “mixed race people are still usually viewed as racial others, and this makes it more challenging to land roles which are traditionally white. And, since characters without a specified race are often assumed to be white, that includes most roles.” If, as she says, characters of *unspecified* race are generally defaulted to be White, then it seems especially crucial that roles of a *specified* race truly be reserved for actors who share the intended racial identity.

This idea goes against the traditional notion of “color-blind casting.” As explained by Kristin Bria Hopkins in the *Harvard Journal of Sports & Entertainment Law*, “Color-blind casting removes race from the casting process, and employs the best actor for the role” (133-34). She points out the glaring ramification of this process when put into practice; that is, minority actors are cast at lower rates than White actors in commercial theatre productions, indicating that, “minorities do not enjoy an equal playing field under the color-blind casting method” (134). Instead, she argues for a “color-conscious”



approach in which race is taken into consideration during casting. As she states, "Color-conscious casting requires casting directors and producers to accept that the country is growing in diversity, and the stage should reflect the changing demographic make-up of the United States" (134).

Back at the department town hall meeting, Goff expressed many of the concerns articulated above and concluded with the following: "To cast a White body in a role meant for a person of color is to be part of an institution that systematically devalues and dehumanizes Black and Brown bodies. It values White beauty more than it values diversity and the inclusion of marginalized groups. It does not value the struggle that actors of color face every day in order to prove that they are worth casting—at least beyond the token sassy best friend of color" (Goff, "Personal Statement").

She further stated that she would not audition for any of the department shows unless she felt assured that those standing for diversity and representation would be acknowledged and respected. "It may seem silly and mundane," she said, "but I cannot morally take part in a system that refuses to view me as a person worthy of representation. Meaningful change cannot be enacted unless we give those in charge a reason to listen to us" (Goff, "Personal Statement").

WHEN YOU CAST A PERSON WHO IS CULTURALLY WHITE AS A PERSON OF COLOR, YOU ARE REDUCING AN ENTIRE CULTURE TO THEIR APPEARANCE AND NOT THEIR EXPERIENCE.

-MONICA GOFF

That spring, the University of Utah Department of Theatre formed a color- and gender-conscious casting policy, in no small part due to the conversations regarding the selection of *Bring It On*. The policy reads in part, "Because we share the belief that the respectful presentation of underrepresented minorities and stories onstage is important, we will always work diligently to cast actors of the appropriate race, ethnicity, or gender identity when a script requires us to do so. In addition, if we do not have the constituency to cast a show appropriately from our student population, we will open our casting pool to community members of the necessary constituency" (qtd. in Petersen).

An article in *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, the University's student-run newspaper, highlighted the new casting policy. In the article, professor Sydney Cheek-O'Donnell, who was involved in the policy's formation, stated, "A casting policy like the one we have adopted is intended to force us to remain alert and sensitive to the multiplicity of identities and points of view that exist in our community and to ensure that we do a better job of representing that diversity on our stages respectfully" (qtd. in Tanner).

Due to the passing of the new department policy, Goff decided to audition for the department shows after all. She did, however, opt out of the *Bring It On* auditions, though she was encouraged to see so many talented people of color show up for that audition. Of course, according to the color-conscious casting policy, had there not been sufficient turnout to cast the show appropriately, the production may have been cancelled, which could be a real, perhaps unforeseen consequence of the color-conscious casting policy. If the appropriate actors of color are not available, either at the University or from the immediate community, does that mean the department can only present White-centric stories? This would deprive both students and audiences of opportunities to experience an array of

diverse perspectives. Or, it may mean a greater investment would be needed from the department to find appropriate actors from outside the immediate community in order to present these stories.

In the intervening years, and especially in recent months, the color-conscious casting conversation has continued in the musical theatre industry. In June 2020, the creators of *Hairspray* amended the licensing agreement to require Black roles be cast with Black performers (Peterson). Then, one month later, the release of *Hamilton* on Disney+ showcased Lin-Manuel Miranda's idea to intentionally cast people of color in the retelling of America's beginnings, reaching an even wider audience than the popular show previously enjoyed. The commitment to maintaining a cast of minority actors, even as the show expanded to a national tour and regional and international productions, is what made *Hamilton*, in the estimation of journalist, Eric Kohn, a "color-conscious casting trailblazer." As Kohn says, "the longstanding notion of 'colorblind casting' no longer has legs." Casting agent, Bernie Telsey of Telsey + Company, agrees, explaining that previous non-traditional casting approaches were based on the idea that anyone can do anything. However, he says, "now it's much more about consciously making a choice to do something, being seen for the color you are. *Hamilton* does that" (qtd. in Kohn).

To that end, several casting agencies released racial justice statements including Telsey + Company, which admitted to complicity in "establishing and allowing systems of white supremacy to continue," in part, through biased audition processes. The company committed to creating positive and permanent change by elevating Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) through its hiring practices and its casting. Some of these commitments included:

1. increasing access to audition opportunities for historically underrepresented actors by expanding the ways in which it seeks talent;
2. consistently creating a safe space for actors to share their work by analyzing each step of its casting process; and
3. collaborating with outside organizations and BIPOC members of the community to establish equitable opportunities and paid casting fellowships for BIPOC casting professionals. (Telsey + Company)

A similar statement was made by the casting office of Stewart/Whitley in which the company admitted to having benefited from a culture of White supremacy. Its committed changes included:

1. developing anti-racism policies, which will be verbally stated and physically distributed at the start of every casting process;
2. including a BIPOC Casting Director or BIPOC Casting Associate in the casting process and audition room for any BIPOC productions where the assigned Casting Director is white; and
3. providing annual training in anti-racism/anti-bias from trained professionals for all Stewart/Whitley casting team members, which will focus on both the casting office and audition room environments. (Stewart/Whitley)

Other organizations are working to encourage greater equity in casting as well. The non-profit, Broadway for Racial Justice, was established in 2020 with a mission of "fighting for racial justice and equity by providing immediate resources, assistance, and amplification for BIPOC in the Broadway and Theatrical community at-large." As part of these efforts, the group announced it will host a nine-week BIPOC training program called Casting Directive. This program offers experience and training for people of color so they may begin work as entry-level casting assistants. Besides providing training for people whom the theatre industry has historically disadvantaged, it also "creates opportunities for people of color to be the ones hiring for BIPOC roles" (Meyer).

In addition to casting issues related to BIPOC roles, the data reveal that BIPOC artists are also far from achieving equal consideration for roles that are not racially specific. Once again, according to The AAPAC's most recent numbers from 2017-2018, only 20% of non-racially specific roles that season

were filled by BIPOC actors (22.4% at NYC non-profit theatres and 16.2% on Broadway) (“The Visibility Report” 14-15). As the authors of the report state, “Although 20% is the highest marker in the 12 years for which we have data, it demonstrates a continued low rate of acceptance of BIPOC actors in non-racially specific roles” (15).

Five years removed from *Bring It On* at the University of Utah, Goff is now living in New York City having completed her BFA studies in the spring of 2018. She is currently pursuing professional theatre opportunities and additional performance training and continues to use her voice to advocate for the underrepresented.

While working a retail job about a year ago, Goff learned that a customer she was serving was a theatre professor. When Goff mentioned that she had earned a theatre degree from the University of Utah, the professor reached into her bag and pulled out a copy of the University’s casting policy, which she had come across independently and planned to use in class discussion the next day. “I was so thrilled to see that people were talking about it!” said Goff (2020).

In recent years, a number of universities have implemented similar changes to their own casting policies. Institutions like Bowling Green State University in Ohio (“Casting Statement”), Southern Connecticut State University (Skinner), West Virginia University (“Casting Policy”), and Florida Atlantic University (The Theatre Lab Team), to name a few, have statements committing to color-conscious casting. Earlham College in Indiana even cites the University of Utah’s policy on its website as it describes the expansion of its own color-conscious casting policy to include gender consciousness (“Earlham Theatre”). However, in lieu of a uniform industry standard, the language and level of detail in the statements from these colleges and universities varies. For instance, West Virginia University simply states, “The School of Theatre & Dance is committed to color-conscious and gender-conscious casting with respect to all persons and to the plays we present” (“Casting Policy”), while Florida Atlantic University presents sixteen specific points of action, including, “we commit to consistently re-evaluating our practices and identifying ways in which we can completely eliminate systemic racism from our organization and our industry” (The Theatre Lab Team).

Students have also led movements at colleges and universities across North America to seek policy changes. In the last year, for example, students at Northwestern University in Illinois (Wang), Humboldt State University in California (Fero), Texas Tech University (Charney), and Queen’s University in Kingston, Ontario (Jeyamoorthy), among others, have called for color-conscious casting at their institutions in an effort to provide equal opportunities to BIPOC students.

In response to a “Call to Action” issued by students and alumni of the Texas Tech University School of Theatre and Dance, School Director, Mark Charney released a statement outlining a multifaceted path forward. First, he committed to “Listen and reflect on whether we have upheld the values we say we cherish” and to “Listen and reflect on the structural work we need to do to make our School a place where our entire community can thrive.” Second, he acknowledged that his administration “must rise to the work that is before us,” as he addressed previous shortcomings. Third, he implemented tangible plans, including the formation of an Anti-Racism Working Group as well as putting into effect specific “steps toward progress.” Finally, he promised to periodically update the community on progress made (Charney). Other universities should consider a similar approach that acknowledges past failures, vows to listen to aggrieved parties, commits to specific actions, and initiates steps that ensure future accountability.

Although theatre has always been a living, evolving art form, it now seems to be shifting at the speed of light—ironically, when there is little live theatre occurring. Due to the Black Lives Matter movement and other efforts, more and more Americans are being forced to confront the realities of what it



means to be a person of color in this country. As theatres reopen in a post-pandemic world, business as usual will simply not cut it. If theatre is to remain relevant, it must intentionally present stories in which BIPOC artists are at the center, rather than relegated to the periphery or, even worse, excluded entirely. If this is to happen, casting policies in many theatres—professional, community, school, and university—need to be revamped. Dramatically.

Bring it on.

WORKS CITED

- The Asian American Performers Action Coalition. "Ethnic Representation on New York City Stages, 2016/2017." Mar. 2019, www.aapacnyc.org/uploads/1/1/9/4/11949532/aapac_2016-2017_report.pdf. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- The Asian American Performers Action Coalition. "The Visibility Report: Racial Representation on NYC Stages, 2017/2018." 30 Sept. 2020, www.aapacnyc.org/uploads/1/1/9/4/11949532/aapac_report_2017-2018_single.pdf. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- Broadway for Racial Justice. "The Mission." www.bfrj.org/missionteam. Accessed 27 Nov. 2020.
- "Casting Policy." *School of Theatre & Dance*, West Virginia University, theatre.wvu.edu/student-resources/casting. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- "Casting Statement/Audition Info." *Department of Theatre and Film*, Bowling Green State University, www.bgsu.edu/arts-and-sciences/theatre-and-film/CastingStatement.html. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- Charney, Mark. "A Need for Change." *School of Theatre and Dance*, 1 Sept. 2020, Texas Tech University, www.depts.ttu.edu/theatreanddance/news/posts/2020/09/chatting.php. Accessed 14 Nov. 2020.
- College Factual. "University of Utah Undergraduate Ethnic Diversity Breakdown." www.collegefactual.com/colleges/university-of-utah/student-life/diversity/chart-ethnic-diversity.html. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- "Earlham Theatre Arts Conscious Casting Policy." *Theatre Arts*, Earlham College, earlhamtheatrearts.wordpress.com/casting-policy/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- Fero, Elise. "Humboldt State Students Voice Concerns Over Racial Casting." *The Lumberjack*, 10 Sept. 2020, thelumberjack.org/2020/09/10/humboldt-state-students-voice-concerns-over-racial-casting/. Accessed 12 Nov. 2020.
- Goff, Monica. "Personal Statement on Color-Conscious Casting." Department of Theatre Town Hall Meeting, Mar. 2016, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, UT. Personal Statement.
- . "Re: article?" Received by Brian Manternach, 18 Mar. 2020.
- Hopkins, Kristin Bria. "There's No Business Like Show Business: Abandoning Color-Blind Casting and Embracing Color-Conscious Casting in American Theatre." *Harvard Journal of Sports & Entertainment Law*, vol. 9, no. 2, 2018, pp. 133-34.
- Jeyamoorthy, Vishmayaa. "The Case for Colour Conscious Casting." *The Journal* [Kingston, Ontario], 4 Oct. 2017, www.queensjournal.ca/story/2017-10-04/arts/the-case-for-colour-concious-casting/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- Kohn, Eric. "How 'Hamilton' Became a Color-Conscious Casting Trailblazer, Before It Was Cool." *Indie Wire*, 4 July 2020, www.indiewire.com/2020/07/hamilton-cast-casting-directors-diversity-1234571127/. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- La Ferla, Ruth. "Generation A.E.: Ethnically Ambiguous." *Models for Writers: Short Essays for Composition*, edited by Alfred Rosa and Paul Eschholz, Bedford/St. Martin's, 2012, p. 603.
- Lehrer, Russell. "Looking at Hiring Biases by the Numbers." *Equity News*, vol. 102, no. 2, 2017, actorsequity.org/news/EquityNews/Spring2017/en_02_2017.pdf. Accessed 23 Nov. 2020.
- Meyer, Dan. "Broadway for Racial Justice Launches 9-Week BIPOC Casting Training Program." *Playbill*, 14 Sept. 2020, www.playbill.com/article/broadway-for-racial-justice-launches-9-week-bipoc-casting-training-program. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- Music Theatre International. "Bring It On The Musical." <https://www.mtishows.com/bring-it-on-the-musical>. Accessed 6 Dec. 2020.
- Nakaishi, Tess. "Race & Theatre: Is Being 'Ethnically Ambiguous' Really An Advantage?" *OnStage Blog*, 13 Nov. 2016, www.onstageblog.com/columns/2016/11/13/is-being-ethnically-ambiguous-really-an-advantage. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- Petersen, Josh. "Color Conscious: From the U to Broadway." *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 13 Feb. 2018, dailyutahchronicle.com/2018/02/13/color-conscious-u-broadway/. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- Peterson, Chris. "'Hairspray' Creators will Require Characters to be Cast as Written." *OnStage Blog*, 3 June 2020, www.onstageblog.com/onstage-blog-news/2020/6/3/hairspray-creators-to-require-characters-be-cast-as-written. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- Skinner, Michael. "Diversity & Inclusion Statement." *Theatre*. Southern Connecticut State University, inside. southernct.edu/theatre. Accessed 14 Nov. 2020.
- Stewart/Whitley. "To the We See You White American Theatre Organizers and the BIPOC Theatre Community." www.stewartwhitley.com/wherewestand. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- Tanner, Courtney L. "Theatre Department Changes Casting Policy to Encourage Diversity." *The Daily Utah Chronicle*, 25 Apr. 2016, dailyutahchronicle.com/2016/04/25/theatre-department-changes-casting-policy-to-encourage-diversity/. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- Telsey + Company. "Our Racial Justice Statement." www.telseyandco.com/test. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.
- The Theatre Lab Team. "Our Plan and Promise." *Dorothy F. Schmidt College of Arts and Letters*. Florida Atlantic University, www.fau.edu/artsandletters/theatrelab/blm/. Accessed 12 Nov. 2020.
- "Tracking Racial Diversity in Universities of the Pacific Athletic Conference." *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education*, 23 June 2015, www.jbhe.com/2015/06/tracking-racial-diversity-in-universities-of-the-pacific-athletic-conference/. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- United States Census Bureau. "Quick Facts, Salt Lake City, Utah." www.census.gov/quickfacts/saltlakecitycityutah. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- . "Quick Facts, Utah." www.census.gov/quickfacts/UT. Accessed 11 July 2020.
- Wang, Aaron. "Students Call for Color-Conscious Casting at Northwestern." *The Daily Northwestern* [Evanston, Illinois], 15 Jan. 2020, dailynorthwestern.com/2020/01/15/ae/students-call-for-color-conscious-casting-at-northwestern/. Accessed 11 Nov. 2020.

Brian Manternach, DM, is an assistant professor (clinical) at the University of Utah Department of Theatre and a research associate for the National Center for Voice and Speech. His current and former students have been cast in national and international Broadway tours and in regional Equity theatres.

The Miseducation of Musical Theatre Majors: Rap Pedagogy for the Stage

by Ian LeRoy

*“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)



Hip-hop began at a party just a short train ride north of the Richard Rodgers Theatre, at 1520 Sedgwick Avenue, the Bronx. In the summer of 1973, Cindy Campbell threw the back-to-school jam that originated an entire genre; it was there that her brother, DJ Kool Herc, first used the same record on two turntables to extend a drum break (Laurence; “The Foundation”). I like to imagine that Lin-Manuel Miranda smiles when he remembers that, thirty-five years before *In the Heights* opened on Broadway, hip-hop was born just across the Harlem River from Washington Heights.

An awful lot has happened since 1973. Hip-hop’s fiftieth birthday is fast approaching, and the genre has already experienced a spectacular list of developments, social movements, controversies, and triumphs—including, of course, the recent record-breaking success of a hip-hop musical. When groundbreaking MC and songwriter Melle Mel was co-writing “The Message” in the early 1980s, could he have predicted that the song would receive a nod from a Black Thomas Jefferson on the same Broadway stage that, at the time, featured *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*? It’s hard to say.

One thing is clear—hip-hop has made an enormous impact on Broadway, and that impact will continue to be felt in theatres everywhere. Many regional theatres, community theatres, and schools have already produced *In the Heights* and *Bring It On*, bringing hip-hop musicals to communities all over the world. As more and more hip-hop musicals are written, the demand for excellent actors who rap will continue to increase. If the next generation of musical theatre performers will be expected to rap, then musical theatre training programs will be expected to teach rap. This is an enormous responsibility.

Unfortunately, there is very little writing available on rap performance techniques and even fewer resources on rap performance pedagogy for musical theatre, despite the fact that rap, as a technique, has been on Broadway for over sixty years,¹ and rap, as an essential aspect of hip-hop, has been on Broadway for at least twenty years² (Zuckerman; Gerard). Why is this art form overlooked in our training programs, our research, and our writing? I have personally heard musical theatre educators dismiss the art of rap with phrases including: “It’s absolutely no different from a Sondheim patter song;” “Just figure the rap part out on your own—I don’t do that stuff;” and “It’s just a fad.” This type of artistic disregard and disrespect, whether intentional or not, causes harm to our students and our casts. We must do better.

This article is intended to be pragmatic and accessible. I am writing this article as a White male music director and vocal coach who has been searching for guidance on this topic for many, many years. Since 2012, I have music directed at least ten musical theatre productions and concerts containing rap. With each new production, I continued to search for any type of resource that would offer some rap-specific recommendations for a musical theatre coach; however, I found very few that were helpful for this specific intersection of genres and techniques. The lack of accessible research and writing on this topic meant that I was largely on my own in terms of developing strategies for coaching musical theatre rap. Even after developing those strategies, there were few knowledgeable colleagues I could turn to for meaningful feedback about the effectiveness or authenticity of my students’ raps, much less to discuss if my approach to hip-hop and rap was respectful to the artists and the art form. Noting this lack of accessible research, I made the decision to write this article in an effort to provide for others a written resource that I wish would have been available much earlier in my own career.

¹ Both “Rock Island” and “Trouble” from *The Music Man* featured rap in 1957.
² *Bring in ‘Da Noise, Bring in ‘Da Funk* opened on Broadway in 1996.



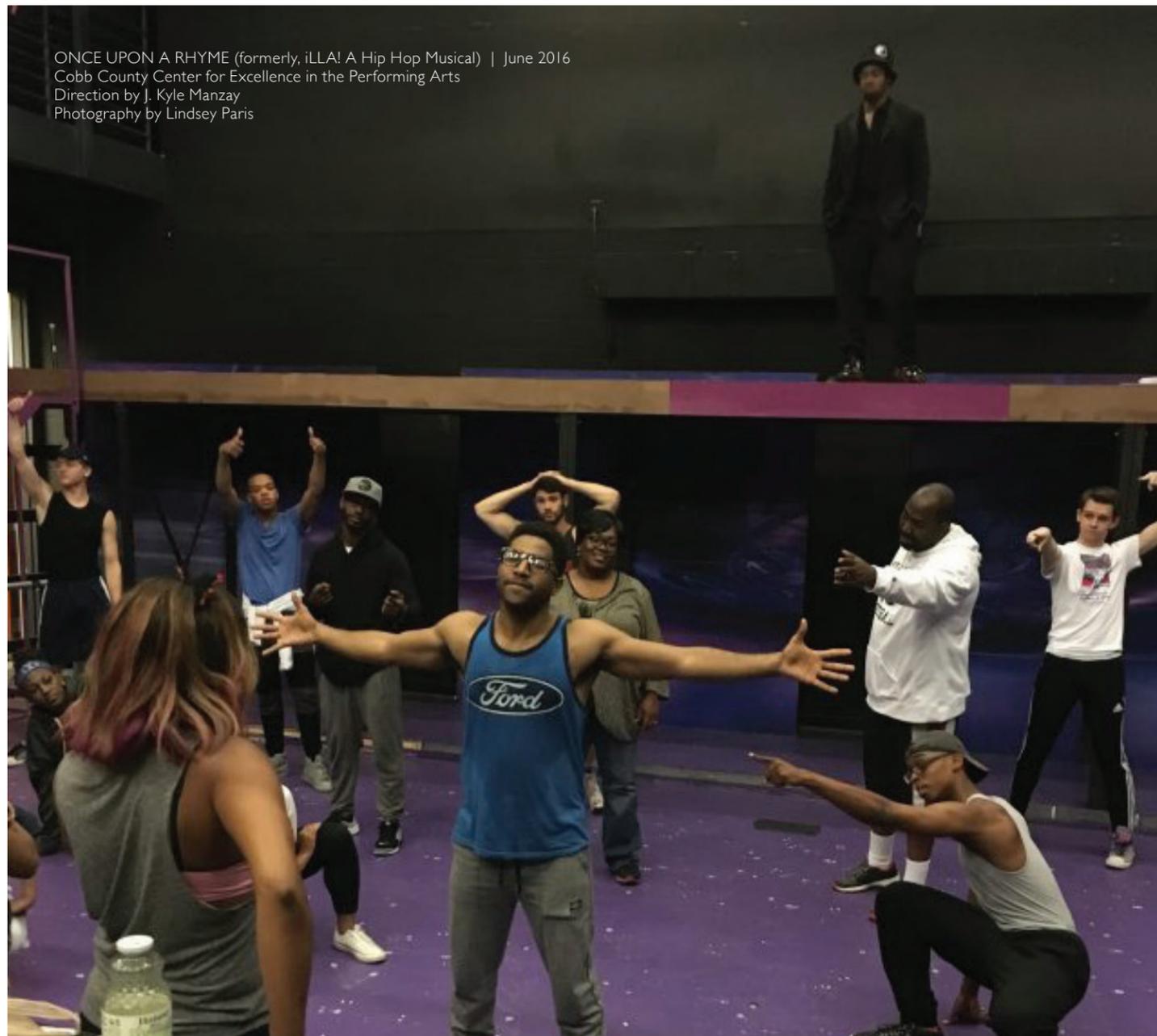
By providing a brief discussion of what a respectful musical theatre rap education might look like, examining the specific challenges presented by musical theatre rap performance, and acknowledging some leading artists in the field, I am hopeful that this article will serve as a meaningful starting place and prompt further discussion of musical theatre rap pedagogy within our profession. In an effort to help the many musical theatre educators who are already teaching rap, I have also provided a potential pedagogical framework for coaching musical theatre rap as well as some basic teaching tools and considerations.

I love hip-hop. However, that love doesn't make me an expert, and this article is not intended to center me as an expert on hip-hop. Instead, I will point you toward a number of hip-hop experts, including many incredible hip-hop artists; I encourage you to study their work and engage critically with this subject matter. It's time that we learn to teach, discuss, and perform one of the most popular genres of music in the world.

YOU MUST LEARN

Definitions

Before beginning any discussion of rap pedagogy, it's important that we discuss the definitions of hip-hop and rap. The exact definitions of these terms are subject to as many opinions as there are hip-hop artists, but in order to meaningfully discuss the field, I will use the definitions discussed by Paul Edwards in his book, *The Concise Guide to Hip Hop Music*. Rap is rhythmic, spoken words, typically delivered over a beat, whereas hip-hop is descriptive of a genre as well as a culture that is inclusive of multiple elements including rapping, DJing, breakdancing, and graffiti (Edwards 6, 11). Rap as a technique predates hip-hop as a genre, but is such an important element of hip-hop that the terms are often used interchangeably (19). Under these definitions, however, the Witch's rap from *Into the Woods* is indeed a rap but is *not* hip-hop.



Resources for Research and Performance

Harvard's Hip-hop Archive & Research Institute at the Hutchins Center for African & African American Research is "committed to supporting and establishing a new type of research and scholarship devoted to the knowledge, art, culture, materials, organizations, movements and institutions of Hip-hop." www.hiphoparchive.org

Home Girls Make Some Noise: Hip-Hop Feminism Anthology "seeks to complicate understandings of Hip-Hop as a male space by including and identifying the women who were always involved with the culture." www.worldcat.org/title/home-girls-make-some-noise-hip-hop-feminism-anthology/oclc/123957643

"Queer Hip Hop: A Brief Historiography" by Shanté Paradigm Smalls provides an overview of the history of queer and LGBT+ hip-hop. www.oxfordhandbooks.com/view/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199793525.001.0001/oxfordhb-9780199793525-e-103

Hi-Arts, formerly known as the Hip Hop Theater Festival, showcases and advances a variety of hip-hop theatre forms through productions, residencies, educational programs, advocacy, and community service. www.hi-artsnyc.org

The website **Hip-Hop Music Ed** "aims to serve as a clearinghouse for musicians, educators, and scholars interested in Hip-Hop and music education." www.hiphopmusiced.com

Say Word!: Voices from Hip Hop Theater, an anthology edited by Dr. Daniel Banks, includes a list of supplemental materials available on The University of Michigan Press website. This list includes a number of activist and educational organizations: www.press.umich.edu/special/hiphop/programs.

Ronvé O'Daniel is a brilliant NYC-based songwriter, performer, and musical theatre composer who provides hip-hop coaching: www.ronveodaniel.com.

Vita E. Cleveland is a performer, poet, and percussionist with an incredible variety of skills. She has significant experience drumming for hip-hop musicals as well as many other genres, musical theatre and otherwise. If you are interested in doing a hip-hop show well, consider hiring Vita: www.maestramusic.org/profile/vita-cleveland.



Despite the extraordinary commercial success and deep sociocultural importance of hip-hop, even hip-hop studies has not yet been adequately recognized as a legitimate academic field. P. Khalil Saucier, professor and director of Africana Studies at Bucknell University, and Tryon P. Woods, professor at the University of Massachusetts, Dartmouth, note in a 2014 article that at a New York University conference on hip-hop studies:

Numerous young scholars expressed how their work on hip hop was dismissed as illegitimate—even within performance studies or cultural studies . . . [and that] the ongoing exclusion, marginalization, and delegitimation of hip hop studies is consistent with how the academy has regarded the topics of black life historically. The barriers faced by these young scholars, therefore, are the expressions of an antiblack culture in the academy and in U.S. civil society writ large. (275-76)

I would similarly suggest that the current lack of research and discussion surrounding musical theatre rap pedagogy is a form of disrespect via negligence.

While it is relatively easy to establish that hip-hop as a genre and rap as a technique aren't yet adequately discussed or respected in academia, it is difficult to define exactly what "respect" looks like in the context of musical theatre rap pedagogy. At minimum, musical theatre educators hoping to teach or produce any piece of art containing rap—as it appears within the genre of hip-hop—have a responsibility to educate themselves by listening to hip-hop and studying hip-hop. For a more thorough example of what truly ethical hip-hop and rap pedagogy for musical theatre students might look like, Saucier and Woods write that "In the rare instance where we have actually taught an entire semester-long course on hip hop, our course designs do not even broach hip hop specifically until the class has spent a good month exploring black history, struggle, and the fungibility of black expressive culture for white society" (284). There is surely no way to standardize and unify what these discussions of respect might look like in theatre education; each department, each production, and each individual student will create new contexts which will call for mindful and continuous reevaluation of what is effective and ethical in practice. However, this lack of standardization does not preclude our responsibility as educators to have these discussions in the first place.³

Acknowledgement of the origins and history of hip-hop is essential in an academic field that is studied and performed primarily by White people. According to data compiled by the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System, over sixty percent of the undergraduate musical theatre degrees awarded in 2017 were to White students (DataUSA). This information reinforces our obligation to discuss issues of race and culture with our students and to be proactively anti-racist in our productions, our classes, and our departments.

This information also calls attention to the perennial question, "Should White people be rapping?," or, more specifically, "Should White musical theatre students be rapping?" In a 2014 correspondence with arts administrator, Howard Sherman, Lin-Manuel Miranda addresses this topic:

The joy of *In the Heights* runs both ways to me . . . When I see a school production with not a lot of Latino students doing it, I know they're learning things about Latino culture that go beyond what they're fed in the media every day. They HAVE to learn those things to play their parts correctly. And when I see a school with a huge Latino population do *Heights*, I feel a surge of pride that the students get to perform something that may have a sliver of resonance in their daily lives. Just please God, tell them that tanning and bad 50's style Shark makeup isn't necessary. Latinos come in every color of the rainbow, thanks very much. (qtd. in Sherman)

³ For perspectives on this topic that are more specific to music pedagogy in the classroom, Adam J. Kruse provides a meaningful discussion in "Toward Hip-Hop Pedagogies for Music Education" in the *International Journal of Music Education*.

Respect

It would be inappropriate to discuss hip-hop in any capacity without stating outright that Black Lives Matter. In his book, *Philosophy and Hip-Hop: Ruminations on Postmodern Cultural Form*, philosopher and cultural critic, J. Bailey, writes that hip-hop "unashamedly offer[s] to the world its own beautiful Blackness, carrying on the proud tradition of Black expression that was begun when the formerly colonized and the formerly enslaved began poeticizing their feelings in the language of their oppressors." Daniel Banks, founder and director of the Hip Hop Theatre Initiative, adds to this understanding while also noting the global and multi-ethnic nature of hip-hop: "In the early days, the Bronx Pioneers of Hip Hop were from African American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, Jamaican, and Bajan parentage, with European American allies . . . involved in helping to make some of the art forms commercially profitable," and, "today, Hip Hop is a dominant presence globally, especially among young people asserting their independence and desire for a return to community-based interactions and social justice" (7, 9). Hip-hop's importance is self-evident. It is worthy of more than cursory research. Our approach to musical theatre rap pedagogy must be informed by diligent and consistent respect for hip-hop as a global, multi-cultural art form that was born from the African diaspora.

Unfortunately, politicians and news anchors regularly perpetuate toxic and disrespectful ideas about hip-hop's identity and legitimacy. For one of many examples, Fox News reporter, Geraldo Rivera, famously argued that "hip-hop has done more damage to young African-Americans than racism in recent years" (qtd. in Strauss). Educators must work to combat this ignorance and misinformation while advocating healthy and meaningful criticism of the genre. Sociologist and author, Tricia Rose, deftly acknowledges the complex nature of hip-hop advocacy in her book, *The Hip Hop Wars*, emphasizing that "We must fight for a progressive social justice-inspired, culturally nuanced take on hip hop" (29).

The nature of cultural appropriation as it relates to hip-hop and musical theatre is deeply complicated and should be discussed at length in our departments and in academia at large. However, decisions about who should and should not be rapping are beyond the scope of this article. In this moment, as a White artist and writer, I'm seeking to acknowledge that rap is already being taught and that it deserves to be taught well.

Listening

Students of all races are now rapping in a wide variety of musicals that contain many different styles of rap. These students deserve leadership from instructors with a true depth of knowledge and respect for the genre. *Hamilton* is incredible, but it's incredible in large part because Lin-Manuel Miranda knows so much about the genres in which he wrote (Paulson). While Miranda's shows might be the first interaction some students have with hip-hop, they must not be the primary source for an educator's hip-hop research and pedagogy. It would be a disservice, and some might argue a supreme act of disrespect, to teach students how to rap based only on information gleaned from two or three musical theatre pieces.

Developing familiarity with a new genre is no easy task, however. Like any relationship between artist and art form, the hip-hop beginner's process of growth and understanding should never end. There is so much work to do. *Start by listening.* Listen to both the old-school hip-hop and the hip-hop that's on the radio right now. Listen to the hip-hop that friends, colleagues, and students recommend. Supplement that listening with articles, books, and interviews, including the many resources for research and listening found throughout this article and in the breakout box.

For the purposes of a basic education in hip-hop, musical theatre educators should familiarize themselves with the major eras of hip-hop as well as the regional scenes. The eras of hip-hop include Old School (1973-1984), New School (1984 to present), and Golden Age (1986-1994) (Edwards, *The Concise Guide to Hip-Hop Music* 133-148). Regional scenes in the United States include East Coast hip-hop, West Coast hip-hop, Southern hip-hop, and Midwest hip-hop (Battan; Blake). Hip-hop can also be delineated by more specific subgenres such as boom bap, trap,



MEDUSA | October 2019
Equity Lab at Open Jar Studios
Direction by Chloe Treat
Photography by Sophie Capp
Pictured: Alexia Sielo

IT'S TIME
THAT WE
LEARN TO
TEACH, DISCUSS,
AND PERFORM
ONE OF THE
MOST POPULAR
GENRES OF
MUSIC IN THE
WORLD.

gangsta rap, industrial hip-hop, and country-rap ("Rap Genius"). However, a single artist can have a defining sound that is difficult to place in a single subgenre, such as Cypress Hill's career-long vacillation between stoner rap and rap-metal (Thigpen; Wiederhorn). Each of these subgenres, along with the many left unmentioned, contains a wealth of excellent material worthy of listening and study.⁴

IT'S TRICKY

Comprehension and "Authenticity"

Musical theatre rap presents a unique combination of challenges for the performer and production team. The enormous effort required to help a theatre audience understand a show in a single viewing is compounded when producing a hip-hop musical by the sheer number of words delivered in a single song (Libresco). The importance of audience comprehension often leads musical theatre teams to prioritize clarity of lyrics above all else so that the audience can follow along with the plot—even at the expense of perceived authenticity.

If we wanted to stage Kendrick Lamar's *To Pimp A Butterfly*, as a theatre piece, we would immediately run into this issue of priorities. For example, take the second track, "For Free?". Do we honor the original interplay of jazz combo and rap? Or, do we make the jazz combo softer so that a first-time listener has a better chance of hearing all of the words? Do we ask the actor rapping to change something about their presentation of the lyrics? Do we bring down the tempo? Are we able to sacrifice some lyric comprehension in favor of more intense emotional content? Do we add supertitles? And how many of these choices can we make before the original aesthetic experience of the track is damaged?

Original shows and jukebox musicals have long walked the line between single-listen comprehension and so-called authenticity (Wollman 31-38). *Hamilton* is no exception. When hip-hop artist, Talib Kweli, was interviewed for his perspective after attending a *Hamilton* performance, he had this to say:

It's similar to Macklemore in terms of the fact that they're enunciating their words clearly and telling stories... they're accentuating their words, but they're doing that because it's a play and people have to hear them. For me, it's like when you watch a sitcom from the '70s and everyone's overacting—dramatic and loud—because they were doing it in front of a live studio audience. There was no laugh track... I'm not one of these people who listens to a Broadway soundtrack if I'm not at the show because those songs are written and designed to be seen. You have to take that into account when you're listening to these songs, but as a 20-year veteran of hip-hop, I was highly impressed. (qtd. in Charlton)

Kweli understands the challenge that many music directors and sound designers have reckoned with for years: live musical theatre is a complicated amalgam of decisions about how best to help live audiences understand the show. Thousands of small choices made by performers, music directors, directors, and designers end up deeply affecting a production in terms of both comprehensibility and perceived authenticity. These choices should be informed by a foundation of knowledge in the genre.

A NEW(ISH) PEDAGOGY

Despite hip-hop being relatively new to Broadway, hip-hop has existed in theatre since long before the work of Lin-Manuel Miranda. As Daniel Banks notes in his 2011 anthology, *Say Word!: Voices From Hip Hop Theater*, there are "Hip Hop Theater courses being taught on college campuses across the country; Hip Hop Theater camps; Hip Hop Theater festivals . . . grants, panels, and conferences all dedicated to Hip Hop Theater" (16-17). Banks also suggests, however, that Hip-hop Theater is difficult

⁴ If the prospect of learning about a new genre without explicit guidance is daunting, consider watching the documentary series *Hip-Hop Evolution* hosted by Shadrach Kabango on Netflix.

to define, in danger of commodification, and is in need of critics who have an “appreciation of the cultural and aesthetic logic of the form and an ability to help translate these complexities for a wider audience” (18). Future research on this topic might even consider and discuss whether *Hamilton* is truly Hip-hop Theater as described by Banks in 2011, and whether “musical theatre rap,” as a technique, contributes to the “commercialization and deracination of intent and core cultural values” of hip-hop (19). I am hopeful that the intersection of Hip-hop Theatre and musical theatre rap pedagogy will be examined at length in future writings on this topic.

To the best of my knowledge, no comprehensive system currently exists for teaching musical theatre students how to rap; however, many talented artists and academics approach the subject from a variety of angles. Ronvé O’Daniel, an excellent performer and composer of both hip-hop and musical theatre, provides hip-hop coaching grounded in thorough knowledge of the history of the genre. Sheri Sanders, one of the leading musical theatre educators currently discussing pop/rock authenticity and respect, has provided dozens of rap audition cuts on her page at Musicnotes.com. Alex Lacamoire is a leading authority on how to put rap on a stage successfully, largely because of his prodigious work with Lin-Manuel Miranda. Joseph Church’s book, *Rock in the Musical Theatre: A Guide for Singers*, includes brief discussions of hip-hop and rap as well as performance and style considerations for a few hip-hop songs (17, 20, 33, 83-86, 126, 132-33). Paul Edwards compiled more than one hundred interviews with well-known hip-hop artists in the book, *How to Rap, The Art And Science of the Hip-Hop MC*, and while it has many valuable insights, it is focused on the actual hip-hop industry rather than rap for musical theatre. There is, of course, a WikiHow page, titled, “How to Rap,” that is surprisingly thoughtful but not particularly meaningful to the unique challenges of rap in musical theatre.

Early critics of formal jazz pedagogy believed that jazz was supposed to be self-taught and learned aurally through immersion, imitation, and development (Prouty). I believe that this is also the best way to learn how to rap; however, since musical theatre programs are expected to prepare students for the demands of the industry, there should be literature available to guide educators and students alike toward a respectful practice of the art form. The twenty-first century has already seen a remarkable development of increasingly specific vocal pedagogies related to genres and even subgenres; musical theatre vocal pedagogy and contemporary commercial music vocal pedagogy are both relatively young fields, each full of discovery and controversy (Edwards and Hoch). I am hopeful that musical theatre rap pedagogy develops similarly. In the interest of providing a rudimentary resource for the many educators suddenly teaching music they have never taught before, I will attempt to provide a potential framework for rap pedagogy in musical theatre.

THE BLUEPRINT

I propose that there are three separate but connected metrics with which we can evaluate and coach rap for the stage: tone, clarity, and storytelling. While it would be irresponsible to imply that the fullness of rap as an art form and technique can be distilled into three relatively constrictive metrics, in the interest of effective and efficient coaching, this is the basic language that I use.⁵ I developed this framework while music directing a university production of a new hip-hop musical; this particular understanding of musical theatre rap helped me to communicate more clearly with students. Like any pedagogical methodology, this is only one lens through which educators, coaches, and music directors may choose to communicate.

Tone

Tone is a purposefully vague term, as it can align with and complement the specific educator’s

⁵ I choose not to include other common terms such as “flow,” a metric that many hip-hop artists discuss when qualifying other rappers. Due to the amount of disagreement about what “flow” actually means as it relates to performance, including it as a pedagogical tool in this context would be unhelpful.

voice and speech methodology. Some voice instructors still use the word “placement,” while others exclusively discuss tone in terms of speech-like expressions (e.g., calling voice, whining, and declamatory speech). Still others prefer to discuss this topic primarily as it relates to physiological realities (e.g., laryngeal position, tongue position). Regardless of the instructor’s preferred terminology within this category, tone is a necessary and meaningful way to discuss and analyze musical theatre rap.

Rappers such as Kendrick Lamar, Danny Brown, and Lil Wayne often present what I refer to as a “bright” tone, which some might refer to as having a “forward” or even “nasal” placement. Rappers like Lil Nas X, Earl Sweatshirt, and E-40 typically present what I refer to as a “dark” or “warm” tone. At first listen, tone might be conflated with the rapper’s natural voice type (e.g., soprano or mezzo); however, several influential rappers have demonstrated a wide variety of tone qualities throughout their careers. For example, Childish Gambino’s raps on “3005” and “This is America” have wildly different tones. Even in the course of the album *DAMN.*, Kendrick Lamar uses an incredibly bright tone on “DNA.” and a much darker tone on “PRIDE.”. Tone can also be used to discuss broader emotional content in the voice. Sa-Roc typically presents a fiery and energetic tone, while Noname often presents a relaxed and relatively conversational tone.

When coaching students on a rap, a music director might ask for a “bright and aggressive” tone or a “warm and friendly” tone—descriptors like these will depend on the character, the character’s objective, and the director’s preference. This language can be substituted with any descriptive language that the students find meaningful so long as they feel safe and are able to perform in a manner that is healthy and sustainable.⁶

Clarity

In order to take rap to the theatrical stage successfully, we have to acknowledge that clarity of language is a priority. Clarity is distinct from tone because it is possible to have clarity—and thus audience comprehension—regardless of the tonal quality of your vocal production. Clarity is also not the same as consistent over enunciation—audiences don’t need to hear a strong “t” in the word “footloose” to understand the word. Clarity for musical theatre rap can be achieved through subtle and vernacular-appropriate choices in both vowel and consonant qualities.

For further listening, rappers that I find clear and easy to understand due to key vowel and consonant choices include J. Cole, Lupe Fiasco, and Nas. Rappers that don’t seem to place as much importance on clarity include Chief Keef, MF Doom, and Young Thug. However, this isn’t a quality judgment regarding any of these artists; it is only a measure of how easily an audience might understand them onstage in the context of a musical.

When coaching students in musical theatre rap, be careful not to undermine a student’s dialect and thus identity in an effort to achieve clarity. Clarity notes are most helpful when they are specific and directly related to audience comprehension (e.g., “Please emphasize that ‘t’ so the audience can hear ‘shot’ easily”) rather than broad suggestions or comments that may place blame on the students’ natural speech patterns (e.g., “Don’t talk like you do with your friends”). It is also wildly inappropriate to ask any student to “talk like a Black person” or to “talk White.” We must not perpetuate racial stereotypes and White supremacy while in the pursuit of clarity and general audience comprehension.

Storytelling

Storytelling, in this context, is the rapper’s use of language to heighten the story being told, whether through inflection, variety in tone, or emphasis of specific words. In “Roses” by OutKast, André 3000’s verses are both full of storytelling while Big Boi’s verse is presented without much emphasis or play

⁶ For further reading on this subject, university educators, Elizabeth Ann Benson, James Stover, and Tara Snyder provide a thorough analysis of *Hamilton* performers’ flexible tones in “Dual Roles, Dual Voices: Analyzing Vocal Function in *Hamilton: An American Musical* through the Estill Voice Model™.”

with the language. Both have their place, but rap with an emphasis on storytelling will be better suited for the stage. Other artists I consider to be strong storytellers include Mos Def, Roxanne Shanté, and Slick Rick.

Storytelling is both the most obvious and the most difficult aspect of theatre rap to teach to a beginner. When coaching novice rappers, consider asking them to:

- underline operative words for emphasis.
- speak the rap as a monologue in order to understand the sentence structure and deliver the meaning more successfully.
- take advantage of onomatopoeia whenever possible.

Like all virtues, storytelling as a quality in a rap exists on a spectrum between deficiency and excess. While it is more likely that young rappers will find themselves not storytelling enough onstage, it is also possible for them to deliver a rap so much like a monologue that it begins to sound corny and inappropriate for the genre. There are also moments in specific theatre raps where storytelling is less important than the rhythm or word games being played, such as the “Ask/Fast/Laugh/Flask/Have/Last/That’s/Scratch” rhyme in the final ninety seconds of “My Shot” from *Hamilton* (Miranda). Like so many other aspects of performance and coaching, these are subtle decisions that should be made with the composer, the production, and the specific performer in mind.

Storytelling is often discussed when coaching and performing Shakespeare, which might make for a logical transfer for our students; however, we must be careful not to center Western European artists or methodologies as ideal or more “correct” than the many hip-hop artists we discuss with our students. If your students are familiar with Shakespeare and their performance might benefit from techniques used when studying Shakespeare, make it clear that you are only helping them to make connections between various art forms. In the same way, an acting technique your students developed while working on a Mozart recitative might help them to better perform a difficult rap; however, one does not conclude that studying Mozart is the best or the only way to learn that particular acting technique. Nothing makes Shakespeare or Mozart objectively more worthy of study than Rakim.

FOLLOW THE LEADERS

Tone, clarity, and storytelling can also be applied as metrics to examine any rap performance or recording. Consider discussing and critically analyzing professional hip-hop artists with your students using questions such as:

- “Who raps with more musical theatre clarity, Prodigy from Mobb Deep or Q-Tip from A Tribe Called Quest?”
- “How would you describe the difference in tone quality between Snoop Dogg and DMX?”
- “In ‘Ladies First,’ does Queen Latifah or Monie Love do a better job of telling the story?”

Again, these analyses should not be used as quality judgments but as tools for communication and discussion. By applying this language to the genre, the coach and the performer are better able to listen and communicate in an effort to discern their own rap goals.

Because aural learning is essential to hip-hop education, it can be beneficial in rap coaching to point to those specific rappers who exemplify the qualities you and your students seek. Whether you’re seeking a different tone, more clarity, or better storytelling, there is at least one hip-hop artist who has already done the work. Hip-hop-savvy coaches can rely on their knowledge of rappers in various eras, regions, and subgenres to make meaningful recommendations to the performer. Again, while it’s true that *Hamilton* is an excellent example of rap in musical theatre, it is inadequate as the primary source for coaching in this style and using it as such would be a disservice to the performer.

SWEAT THE TECHNIQUE: PEDAGOGICAL TOOLS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Each new production of the many musicals containing rap will present unique pedagogical demands, and those demands will necessitate many different teaching strategies and techniques. That being said, I have found the following list of strategies and considerations consistently helpful when coaching rap:

- Teaching through call and response is appropriate and meaningful, especially to clarify rhythms in a rap.
- Downbeat-focused teaching is typically helpful. Mark each of the “big beats” on the score with the student, and underline where those beats align exactly with key words. Those moments become anchor points that the student can feel while tapping their chest or listening to the drummer.
- Find opportunities for volume and intensity building such as lists, rhythmic games, and rhyme schemes that increase in density—density, in this context, meaning the total amount of words and syllables that rhyme in a given section.
- Sometimes, it is helpful to think in terms of the physical size of articulation—fast rap (much like fast movement when conducting) is typically more effective when it’s smaller. Students might instinctively try to move their articulators more when asked to be clearer, but this is often inefficient and gets in the way of both speed and clarity. Decreasing the amount of jaw and lip movement might make articulation easier and more efficient.
- Like in most music teaching, asking for extreme examples is a quick way to clarify a concept. Consider asking your student to approach the extremes of any of the three discussed metrics in order to help them understand the outer bounds of what is possible for a rapper. For instance, “Please rap this section totally monotone and boring,” followed by, “Now try rapping this section with as much over-the-top storytelling as possible as if you were delivering it to a group of children.”
- Similarly, practicing tempo extremes can be helpful. While the instinct to practice slowly and gradually speed up is often beneficial, sometimes articulation strategies used at slow tempos cease to be efficient or helpful at fast tempos. Occasionally, practice a difficult rap at thirty or forty BPM higher than performance tempo. This will highlight where elision or epenthesis might be necessary, and it’s also fun!
- Syncopation is rhythmic dissonance. A rap that doesn’t land on any downbeats for eight bars can build as much tension as a series of unresolved harmonic suspensions.
- Find out how your students learn and think about rhythm and language. What is their experience with poetry? What is their experience with percussion and drumming? What is their experience with hip-hop? Spend time developing a shared language that will be meaningful for each student. This will make the rehearsal process more efficient and enjoyable.

THE MESSAGE

This article is not comprehensive. However, I am hopeful that you will find it to be a helpful starting place if preparing for a production of *In the Heights*, *Once Upon a Rhyme*, *Venice*, *Medusa*, *Othello: The Remix*, or one of the many other hip-hop musicals currently being written and produced throughout the world. Whether as an instructor, coach, music director, or performer—we must all treat hip-hop with the respect that it deserves. The meaning of respect in musical theatre rap pedagogy will grow and change as we continue to discuss and discover the intersections of rap, hip-hop, musical theatre, and education. For now, I encourage you to respect these topics by choosing to research them. The real work and the real joy can’t start until after we acknowledge how little we know. There is so much work to do. *Start by listening.*

TITLE REFERENCES (IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE)

The title of this article, as well as each of the major section titles, references an important piece of art from hip-hop history. I recommend that you listen to each of these albums and tracks, then familiarize yourself with these artists and their discographies.

Hill, Lauryn. *The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill*, Ruffhouse Records, 1998.

Boogie Down Productions. "You Must Learn." *Ghetto Music: The Blueprint of Hip Hop*, Produced by KRS-One. Jive/RCA Records, 1989.

Run-DMC. "It's Tricky." *Raising Hell*, Arista Records, 1986.

Jay-Z. *The Blueprint*, Roc-A-Fella Records, 2001.

Eric B. & Rakim. *Follow the Leader*, Uni/Geffen Records, 1988.

Eric B. & Rakim. *Don't Sweat the Technique*, MCA, 1992.

Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five. "The Message." Produced by Edward G. Fletcher and Sylvia Robinson. Sugar Hill Records, 1982.

WORKS CITED

Bailey, J. "Rumination 2: Firebrands and Battle Plans: Jean Paul Sartre, Friedrich Nietzsche, and G.W.F. Hegel." *Philosophy and Hip-Hop: Ruminations on Postmodern Cultural Form*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Banks, Daniel. *Say Word!: Voices from Hip Hop Theater*. University of Michigan Press, 2011.

Battan, Carrie. "The Return of West Coast Hip-Hop." *The New Yorker*, 20 Aug. 2018, www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/08/20/the-return-of-west-coast-hip-hop. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Benson, Elizabeth Ann, et al. "Dual Roles, Dual Voices: Analyzing Vocal Function in *Hamilton: An American Musical* through the Estill Voice Model™." *Voice and Speech Review*, vol. 14, no. 1, 2019, pp. 28–44, doi:10.1080/23268263.2020.1687161.

Blake, Emily. "Will Streaming Make Hip-Hop A Less Regional Genre?" *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 18 Jan. 2018, www.forbes.com/sites/emilyblake/2018/01/18/streaming-data-hip-hop/. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Charlton, Laretta. "Is *Hamilton* Technically Impressive Rap? Talib Kweli Analyzes the Broadway Smash." *Vulture*, 20 Oct. 2015, www.vulture.com/2015/10/talib-kweli-analyzes-hamilton.html. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Church, Joseph. *Rock in the Musical Theatre: A Guide for Singers*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

Data USA. "Musical Theatre; Race & Ethnicity by Degrees Awarded 2017." *Data USA*. datausa.io/profile/cip/musical-theatre. Accessed 22 Oct. 2020.

Edwards, Matthew, and Matthew Hoch. "CCM versus Music Theater: A Comparison." *Journal of Singing*, vol. 75, no. 2, 2018, pp. 183–90.

Edwards, Paul. *The Concise Guide to Hip-Hop Music: A Fresh Look at the Art of Hip-Hop, from Old-School Beats to Freestyle Rap*. St. Martin's Griffin, 2015.

How to Rap: The Art and Science of the Hip-Hop MC. Chicago Review Press, 2009.

"The Foundation." *Hip-Hop Evolution*, season 1, episode 1, directed by Darby Wheeler and Rodrigo Bascunan, hosted by Shadrach Kabango. Banger Films, 2016. *Netflix*, www.netflix.com/title/80141782.

Gambino, Childish, et al. "3005." *Because The Internet*, Glassnote Records, 2013.

---. "This is America." mcDJ Recording/RCA Records, 2018.

Gerard, Jeremy. "Bring in 'Da Noise, Bring in 'Da Funk." *Variety*, 20 Nov. 1995, variety.com/1995/legit/reviews/bring-in-da-noise-bring-in-da-funk-1200443780/. Accessed 22 Oct 2020.

"How to Rap." *WikiHow*, 27 Feb. 2020, www.wikihow.com/Rap. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Kruse, Adam J. "Toward Hip-Hop Pedagogies for Music Education." *International Journal of Music Education*, vol. 34, no. 2, 2016, pp. 247–60.

Lamar, Kendrick, et al. "DNA." *DAMN.*, Top Dawg Entertainment/Aftermath/Interscope, 2017.

---. "For Free?." *To Pimp a Butterfly*, Top Dawg Entertainment/Aftermath/Interscope, 2015.

---. "PRIDE." *DAMN.*, Top Dawg Entertainment/Aftermath/Interscope, 2017.

Laurence, Rebecca. "40 Years on from the Party Where Hip Hop Was Born." *BBC Culture*, BBC, 21 Oct. 2014, www.bbc.com/culture/article/20130809-the-party-where-hip-hop-was-born. Accessed 8 July 2020.

Libresco, Leah. "'Hamilton' Would Last 4 to 6 Hours if It Were Sung at the Pace of Other Broadway Shows." *FiveThirtyEight*, 5 Oct. 2015, fivethirtyeight.com/features/hamilton-is-the-very-model-of-a-modern-fast-paced-musical/. Accessed 6 July 2020.

Miranda, Lin-Manuel. "My Shot." *Hamilton (Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, Atlantic Recording Corporation, 2015.

OutKast et al. "Roses." *Speakerboxx/The Love Below*, LaFace/Arista, 2003.

Paulson, Michael. "Lin-Manuel Miranda, Creator and Star of 'Hamilton,' Grew Up on Hip-Hop and Show Tunes." *The New York Times*, 12 Aug. 2015, nytimes.com/2015/08/16/theater/lin-manuel-miranda-creator-and-star-of-hamilton-grew-up-on-hip-hop-and-show-tunes.html. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Prouty, Kenneth E. "The 'Finite' Art of Improvisation: Pedagogy and Power in Jazz Education." *Critical Studies in Improvisation/Études Critiques En Improvisation*, vol. 4, no. 1, 6 Aug. 2008, doi:10.21083/csieci.v4i1.346.

Queen Latifah, et al. "Ladies First." *All Hail the Queen*, Tommy Boy Entertainment, 1989.

"Rap Genius—Hip Hop Subgenres." *Genius*, genius.com/Rap-genius-hip-hop-subgenres-lyrics. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Rose, Tricia. *The Hip Hop Wars: What We Talk About When We Talk About Hip Hop, and Why It Matters*. Basic Civitas, 2008.

Sanders, Sheri. "Musicnotes Audition Cuts." *Musicnotes*, musicnotes.com/audition. Accessed 16 Nov 2020.

Saucier, P. Khalil, and Tryon P. Woods. "Hip Hop Studies in Black." *Journal of Popular Music Studies*, vol. 26, no. 2-3, 2014, pp. 268-94.

Sherman, Howard. "What Does 'Hamilton' Tell Us About Race in Casting?" *Arts Integrity Initiative in Partnership with the New School*, 27 Jan. 2016, artsintegrity.org/what-does-hamilton-tell-us-about-race-in-casting. Accessed 9 Nov 2020.

Strauss, Matthew. "Geraldo Rivera Responds to Kendrick, Doubles Down on Rap Criticism." *Pitchfork*, 5 June 2017, pitchfork.com/news/72880-geraldo-rivera-responds-to-kendrick-doubles-down-on-rap-criticism/. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Thigpen, David. Review of *Cypress Hill "Skull and Bones," Vibe*, 2000, p. 223. *Google Books*, books.google.com/books?id=SSgEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA223. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Wiederhorn, Jon. "Cypress Hill Exhibited Metal Cred 17 Years Before New Album." *Noisecreep*, Townsquare Media, Inc., 24 Feb. 2010, noisecreep.com/cypress-hill-exhibited-metal-cred-17-years-before-new-album/. Accessed 28 June 2020.

Wollman, Elizabeth L. *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical, from Hair to Hedwig*. University of Michigan Press, 2013.

Zuckerman, Esther. "Hugh Jackman, LL Cool J, and T.I. Rapped the Opening Number from 'The Music Man!'" *The Atlantic*, Atlantic Media Company, 9 June 2014, www.theatlantic.com/culture/archive/2014/06/hugh-jackman-ll-cool-j-and-ti-rapped-the-opening-number-from-the-music-man/372398/. Accessed 22 Oct 2020.

Ian LeRoy is a music director, pianist, and teacher. He has music directed new musicals and concerts containing rap at NYU's Tisch Drama Stage, Creede Repertory Theatre, Michigan State University, and Lincoln Center. He is a staff pianist for the vocal performance program at NYU Steinhardt. He received a BM from the University of Mount Union.

Musical Theatre in China: Considerations and Strategies for Teaching in a Global Context

By Tommy lafrate, Corinne Ness, Tommy Novak,
Kati Schwaber, and Xiaomin Zhang



Musical theatre has a long history of developing in communities prosperous enough to support arts and culture and “optimistic” enough to support future generations of performers (Kenrick 11). Over the past four decades, China’s entrepreneurial momentum has created a vibrant ecosystem for the development of musical theatre (Liu 533). The *American Theatre* magazine reported that China has “fallen head over heels for the form” and audiences are purchasing tickets in growing numbers (MacDonald, “The Sound of Musicals in China” 3). According to the 2012 to 2016 annual reports of the Shanghai Culture Square Theatre, musical theatre was the first choice of spectators among all performances offered (MacDonald, “Seasons of Love”). Chinese entrepreneurs have realized the musical theatre industry’s forward-looking potential and are making considerable investments in the Chinese musical theatre market; in 2018, there were 351 musicals staged across Shanghai alone with over 323,000 viewers generating over \$7.5 million in revenue (K. Zhang).

The commercial growth of musical theatre in China has had a symbiotic relationship with the growth of Chinese musical theatre training programs. Universities, conservatories, and academies have established training programs for future “triple threat” performers (MacDonald, “The Sound of Musicals in China”). Musicals in China have also become popular vehicles for amateur, millennial performers. The C9 institutions in China (China’s Ivy League) all have musical theatre performance clubs that perform musicals, typically in English. These clubs have helped American musicals increase their foothold in Chinese pop culture and grow more visible in the public consciousness (MacDonald, “Seasons of Love”). The amateur and professional training is part of a growing Chinese middle class, where a university education and Western musicals are markers of social and professional status (Campana and Jahanmir 14).

As Chinese artists and educators work to refine what musical theatre looks and sounds like in the Chinese experience, they are also looking outward at Broadway and West End productions while incorporating educational techniques from higher education programs in the United States and abroad. The global spread of Broadway-style musicals in China has increased the need for professional development and training, and many Chinese institutions invite Western pedagogues to share teaching methodologies (X. Zhang). In our experience, performers and pedagogues alike are valued, and school administrators often seek Western specialists with exceptional performance and teaching resumes.

As exciting as these opportunities may be, teaching in global contexts poses significant challenges for musical theatre professionals. Fortunately, international teaching artists commonly share strategies for meeting those challenges and often become informal mentors for educators new to teaching in China. This article aims to add to the conversation around international musical theatre pedagogy in an effort to create a larger body of work focused on teaching musical theatre in global contexts.

This article is a reflection on teaching praxis and practice. It is a collaborative effort of four American teaching artists with decades of musical theatre teaching experience in China and one Chinese artist-educator with decades of Chinese professional performance experience who spent three years researching and learning in the United States. Since 2003, we have collaborated with musical theatre

programs across China and served as music directors, master class teaching artists, guest directors, and workshop leaders. During these many collaborative interactions with scholars and students in China, we have had ongoing discussions about global musical theatre education and codified our teaching experiences through conversation, journal keeping, and professional presentations of mini “case study” experiences. We have also had the opportunity to watch the growth of musical theatre in modern China, and we have had frequent conversations with Chinese scholars and artists about the development of musical theatre in China and the intersection of Chinese and American teaching practices. The goal of these global educational partnerships has not been to recreate Western techniques identically but rather to integrate them and localize them within the context of Chinese musical theatre.

In this article, we describe the development of the Broadway-style musical in China, which provides the backdrop of the curriculum in Chinese undergraduate musical theatre programs. We outline some strategies for teaching musical theatre voice in China as well as strategic goals for teaching effective storytelling—the dramaturgy of musical theatre in a Chinese educational context. These storytelling techniques stem from the dramaturgical work done by all musical theatre performers but address added challenges and pedagogical benefits for students with less exposure to American culture and practices. These techniques may prove useful not only to those working in China but also to any musical theatre educator working with performers from different cultures, nationalities, or backgrounds. Finally, we articulate some essential teaching attitudes for international artists who teach musical theatre in China.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF MODERN MUSICAL THEATRE IN CHINA

China has a long tradition of musical drama in traditional Chinese opera with its combination of music and movement to tell stories, costumes and makeup, martial arts, acrobatics, and poetry. Chinese opera reached its height in the 13th century but has continued to be a vivid part of Chinese culture even as some Chinese considered it old-fashioned (X. Zhang). The rich, musical storytelling of traditional Chinese opera provided a fertile ground for the development of the musical in China.

The earliest modern musicals in China began in 1949 with musical dramas that told nationalist stories set to traditional Chinese folk music. These state-commissioned pieces celebrated “communist heroism . . . and the founding of a new nation” (Liu 533). This format continued through 1966 until the Chinese Cultural Revolution suppressed all forms of art and culture. This suppression lasted a decade until Deng Xiaoping’s reforms helped revitalize a market economy in China (MacDonald, “Sound of Musicals in China”). The growth of modern musical theatre in China is tied to this economic development and the growing middle class (Kim).

In an article published in early 2019, Liao Xianghong, professor at the Central Academy of Drama, proposed that in “the past four decades, the development of musical theatre in China has roughly gone through three phases” (Xu 5). Phase One began in the 1980s when Broadway film musicals such as *Singin’ in the Rain* were brought to China, along with fully staged musicals on tour from the United States, Japan, and Korea (Xu 5). During this phase, all professional musicals were international tours produced abroad, transported to China, and always performed in a foreign language (MacDonald, “The Sound of Musicals in China”). By 1986, producers and schools began translating these musicals into Mandarin, including, *My Fair Lady*, led by students at the Shanghai Theatre Academy (Xu 5). In 1987, the Eugene O’Neill Theatre Center partnered with the Chinese Theatre Association, the Central Opera Theatre of Beijing, and the Center for US-China Arts Exchange to present *The Music Man* and *The Fantasticks* (Liu 532).

The translation of these musicals into Mandarin with English supertitles led to the second phase

of musicals in China: imitation (Liu 533). In the 1990s, musicals produced in China were largely re-creations of productions done by international companies and influenced chiefly by the Shiki Theatre Company of Japan. In 1999, the Shiki Theatre brought a production of *Beauty and the Beast* to Shanghai, followed by *Les Misérables* in 2002, which had a three-week run at the Shanghai Grand Theatre (Liu 533). These first imported musicals opened the floodgates to more musical theatre tours from the West, which eventually grew to more than thirty-five musical productions imported every year by the late 2010s (MacDonald, "The Sound of Musicals in China"). Korean musicals were also imported to China and were popular for their stories and the K-Pop sound (Kim). Zhang Xiao Qun, the dean of musical theatre at the Beijing Dance Academy, mentioned that during the "imitation" phase, institutions such as the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, the Central Academy of Drama, and the Beijing Dance Academy began developing academic programs to train the first Chinese "triple threat" musical theatre performers (X. Zhang). These training programs imported Western, Japanese, and Korean musicals for performance projects that added to the expansion of musicals in China.

FUNCTIONAL SYSTEMS TRANSLATE WELL TO INTERNATIONAL TEACHING CONTEXTS BECAUSE THEY DO NOT RELY ON CULTURALLY LEARNED METAPHORS AND IMAGES BUT RATHER ON SCIENTIFIC SYSTEMS.

experienced Korean musical theatre performers to work with Chinese musical theatre artists (Kim). The rising popularity of imported musicals spurred an interest in creating more Chinese musicals, engaging Chinese composers, and utilizing creative teams in state-funded projects (Yang). This phase is characterized by experimental, cross-cultural production teams that brought West End, Broadway, and Chinese professionals together to work collaboratively on productions. For example, the 2020 production of *Spring Awakening*, coordinated by Harmonia Productions and the Shanghai Cultural Square, featured bilingual performers who auditioned in New York and Shanghai. The production also highlighted cross-collaborations in design elements and marketing ("*Spring Awakening*").

The popularity of musical theatre in China has recently moved into a fourth phase based on the success of the 2018 television variety show, *Super Vocal*, a singing competition for trained Western opera and musical theatre singers (Xu). *Super Vocal* created *American Idol*-like superstardom for the all-male program contestants. Productions and concerts featuring these artists sold out as soon as tickets became available. The growing economic development and the rise of China's "new rich" middle class, along with the *Super Vocal* "musical fandom" and "blockbuster franchises" like *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Mamma Mia!*, paved the way for the continued growth of modern musical theatre in China (Kim).

The rise of musical theatre in the Chinese zeitgeist has led to a surge in applications to musical theatre undergraduate programs. Professor Jin Fuzai, former director of the musical theatre department at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music, described a 17% increase in their 2019 academic year applications (Jin). In the same year, applicants to the Beijing Dance Academy doubled from 300 applicants to

600 applications (X. Zhang). Similarly, applications to the Central Drama Academy's musical theatre program remained steady at around 900 applicants for years but grew to 1,100 in 2019 and topped at 1,300 applicants in 2020 (Dai). New, large venues are being developed in provinces such as Hebei (Hensel), and new programs are being designed in provinces across China, including Hangzhou and Zhejiang (Dai).

The commercial and educational growth of musical theatre in China has led to increased organization among professional musical theatre educators. The China Musical Theatre Association established an Internet Art Education Committee to promote musical theatre education and performance for people from all backgrounds. The Children's Education Professional Committee specializes in musical theatre education for young audiences and provides a platform for resources and training for musical theatre educators working with Chinese youth (Dai).

TEACHING MUSICAL THEATRE VOICE IN CHINA

The globalization of voice teaching in China mirrors what we find in Western training programs; *bel canto* voice training dominates the conservatories (LoVetri and Means Weekly 207). We have found that many Chinese musical theatre voice specialists are eager for professional development specific to the contemporary sounds of musical theatre. Our experience has been that Chinese musical theatre students respond well to functional voice training and methods aimed at developing habits for learning contemporary musical theatre singing technique.

Playing with the Power-Source-Filter Model

Functional approaches to singing, in addition to the use of metaphor and imagery, have begun to gain popularity among voice specialists (LoVetri 79). Functional systems translate well to international teaching contexts because they do not rely on culturally learned metaphors and images but rather on scientific systems. Teaching voice production using the power-source-filter model has worked well in China. Every sound has something that makes it go (i.e., the power), something that vibrates (i.e., the source), and something that makes it louder and more beautiful (i.e., the filter) (Titze et al. 562). In singing, breath is the power that excites the vocal folds, or source, into vibration, and the vocal tract serves as a filter that provides color to the vocal quality. We acknowledge that the voice is a dynamic, integrated system (Steinhauer and Estill 6); however we have found that directing the student's attention to the individual parts of each system can result in improved efficiencies in voice production.

It has been our experience that Chinese singers typically point to the breath or the "qi" as being their primary technical problem but have very little experience exploring the other voice systems that may be the primary issue. We have found that helping students to explore the many ways that they can use breath flow—rather than a one and only perfect way of breathing—helps to develop their musical theatre vocal qualities. For example, a student singing, "So Big/So Small" from *Dear Evan Hansen*, can be encouraged to allow a breathy quality and greater air flow in the opening and closing lines. However, we can also explore the way in which the breath changes in the climactic belt of the bridge. Rather than blowing "qi," there might be a feeling of the breath standing still in the excited, speech-like "call" section of the bridge. Of course, we understand that vocal function is non-linear, and we know that the breath and the vocal folds are interactive; however, we have found that drawing the student's attention to the many ways in which they might feel the breath move can be a helpful first step in teaching musical theatre voice.

We also encourage students to explore variety in the vocal fold source. Are the vocal folds thicker (i.e., thyroarytenoid dominant or Mode 1) or thinner (i.e., cricothyroid dominant or Mode 2)? We generally agree that thicker vocal folds create a more belt-like timbre, and thinner vocal folds create a more legit-like sound (Spivey 611). Can students find a thicker vocal fold call on different pitches in

THE TONAL NATURE OF THE CHINESE LANGUAGES MEANS THAT MANY CHINESE MUSICAL THEATRE STUDENTS ARE QUICK LEARNERS OF PITCH.

the speaking range? Can they find a thinner quality in the speaking range? We explore sounds that might encourage these adjustments naturally, such as calling across the room or cooing to a baby. We also use examples from songs—for example, returning to “So Big/So Small,” can the student feel places where they are using thinner vocal folds versus thicker vocal folds?

In our experience, the most exciting adjustments for singers happen with changes in the filter. Unlike other instruments that have a fixed resonator shape, the vocal tract can change shape to create a variety of vocal qualities. We encourage students to explore the shape of the filter in some very specific ways. We explore adding nasality and removing it, lip spreading and lip rounding, and convergent and divergent mouth shapes. For example, using *Les Misérables*, we ask students to re-create the convergent, rounded mouth shape of [u] that we hear in the lovely and heroic legit singing sections as well as the divergent, megaphone mouth shape of [æ] and [e] that we hear from the street ladies and lower society. Playing with various filter shapes can be useful physical touchstones to achieve the varied vocal qualities required for Broadway-style musical theatre productions.

Teaching Chinese students that the voice is a dynamic system that allows for individual artistic choices is an important concept. It should not result in mechanical singing but rather encompass a playful exploration of all the color possibilities of the singing voice. Moving from “it’s all about the qi” to making artistic choices in an interactive system has resulted in significant progress and success with our students.

Resonance, Diction, and Articulation

As musical theatre voice teachers, we frequently claim that “we sing because we have something to say.” Exploring the power-source-filter model provides options in vocal qualities for the artist, but these options must be connected to one’s strong desire to communicate. Our language habits—what some call our “attractor states” (Steinhauer and Estill 6)—make certain vocal qualities seem more natural than others. Understanding the resonance, diction, and articulation experiences of Chinese students can provide insight for the teaching artist.

The tonal nature of the Chinese languages means that many Chinese musical theatre students are quick learners of pitch; however, the intersection of pitch with dialect can create a variety of intonation challenges for a musical theatre singer. Each student’s language patterns are unique in China as many students speak Mandarin and Cantonese as well as regional dialects from Shanghai, Suzhou, and other areas of mainland China. All Chinese students study English throughout their schooling (Wiseman and Huang 128), and most students learning musical theatre continue to study English at the undergraduate level (X. Zhang). However, Chinese students may have been taught English with an American dialect, British dialect, or Australian dialect. The combination of regional Chinese dialects and regionalisms in English language teaching results in English singing diction that varies significantly across China.

Diction and articulation are critical for performance in any language as they play an integral part in determining voice quality. A musical theatre teaching specialist in China will need to be well versed in English/American IPA and be prepared to do a great deal of diction work to integrate language with efficient vocal production. One fundamental way to address the variety of language sounds is to do some kinesthetic mapping of the resonators and articulators, particularly drawing attention to the tongue. Chinese languages tend to prefer a low, flat tongue position, and many sounds are made to

resonate farther back in the mouth. Ken Bozeman, a highly esteemed voice pedagogue, speaks of the “two rooms” of the vocal tract (19). Students are encouraged to think of the “back room” of the voice as the primary resonating area (the tall feeling behind the tongue) and the “front room” of the voice as the primary articulation area (the space in the front of the mouth for communicating). The bulge of the tongue becomes a “door” between these two rooms, which frees up the tip of the tongue for articulation and prevents tongue retraction. This kinesthetic map helps students feel the optimal resonating space, keep articulation clear, and avoid unnecessary tongue tension. A hissing cat also works as a prompt for finding the appropriate acoustic “rooms” for musical theatre belting. Western pop culture is ubiquitous in China, so directing students to say “yass queen” or “whatever” in an Americanized, Midwestern, spread dialect also translates well across cultures and allows students to find an optimal resonance adjustment for belting.

Finding culturally relevant metaphors is also essential in bridging students’ understanding as they build efficient vocal technique. In the United States, it is common to call for a taxi to elicit a belt quality, thanks to Mary Saunders Barton’s “Hey Taxi!” exercise (Barton). Our experience has been that while this does not always resonate with students in China, calling a waiter in a crowded restaurant does. Every student could call out “Fu Yuan,” which means “waiter,” or “Fu Yuar,” the Beijing pronunciation of the word. We found that helping students find the vocal coordination that they use in a calling voice helped create a speech-like belt, despite the fact that the vowel was not as bright and spread as the vowels we might use in the United States.



Corinne Ness with students in a master class in Beijing. Photography by Tommy Novak

LEARNING AND PRACTICING MUSIC

It has been our experience that Chinese students predominantly utilize their smartphones as a learning tool. They use them to take notes, to play accompaniment tracks, and to read musical scores. This means that they are frequently toggling between apps and oftentimes managing those apps on a small screen, which can be distracting. We found that encouraging students to develop the habit of bringing paper scores and pencils (or a larger tablet like an iPad with a stylus that can mark digital scores) helped students focus on the learning tasks at hand. Each student needs to be able to mark rhythms (often complicated in contemporary musical theatre), translate text for meaning and poetic ideas, and notate pronunciation using the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

The smartphone can also be a useful technological tool for Chinese students to record audio files when learning music. Voice specialists and music directors should be ready to record the English pronunciation of every word by speaking slowly and in an energized, monotone fashion so that students can listen to a clear, even, and clean demonstration of the words while following along in the musical score. We also found it helpful to record a second version with the English words spoken in rhythm, which students can use as a model to more easily move from speech into song—similar to the process that English-speaking singers might use when learning arias in foreign languages. It is also helpful to have students speak the words in rhythm with an external, steady beat, perhaps by tapping their sternum or thigh. In the same way that young children play clapping games during recess, undergraduate students can better internalize difficult rhythms by creating a sense of play with the steady beat (Chooi-Theng Lew and Campbell 57). Saying the words with an external beat can also help lower the cognitive load for the student and allows the teacher to hone in on any articulation issues related to rhythm.

DRAMATURGY: FACILITATING UNDERSTANDING AND MEANING OF LYRICS

Establishing good learning habits and a solid foundation in vocal technique is just the beginning in developing any authentic musical theatre performer. These habits must be integrated into a collaborative rehearsal process. In the United States, we expect that performers complete pre-show research before they attend their first rehearsal. They are expected to understand where the song and musical originated by having researched the significant performers and creative team members that first brought the piece to life. They are expected to develop a thorough understanding of the world of the piece they are performing, including understanding the cultural significance of the musical's content and the given circumstances of the character. This type of research is essential if a musical theatre performer is to take full ownership of the material and make active choices on the stage.

The ultimate goals in role preparation for Chinese performers are the same, but the individual steps they must take as non-native English speakers make for a much more involved research process. A Chinese student's preparation requires drilling the pronunciation and meaning of each word including literal meaning and connotation. It means that the instructor will need to explain colloquial phrases and expressions that may not be immediately apparent to non-native speakers, which can be particularly challenging with songs that have especially poetic or symbolic language. Good musical theatre writers also tend to use shades of meaning and subtleties in language that English-speaking musical theatre performers understand instinctively but can be particularly challenging to the Chinese performer. It is part of our job as educators to help them understand all the layers of meaning in every piece they perform.

For example, "I'll Be Here" from *Ordinary Days*, opens with the lyric, "We met, of all places, in front of Gristedes some freakishly cold winter's day" (Gwon). There is much to discuss in this one line: what "of all places" implies; the meaning of "freakishly" in this context; the difference between "some" day

versus "one" day; what Gristedes is. These are just some of the essential keys to understanding this character's story and journey. If a five-minute conversation can come out of this seemingly simple line, it can take much longer to thoroughly coach an entire song. It is difficult for a student to grasp these meanings in a different language and a further challenge to remember these details at a subsequent coaching. Patience and frequent review are necessary tools for educators in these kinds of rehearsals.

It is commonly said that the most advanced aspect of learning another language is understanding its humor. For non-native speakers who wish to perform the musical theatre canon, they must understand the English lyrics thoroughly enough to not only appreciate the jokes, puns, and wordplay of the lyrics but also to be able to perform them as their own so that an audience will appreciate them as well. We must dedicate time to exploring the rhymes of a song as well as their function. For musicals inspired by popular music forms, attention to rhymes includes slant rhymes as well as true rhymes. Assonance, consonance, onomatopoeia, and other playful language tricks all deserve attention since their use in musical theatre is deliberate and meaningful.

Similarly, non-native speakers must understand phrases that suggest something different or even opposite from what they mean at face value. Characters employ sarcasm to undermine or belittle another character, such as when Evan Hansen's mother sings, "Well I'm sorry you had it rough, and I'm sorry I'm not enough. Thank God they rescued you" (Pasek and Paul). Other characters might use sexually suggestive innuendo not immediately apparent to non-fluent speakers, which often leads to humorous moments. Still, performers must have a full grasp of both the literal meaning and the subtext of the songs they sing.

Furthermore, performers must understand nonsense lyrics. While most English-speaking performers immediately grasp the comic meaningfulness of "Yes, we have no bananas" (Cohen et al.), a Chinese student may struggle with what this means and why this song appears in *Bullets Over Broadway*. Nonsense words, despite sounding meaningless, usually convey something through their sounds or emotional tone. For an obvious example, a performer in *Spring Awakening* must know what is meant by "Blaa blaa blaa blaa blaa blaa blaa blaa, Blaa blaa blaa blaa blaa" (Sheik and Sater) because "blaa blaa blaa" still carries meaning to an English-speaking audience. But even with entirely made-up words, there is a tonal difference between "Beedle dee dee dee!" in "Two Ladies" (Kander and Ebb), "Daidle, deedle, daidle, digguh, digguh, deedle, daidle, dum" in "If I Were a Rich Man" (Bock et al.), and "Doodle oodle oodle, doodle oodle oodle, doodle oodle oodle, ooo" in "Bushel and a Peck" (Loesser et al.). It might take a minute to assess and convey the meaning of these strings of sounds, but we must do so in order to help our Chinese students better understand the lyrics they sing.

Beyond the words and phrases themselves, cultural references in the lyrics may not be apparent to Chinese students. In a way, we are also serving as cultural ambassadors to non-Western performers so that they may understand the historical, cultural, political, and social world of a play. This might mean explaining the mythology behind Santa Claus or unpacking Puerto Rico's status as a United States territory that is simultaneously separate from, yet still technically part of, the United States. Many musicals explore issues of race in American society. When working with a non-native speaker, this leads to conversations about racism throughout United States history and discussions of how the country still struggles with racial justice today. All of these conversations help connect students of every background to the rich historical and social context of the musical theatre pieces they perform.

PARTING THOUGHTS: PATIENCE, REPETITION, AND SIMPLICITY

Musical theatre teachers in China face many of the same challenges that artists do in the United States. We all struggle to balance art against the demands of commercialism, and we strive toward an authentic interpretation of the human experience on stage. As artist-educators, we can engage with

Chinese students to help them better understand American musical theatre so that they are better equipped to build the future of Chinese musical theatre. With this in mind, it is important to recognize some essential dispositions required of musical theatre pedagogues who find themselves teaching in global contexts.

First, patience will be needed as you frequently check for thorough understanding. Do not underestimate the language barrier. We have found that this particular challenge does not get easier as quickly as you might expect. Second, repetition is crucial both as a rehearsal technique and in everyday communication. It will simply take longer to apply some aspects of your teaching, and it will be essential to remain patient and repetitive without losing your focus on authentic storytelling. Finally, simplicity, even when discussing complicated or nuanced concepts, will always help. Expressing yourself simply and effectively is paramount in any international setting.

Building your patience, finding the value in repetition, and embracing simplicity will help the musical theatre educator thrive globally. Furthermore, these practices will continue to refine and influence our work in our native cultural contexts when incorporated as part of our normal, reflexive practice in classrooms and rehearsals at home.

AUTHORS' NOTE

This article was developed in the fall of 2019 before the global pandemic of COVID-19 began to take over the collective consciousness. The resulting impact of the pandemic on travel and engagement with the arts has been devastating, yet there is still hope. As of August 2020, the number of new cases in China has leveled off, and schools are preparing to resume for the Fall 2020 semester. Like the United States, musical theatre programs are engaging and teaching students through digital platforms. Students, collegiate programs, and private institutions are eager for voice lessons, master classes, presentations, and many other forms of teaching that can be accomplished online. The opportunity to collaborate between Chinese and Western musical theatre artists remains an exciting possibility for the future of musical theatre. International teaching artists and performers must be prepared partners in this chapter of the global development of musical theatre.

WORKS CITED

Barton, Mary Saunders. "Broadway Bound: Teaching Young Musical Theatre Singers in a College Training Program." *Journal of the New York Singing Teachers' Association*, 2013, belcantocanbelto.com/2013/03/01/broadway-bound-nysta-2013/.

Bock, Jerry, et al. "Fiddler on the Roof." Sony Music Entertainment, 1964.

Bozeman, Kenneth. *Kinesthetic Voice Pedagogy: Motivating Acoustic Efficiency*. Inside View Press, 2017.

Campana, Jillian, and Yasmine Marie Jahanmir. *Western Theatre in Global Contexts*. Routledge, 2020.

Chooi-Theng Lew, Jackie, and Patricia Sheehan Campbell. "Children's Natural and Necessary Musical Play: Global Contexts, Local Applications." *Music Educators Journal*, vol. 91, no. 5, 2005, pp. 57-62. doi:10.2307/3400144.

Cohen, Irving, et al. "Final (Yes, We Have No Bananas)." W.K.N. Music LLC, Sony Music Entertainment, 2014.

Dai, Jingsong. Personal conversation. 2020.

Gwon, Adam. "Ordinary Days." Ghostlight Records, New York, NY, 2008.



Corinne Ness and Xiaomin Zhang during Zhang's time as a visiting scholar at Carthage College. Photography by Steve Janiak

Hensel, Jason. "China to Build Base to Promote and Produce Musical Theatre." *Front Row News: The IAVM Industry Blog*, 2014, [blog.iavm.org/china-build-base-promote-produce-musical-theatre/](http://iavm.org/china-build-base-promote-produce-musical-theatre/).

Jin, Fuzai. Personal conversation. 2020.

Kander, John, and Fred Ebb. "Cabaret." *Masterworks Broadway*, 1966.

Kenrick, John. *Musical Theatre: A History*. The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008, pp. 11-12.

Kim, Shin Dong. "The Industrialization and Globalization of China's Musical Theater." *Media Industries*, vol. 1, no. 3, 2015. doi:10.3998/mij.15031809.0001.303.

Liu, Siyuan. *Routledge Handbook of Asian Theatre*. Routledge, 2016.

Loesser, Frank, et al. "Guys and Dolls." Verve, 1950.

LoVetri, Jeannette. "The Necessity of Using Functional Training in the Independent Studio." *Journal of Singing*, vol. 70, no. 1, 2013, pp.79-86.

LoVetri, Jeannette, and Edrie Means Weekly. "Who's Teaching What in Nonclassical Music." *Journal of Voice*, vol. 17, no. 2, 2003, pp. 207-15. doi:10.1016/S0892-1997(03)00004-3.

MacDonald, Laura. "Seasons of Love: Chinese Millennials' Affective Amateur Musical Theatre Performances." *A Journal of Performing Arts*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2020, pp. 112-20. *Taylor And Francis Online*, doi:10.1080/013528165.2020.1747260.

---. "The Sound of Musicals in China." *American Theatre*, 2017, www.americantheatre.org/2017/04/25/the-sound-of-musicals-in-china/.

Pasek, Benj, and Justin Paul. "Dear Evan Hansen." Atlantic Records, 2015.

Shanghai Culture Square Annual Report. Shanghai Culture Group, 2012-2016, Accessed 2017.

Sheik, Duncan, and Steven Sater. "Spring Awakening." Verve, 2006.

"Spring Awakening Will Play in China for the First Time." *Broadway World*, 2019, www.broadwayworld.com/china/article/SPRING-AWAKENING-Will-Play-In-China-For-the-First-Time-20191106.

Spivey, Norman. "Musical Theater Singing: Let's Talk Part 2." *Journal of Singing*, vol. 64, no. 5, 2008, pp. 607-14.

Steinhauer, Kim, and Jo Estill. "The Estill Voice Model: Physiology of Emotion." *Emotions in The Human Voice*, edited by Krzysztof Izdebski, Plural Publishing, San Diego, 2008, pp. 83-89.

Titze, Ingo, et al. "Source-Vocal Tract Interaction in Female Operatic Singing and Theater Belting." *Journal of Singing*, vol. 67, no. 5, 2011, pp. 561-72. www.vocapedia.info/_Library/JOS_files_Vocapedia/JOS-067-5-2011-561.pdf.

Wiseman, Alexander W., and Tiedan Huang. *The Impact and Transformation of Education Policy in China*. Emerald Group Publishing, 2011.

Xu, Yan. "Liao Xianghong: A Chinese Musical That Makes Me Love and Hope Deeply." *New Screenplay Magazine*, 2019.

Yang, Chengxi. "Musicals Gaining Popularity Across China." *CGTN America*, 2019, america.cgtn.com/2019/03/07/musicals-gaining-popularity-across-china.

Zhang, Kun. "Showbiz Is Booming in Live Entertainment Hub." *China Daily*, 2019, www.chinadaily.com.cn/a/201902/22/WS5c6f3e43a3106c65c34eab67.html.

Zhang, Xiao Qun. Personal conversation. 2020.

Tommy Iafrate has taken four trips to China to direct and give workshops, including a two-month residency at the Beijing Dance Academy. He is the director of musical theatre at Binghamton University, producing artistic director for Festival 56, the musical theatre coordinator for Region 2 of KCACTF, and a regional representative for MTEA.

Corinne Ness has taught in China since 2003 and holds a Distinguished Visiting Scholar appointment with the Beijing Dance Academy. She is the director of graduate studies in music theatre vocal pedagogy at Carthage College. Corinne is a member of the NATS International Advisory Committee and the MTEA Voice Advisory Board.

Tommy Novak has taught in China since 2015, working with youth and conservatory training programs. Tommy earned a Master of Music in music theatre vocal pedagogy at Carthage College and serves as adjunct faculty for the music theatre program. Tommy is an active performer, represented by Paonessa Talent. www.tommynovakactor.com

Katrin Schwaber earned her master's degree in professional voice practice from the Royal Birmingham Conservatory (UK) and was a voice and text assistant with the Royal Shakespeare Company. Kati has taught in China since 2015, specializing in text analysis and dialect coaching. She is an active performer and music director.

Xiaomin Zhang earned her Master of Fine Arts in music theatre from the Shanghai Conservatory of Music. She spent three years studying music theatre in the United States as a visiting scholar at Carthage College and is an actress with the China National Opera and Dance Drama Theatre.

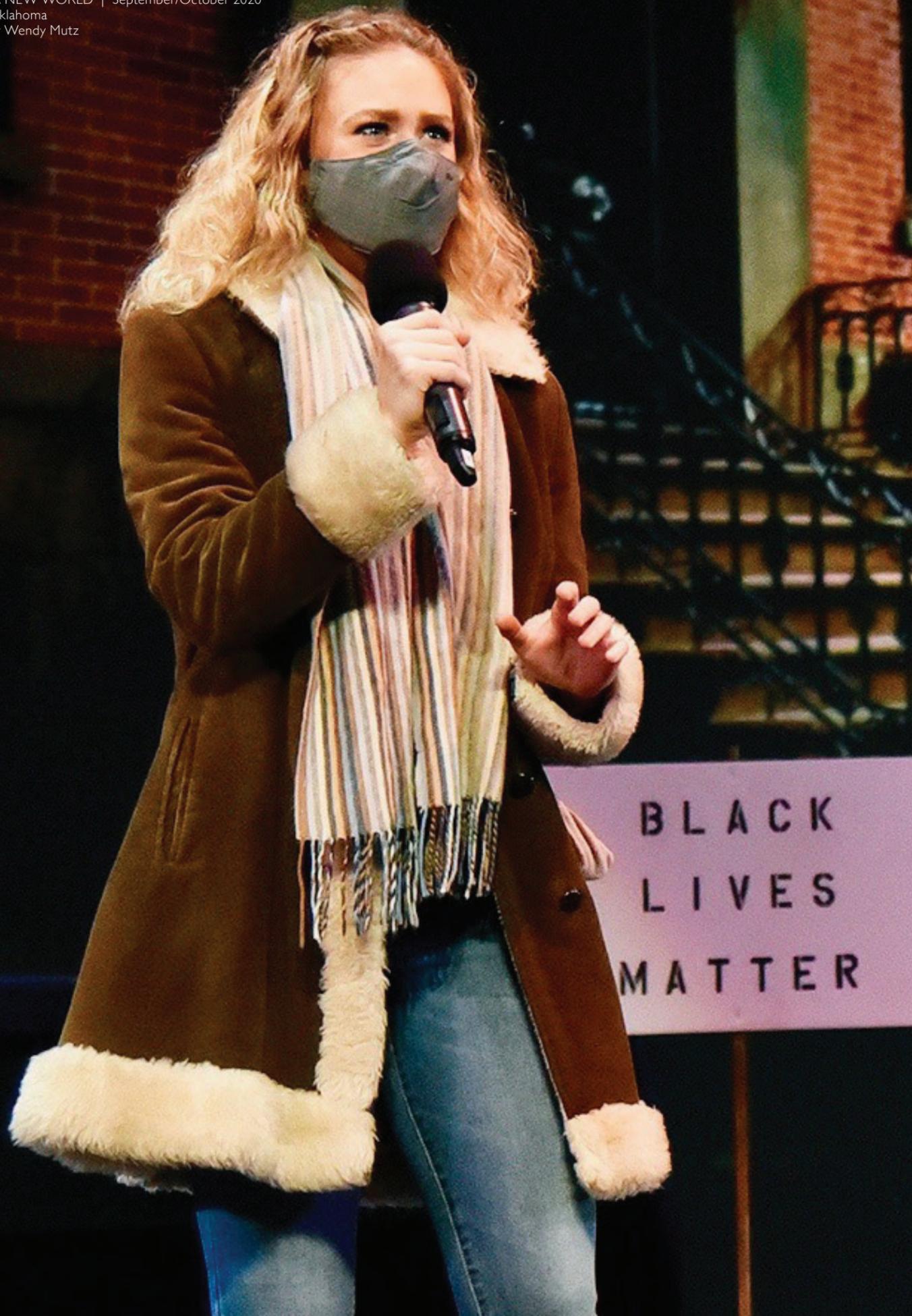
劇場



RENT | September 2019
The Biz Performing Arts
Direction by André Gress
Music Direction by Saulo Ribeiro, Andrey Barbosa, and Miqueias Martins
Choreography by Clara Monteiro and Thais de Melo
Set Design by Beatriz Leire and Mariana Viteli
Costume Design by Beatrice Melo
Lighting Design by Marcio Buarque
Sound Design by Laiz Holanda
Photography by Lara Pereira

DUTCHMAN | September 2020
Ball State University
Direction by André Garner
Music Direction by André Garner
Choreography by André Garner
Set Design by Kerry Chipman
Costume Design by Blake King
Lighting Design by Mickie Marie
Sound Design by Nico Rowland
Photography by Kip Shawger





A Time for Something Smaller

by Michael E. McKelvey

On March 11, 2020, Tulane University issued a statement informing the campus community that all classes would move online and all University activities would be cancelled due to an outbreak of COVID-19 in New Orleans. With less than 24-hours' notice, our production of *Urinetown*, which we had rehearsed for the past five weeks, was cancelled. We subsequently refocused our efforts and created a virtual event in honor of Stephen Sondheim's 90th birthday; however, for the following semester, I wanted to give my students an opportunity to perform in person if at all possible.

New institutional guidelines for the Fall 2020 semester stated that singing and the playing of wind and brass instruments would only be permissible online or outdoors (J.S. Held 9), which would make producing a musical in person a challenge. While several schools were successfully producing large-cast musicals, albeit mostly virtually, the idea of rehearsing and performing a medium- or large-scale show in person seemed daunting given these new guidelines and the size and resources of our program at Tulane. As an alternative, I began to investigate smaller musicals that would provide a valuable educational experience and also allow us to follow the University health and safety guidelines in rehearsals and performances. In this article, I will examine the small musical repertoire and demonstrate how these shows may be advantageous and valuable options within the paradigm of a musical theatre curriculum, particularly for programs with limited resources during the COVID-19 pandemic.

PRODUCING MUSICAL THEATRE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Singing came under tremendous scrutiny after the March 10, 2020 incident in Skagit County, WA, where 53 of the 61 choir members attending a 2.5-hour rehearsal became ill and two choir members eventually died (Hamner et al. 606). The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) first believed that SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19, was spread primarily through droplet transmission; however, the CDC updated the report in October 2020 to include contact and airborne transmission ("Scientific Brief"). Findings from a study in *Aerosol Science and Technology*, which included seven professional opera singers and five amateur singers, indicated that increased volume levels,

singing higher pitches, and exaggerated articulation during singing and speaking significantly generated more aerosol particles than normal breathing and speaking. The findings also showed that wearing a mask during loud singing reduced the amount of generated aerosol particles to a range similar to that of normal talking (Alsved et al. 1248). With so much of musical theatre involving speaking and singing, these findings raised considerable concerns as to how rehearsals and performances should proceed.

Many professional organizations subsequently released guidelines on how to lower the risk of exposure during instruction. The Voice and Speech Trainers Association (VASTA) released *COVID-19 Scenario Planning Guidelines* that recommended “Voice, Speech, Dialect and Text classes be taught online until such time as a vaccine or cure for COVID-19 is developed that refutes the known dangers outlined in current scientific literature” (2). The document stated that the following factors might increase the risk of infection: poor building ventilation, close proximity of students between classes and social gatherings, narrow hallways and stairwells, the number of students in teaching spaces, recycled air through HVAC systems, and shared instructional materials (4). A July 2020 study in the *Journal of Voice* recommended that the safest option for singing would be online or outdoors (Naunheim et al. 5). The American Choral Directors Association (ACDA) provided guidelines that encouraged choirs to rehearse in small groups (e.g., sectionals); use larger indoor venues (e.g., auditoriums, auditorium lobbies with exit doors for ventilation, gymnasiums) or outdoor areas (e.g., covered parking garages); wear masks; and use virtual programs and other technological tools for instruction when possible (Nápoles 39-40).

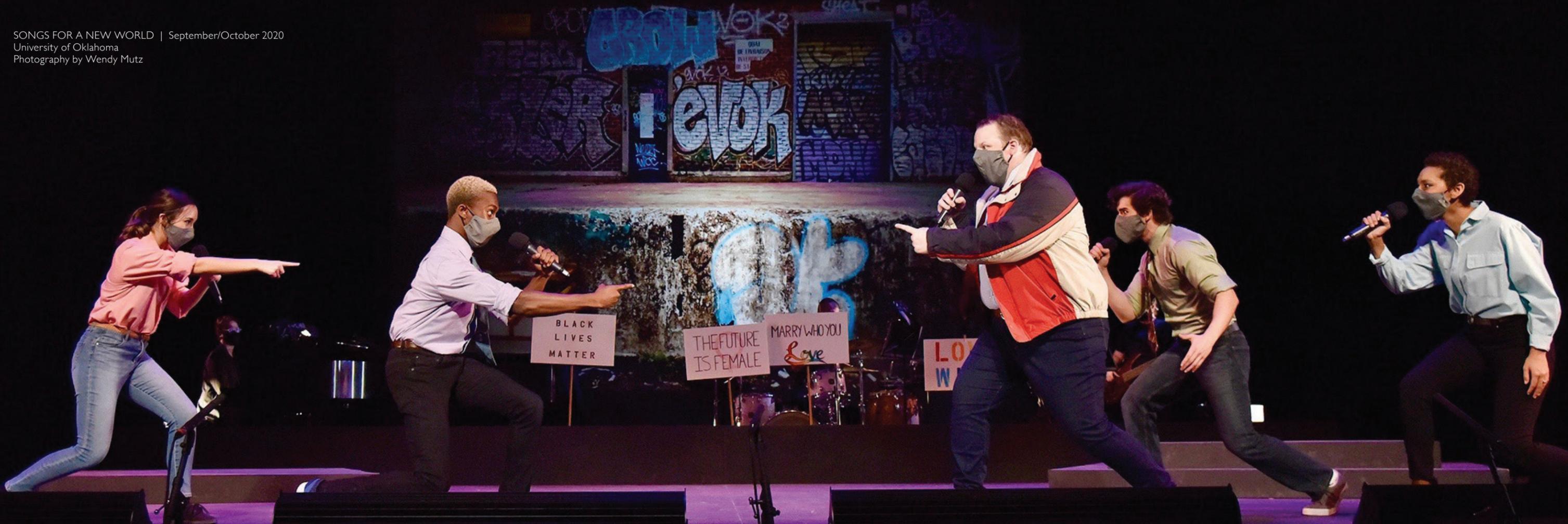
In order to comply with these new health and safety guidelines, musical theatre programs were forced to reassess and consider the unique advantages and disadvantages of various instructional models and delivery systems for classes, rehearsals, and musical theatre performances. For a completely remote learning model (i.e., where all rehearsals and performances would be conducted online), actors would

need to self-record (from their distant locations) content that would be edited together later. While arguably the safest option, completely remote instruction could also create a unique set of challenges, including an increased sense of isolation; a decreased sense of ensemble; difficulty in scheduling; interruptions and distractions due to technical issues; increased workload for all involved due to the learning curve with technology; and gaps in equity and access among instructors, directors, students, and actors (*COVID-19 Scenario 8*).

A hybrid model, which utilizes a combination of online and in-person instruction, offers more flexible options for musical theatre rehearsals and performances. Programs could use an online platform to more easily facilitate initial preparatory rehearsals and limit the amount of contact time with the cast followed by limited in-person rehearsals and performances. However, these rehearsals and performances would need to follow numerous guidelines, including social distancing, wearing masks, handwashing, limiting the number of participants and the duration of each work session, sanitizing and storing props and costumes, training actors to be more self-reliant with costumes and body mics, conducting temperature checks, and following any COVID-19 testing procedures.

As I began to research musical theatre production options during the pandemic, I conducted a survey of forty university and college musical theatre programs throughout the United States to ascertain rehearsal and performance procedures, health and safety protocols, delivery of performances (e.g., in person, live stream, scheduled stream), and title selection for the Fall 2020 semester. Twenty-six of the forty schools produced a musical, revue, song cycle, or other show that included music. All productions streamed the performances online; however, two of the shows also performed in front of a live, socially-distanced audience. Nine programs produced a medium- or large-cast musical or operetta, such as *Spring Awakening*, *Spamalot*, *Chess*, and *Pirates of Penzance*. Nine programs produced an original work that included program- and student-created cabarets, revues, devised work, original

SONGS FOR A NEW WORLD | September/October 2020
University of Oklahoma
Photography by Wendy Mutz



CHAPLIN | October 2020
Nazareth College of Rochester
Direction by Valerie Wright
Music Direction by Corinne Aquilina
Choreography by Valerie Wright
Set Design by Allen Shannon
Costume Design by Yuanting Zhao
Lighting Design by Emily Stork
Sound Design by Kyle Critelli
Photography by Evan Mikoll



plays with music, etc. Eight programs produced small musicals, such as *Songs for a New World*, *Ordinary Days*, [title of show], *Myths & Hymns*, *Ride the Cyclone*, and *POPI!*. Fourteen of the programs deferred producing a musical until the Spring 2021 semester in order to figure out technological logistics or in hopes that restrictions might become more accommodating.

Most productions rehearsed online for a portion of the process to limit the number of in-person rehearsals. In several cases, recordings of vocal parts and choreography were given to the students in advance for self-preparation. In some cases, in-person rehearsals were conducted in small groups of four to five cast members for short intervals of time (usually thirty minutes). Some productions held rehearsals outdoors. For in-person rehearsals, most productions followed guidelines and recommendations issued by the professional entertainment unions and associations, such as the joint report from the American Guild of Musical Artists (AGMA) and the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society (SDC), which recommended ventilation of the rehearsal room, identifying pods and creating bubbles of performers and production staff, spacing considerations for singers and dancers, and safety protocols for wig, make up, and costume personnel (*Return to Stage* 11-12, 20, 22, 24-26, 28-29).

Considering that wind and brass instruments could emit varying levels of aerosol particles and droplets (He 5-6), compounded with the spacing demands of an orchestra, several productions opted to use pre-recorded backing tracks. However, a few programs were able to find ways to include instrumentalists in their productions. For example, a production of *Chess* at San Diego State utilized the talents of their symphony orchestra and chamber choir by recording them in a university parking garage while socially spaced (Brotebeck).

Through these interviews, I was inspired by the programs that were able to successfully produce a larger-scale work in person or virtually. However, with the limited resources and stringent COVID-19 protocols within the City of New Orleans and at Tulane University, selecting several small musicals appeared to be the best option for our situation.

DEFINING A SMALL MUSICAL

For the purpose of this article, I will define a small musical as one that calls for a cast of two to fifteen actors (based on the original production), has minimal set and costume requirements, and is geared toward a more intimate setting. These shows may be categorized as chamber musicals (e.g., *The Last Five Years*); small-cast musicals, which also may employ a small auxiliary chorus (e.g., *Little Shop of Horrors*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*); ensemble musicals (e.g., *Godspell* and *Honk*); revues or themed cabarets (e.g., *Starting Here*, *Starting Now*); jukebox shows (e.g., *Five Guys Named Moe*); and song cycles (e.g., *Fugitive Songs*).

In researching the origins of small musicals, one might be led to the beginnings of the integrated musical itself—the seven “Princess” musicals of Jerome Kern, Guy Bolton, and P. G. Wodehouse. Constructed in 1912, The Princess Theatre had a seating capacity of 299. After diminishing box office returns due to the programming of Grand Guignol-style, one-act plays, F. Ray Comstock, owner of the “little jewel of a theatre,” transitioned to producing small musicals (Flinn 140).

The limited seating of The Princess Theatre restricted potential revenue, which meant producing shows with smaller budgets, fewer cast members and instrumentalists, and simplified production elements compared to other musicals and operettas during that time. For example, *Nobody Home*, the first of the Princess shows, only used two sets and employed young, inexpensive performers, a chorus of eight to twelve singers, and an orchestra of eleven instrumentalists. In contrast, the costume musicals and operettas of the time often featured the prominent stars of the day and used around a dozen sets, 90 singers in the chorus, and 45 instrumentalists in the pit (Flinn 142).

“In the best of the Princess musicals,” according to John Kenrick, “every element was organic, developing naturally from story and character. This type of development allowed these shows to dispose of star turns, interpolated songs, and forced comic characters found in most previous American musicals” (Kenrick 141-42). Denny Martin Flinn states, “With less distraction from production elements, their songs and comedy, in addition to standing on their own, had to carry the action forward consistently, and thus had to be an integral part of the plot in order to keep the audience interest . . . but as the musical numbers became more integrated within the show, they depended increasingly on the quality of the book for ultimate effect” (142). What Kern, Bolton, and Wodehouse created was the model for the integrated book musicals that would follow with attention to story, songs that integrated with the plot, and fast-paced delivery of dialogue. Many of the qualities that made the Princess musicals unique and successful are the very attributes that make small musicals advantageous to musical theatre programs, especially during the time of COVID-19.

NOT ONLY CAN SMALLER WORKS OFFER A MORE FEASIBLE OPTION FOR MUSICAL THEATRE PROGRAMS DURING THE PANDEMIC, THEY CAN ALSO OFFER SEVERAL UNIQUE ADVANTAGES IN THE PERFORMANCE, DESIGN, AND PRODUCTION EXPERIENCE.

THE ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES OF A SMALL MUSICAL

Theatre departments are often drawn to large-scale shows in order to offer a greater number of production and performance opportunities to students. Also, those not cast in primary roles would have the chance to hone their dance and vocal skills in the ensemble. Furthermore, medium- and large-scale musicals oftentimes have the advantage of greater title recognition by both students and audiences. However, not only can smaller works offer a more feasible option for musical theatre programs during the pandemic, they can also offer several unique advantages in the performance, design, and production experience.

When asked about creating a smaller work, *Ordinary Days* creator, Adam Gwon, said, “I like being able to dive deep into characters on a ‘chamber’ show. You’ve got to make a compelling story with fewer characters, and I find it’s an opportunity to really delve into the hearts and minds of the people you’re writing.” *Dani Girl* lyricist, Chris Dimond, added, “Chamber musicals allow for a much more intimate storytelling experience. They often allow for the writer, and the audience, to focus on character and story, rather than production value.”

Selecting a show with fewer characters who have more scene and song work throughout may provide beneficial contextual opportunities for students to apply the technical concepts covered in their acting, scene study, and song analysis courses. This can be as true for an integrated book show (e.g., *A Minister’s Wife*, an adaptation of George Bernard Shaw’s, *Candida*) as it can for a themed cabaret or song cycle. In the case of the latter, the songs can serve as stand-alone monologues where the performer has the opportunity to develop a character’s background and intent (e.g., “If I Sing” from *Closer Than Ever* and “Stars and the Moon” from *Songs for a New World*).

Furthermore, double casting a small musical with six sizable roles may actually provide a better educational experience for those twelve performers than the four or five featured roles in most medium- or large-cast shows. During the time of COVID-19, adding a shadow cast would also be a prudent option in case actors test positive or need to quarantine due to contact tracing. Double casting may increase the workload of the director, choreographer, and music director; however, this effort can be offset as small musicals will not require teaching, staging, and choreographing large production numbers.

In Oklahoma University’s recent production of *Songs for a New World*, director Ashton Byrum expanded the four-person cast to six and double cast the show. The performers were masked for the performances, which fit well into Byrum’s concept. He said, “Setting the show on Election Day in NYC and framing it with the concept of protest—especially around the movement for Black Lives—and the pandemic, added a sense of urgency and updated the context for the piece—which was very meaningful for all of us” (Byrum).

While small musicals are often created with intimate theatrical settings in mind, they can nevertheless present unique challenges and creative opportunities for designers as well, especially during the time of COVID-19. For example, no matter the size of the venue, the sound designer is tasked with the challenge of creating a balance between the actors and the band (or backing track). In a small theatre, floor or choir mics are often sufficient to amplify the voices on stage. However, if performers have to sing while wearing masks due to COVID-19 safety guidelines, the sound designer may have to use body or wig mics to contend with the dampening and muffling created by the masks. Furthermore, the designer will have to create protocols to safely mic the actors and sanitize the equipment.

Several small musicals can also be problematic for reasons not related to their small size. Some titles are dated and may not resonate with today’s students and audiences (e.g., *I Do! I Do!* and *Nonsense*). The world’s longest running musical, *The Fantasticks*, written by Tom Jones and Harvey Schmidt in 1960, has been criticized for its negative stereotyping of Native Americans and Latinos; for portraying sexism; and the rape scene, which has been changed to the “abduction,” yet still presents an issue in the wake of the #MeToo movement (Bauer-Wolfe). More recent shows such as *Bloody, Bloody Andrew Jackson* and *The Adding Machine* have also come under scrutiny due to their potential reinforcement of negative ethnic stereotypes and racist content. Although some might argue the intent behind the material may be actually a condemnation of White supremacy and systemic racism, adequate facilitation must be provided for our students when tackling material which could be incendiary (Norman; Combs).

LICENSING AND STREAMING A SMALL MUSICAL

Prior to COVID-19, streaming licenses were not an option for universities or theatre companies and video recording required special permission and additional licensing fees. In less than a year, educators have been forced to learn about streaming licenses in addition to digital recording, editing, and ticketing. Concurrently, licensing companies have been forced to negotiate streaming arrangements and licensing agreements with show creators, stakeholders, and producers.

The rights for a majority of these more diminutive shows can be obtained through licensing houses such as Music Theatre International (MTI), which also handles the Disney musicals, and Concord Theatricals, which includes the catalogues of Tams-Witmark, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Samuel French, and Andrew Lloyd Webber. These two licensors represent over 1,200 titles ranging from large, commercial shows to Theatre for Youth Audiences (TYA) musicals. Omitting school editions and TYA shows, small musicals constitute about 25% of the musicals that MTI and Concord represent.



Although MTI and Concord are the largest licensors in the business, there are popular small musicals handled by companies such as Dramatists Play Service (DPS), Theatrical Rights Worldwide, and Broadway Licensing. DPS represents titles such as *Bat Boy: The Musical*, *Crowns*, *Grey Gardens*, *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*, and *Passing Strange*. DPS also licenses the smaller musicals of Michael John LaChiusa, one of the most prolific writers in this category, including *Hello Again* and *Little Fish*, and his collections of short musicals, *First Lady Suite*, *Lucky Nurse* and *Other Short Musical Plays*, and *See What I Wanna See*.

Theatrical Rights Worldwide (TRW) and Broadway Licensing are newer companies, but they have acquired significant titles. TRW first carved out its place in the market with off-Broadway shows like *I Love You Because*, *Bare*, *Illyria*, *Beehive*, *Zanna Don't*, and *Captains Courageous*. Broadway Licensing has built its catalogue on smaller Broadway, off-Broadway, and regional shows like *BKLYN the Musical*, *Disenchanted!*, *The Old Man and the Old Moon*, and *Ride the Cyclone*.

Unfortunately, only a limited number of titles from the aforementioned licensors are available for streaming, and the manner in which a show can be streamed is often restricted as well. Most licensors offer three types of streaming licenses: live-streaming (transmitting the performance in real time as it is happening onstage); scheduled content (streaming of pre-recorded content at scheduled times); and video on demand (uploading content that can be viewed by patrons on demand). For example, some titles, such as MTI's *Songs for a New World*, *A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder*, and *John & Jen*, permit all types of streaming, whereas *Once on This Island* and *Lucky Stiff* can only be live-streamed or viewed through scheduled content ("Available for Streaming").

To make a streaming license possible, all creators and contractual stakeholders must give permission. Coordinating these agreements can be a painstaking and time-consuming task for the licensor and becomes even more complicated for shows that contain material from multiple writers (e.g., a jukebox show) or where a stakeholder is deceased. In many cases, the creators simply have an objection to their creative material being accessible on a platform where there may be a greater potential for pirating (Prignano).

By December 2020, MTI had announced approximately 70 titles (excluding TYA and school editions) would be available for streaming by universities and theatres ("Available for Streaming"). Of those, over 40% are small musicals. However, MTI announced that popular titles like *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *The All Night Strut*, *Forever Plaid*, *Plaid Tidings*, *tick, tick...BOOM!*, *Baby*, and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* would not be available for streaming ("Titles Not Available to Stream"). Similarly, Concord Theatricals would not offer a streaming license for *Be More Chill*, *Death Takes a Holiday*, *The Rocky Horror Show*, *Ruthless!*, and *Charlie Brown Christmas* ("Are Virtual Performances"). It should be noted that if you are interested in a title that does not appear on a "not available for streaming" list, you should ask the licensor because some right holders approve streaming licenses on a case-by-case basis (Culwell-Block).

WITH SO MANY VARIABLES AND CONCERNS TO CONSIDER, THIS PANDEMIC DEMANDS THAT WE—AS DIRECTORS, CHOREOGRAPHERS, MUSIC DIRECTORS, PRODUCERS, AND MOST IMPORTANTLY, EDUCATORS—REEVALUATE THE EDUCATIONAL BENEFIT WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE THROUGH MUSICAL THEATRE PRODUCTION.

INDEPENDENT LICENSING AND NEW, SMALL MUSICALS

Because a considerable number of titles from these licensors were not available for streaming, I decided to reach out to creators directly to see if they would be more amenable to digital options for their unrepresented works. Since licensors ultimately decide what shows they want to represent, I discovered a considerable number of heralded, award-winning, small musicals that were not licensed by one of the aforementioned companies. For example, Adam Gwon's, *Ordinary Days*, licensed by Concord, is by far his most popular and most often produced title; however, *Scotland PA*, *String*, *Cake Off*, and *Bernice Bobs Her Hair* are licensed by Gwon's representatives and have had considerable success off-Broadway and regionally.

One can explore a number of different avenues to discover more small musical titles that might be available for licensing and streaming. If you know the show, you can try going directly to the website of the show or the writer. You can also take a more investigative approach and research new, smaller shows on platforms dedicated to contemporary writers. For example, NewMusicalTheatre.com, co-founded by Kait Kerrigan and Brian Lowdermilk, is an open platform where visitors can see the works of over 70 songwriters and composition teams. Some of the shows listed are represented by a licensor but many are not. Lowdermilk shared, "We founded NewMusicalTheatre.com in order to provide the highest royalty rate in the industry for writers and to give writers direct control over the publication of their work . . . I'm proud of how we've been able to create new revenue streams for independent writers."

In my efforts to further investigate working with a writer or composition team to produce a newer show or one in development, I also contacted the BMI Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop, which for fifty years has been the foremost training ground for new musical theatre writers, including the creators of *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Nine, Avenue Q*, and *Next To Normal* ("ASCAP, BMI"). In addition to coordinating with BMI, I researched titles recently produced or developed by workshops, festivals, and theatres known for championing new, small musicals, including: The ASCAP Foundation Musical Theatre Workshop; National Alliance for Musical Theatre, Festival of New Musicals; Williamstown Theatre Festival; Eugene O'Neil Theater Center; National Music Theatre Conference; Barrington Stage Company, Musical Theatre Lab; Pittsburgh Civic Light Opera, SPARK program for small musicals; Theatre Now; The Public Theatre; and Playwrights Horizons.

As I researched these festivals, conferences, and development programs, I encouragingly noticed a number of works by BIPOC and LGBTQ+ creators—demographics woefully underrepresented in the catalogues of commercial licensors. As theatre companies and institutions of higher learning place more importance on inclusion, equity, and diversity, the need to tell the stories of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and other marginalized groups has become even more important. The previously mentioned musical theatre development programs, workshops, festivals, and theatres are important resources for becoming acquainted with these artists and their new works.

In the process of connecting with writers, I also learned of some new projects featuring smaller musicals that centered on life in the time of COVID and the surge in digital theatre creation. Tim McDonald and iTheatrics, the creators of *Zoomsical*, developed a new collection of small musicals chronicling COVID-19 experiences—*Breathe: A Musical Theatre Quintet*. McDonald and writing partner Jodi Picoult came up with the premise



when McDonald contracted the virus at a wedding. They crafted five stories based on his experience, the accounts of others afflicted by the virus, the media coverage of the pandemic, and the heightened racial tensions surrounding the killing of George Floyd. In addition to the McDonald and Picoult libretto, the show features music and lyrics by such notable writers as Doug Besterman, Zina Goldrich, Marcy Heisler, Rob Rokicki, and Sharon Vaughn. *Breathe: A Musical Theatre Quintet* premiered at Chico State University in November 2020. Subsequently, some or all of these five short chamber musicals have been presented by Tulane University, Ithaca College, and the University of California, Los Angeles (McDonald).

Kait Kerrigan and Brian Lowdermilk created *The Mad Ones* Lab, an online community of theatre makers focused on the development of digital theatre. The Lab provided support and development through online programming and production resources to over 300 participants from across the globe using Kerrigan and Lowdermilk's musical, *The Mad Ones*. Participants created their own digital interpretation of a section of the musical, and through the creation of a unique web application, online audiences can watch a full production via The Mad Ones Engine, which selectively and randomly organizes the segments submitted by participants into 2.5-billion variations of the complete show (Fisher). Kait Kerrigan offered, "Theatre-making feels both endangered and vital right now. We're not interested in a scarcity of resources or competition. We want to raise up new voices and learn from each other. We want to be a part of figuring out what it means to make digital theater."

PUTTING SMALL MUSICALS TO WORK: A CASE STUDY

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, I decided to search for two- and three-person musicals, fifteen to thirty minutes in length. Because I had mostly female students enrolled in the workshop, I looked for shows with gender-neutral roles. Unfortunately, many shows from

GOLDRICH & HEISLER: SHOWBIZ AND FAIRY TALES | September 2020
Anderson University
Direction by David Coolidge
Music Direction by Fritz Robertson
Choreography by Kenny Shepard
Set Design by Eric Reiberg
Costume Design by Michele Mullins
Lighting Design by Eric Reiberg
Sound Design by Kris Rinas and Bailey McBride
Photography by Jack Lugar/Blackbird Media Lab

commercial licensors did not fit these parameters. Therefore, as previously mentioned, I investigated independent licensing options and new, unrepresented musicals.

BMI Workshop's Artistic Coordinator, Frederick Fryer, connected me with eight alumni writing teams to ask if they had any finished or unfinished projects from their time in the program or other small works that had not yet been produced. These creators subsequently provided libretti for my perusal. In order to involve the students in the selection process, I asked them to read the works and present rationales for the pieces they thought we should produce.

Students selected the following pieces:

- **A Piece of Sky, music by Clay Zambo, book and lyrics by Susan Murry**
A Piece of Sky originated as part of Fairfield Center Stage's, 26-Hour Playathon.

- **The Eyes of Vienna, music by Joshua Cerdenia, book and lyrics by Kara Cutruzzola**
The Eyes of Vienna originated at "Across a Crowded Room," a workshop hosted by the New York Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center in the summer of 2019.
- **Fables, music by Dimitri Landrain, book and lyrics by A.J. Freeman**
Fables is a collection of five Aesop fables and runs approximately 60 minutes. Each show has two, gender-flexible roles. *Fables* was developed in part through a writing residency with the 92nd Street Y in New York City. A live performance at the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts was scheduled for April 2020 and subsequently cancelled due to COVID-19.

In total, we selected nine small musicals and projects: three chamber musicals from *Breathe: A Musical Theatre Quintet*; three pieces from *Fables: A Piece of Sky*; *The Eyes of Vienna*; and scenes from *The Mad Ones*. Licensing agreements regarding royalties, material fees, and streaming permissions were negotiated directly between the creators and Tulane University.

We rehearsed all of these two- and three-person musicals online and in person while following all safety protocols, including masks, face shields, social distancing, and COVID-19 testing by the University. In-person rehearsals were conducted outdoors—some at Tulane's Yulman Football Stadium. As singing of any kind (even masked) was restricted indoors, the Office of the General Counsel at Tulane University gave special permission to allow the shows to be performed indoors without masks in front of a socially-spaced audience of fifteen in Dixon Hall, a 950-seat auditorium. Because we wanted the creators, parents, friends, and faculty to see the students' work, we filmed a live performance of each show that streamed at a later date.

To limit the number of people on stage, we performed all nine shows with pre-recorded backing tracks. Some of the creators provided backing tracks from their previous readings and demos, and a staff accompanist created the remaining tracks. The writers generously allowed (and in some cases provided) transpositions of specific songs for the gender-neutral roles. The creators also agreed to meet with the casts via Zoom, which personalized the experience for the students as they were able to interact, ask questions, and discuss the development of the shows.

In an attempt to limit contact time and due to the limited availability of the performance hall (because of instructional, COVID-related, social-distancing needs), we abbreviated the technical rehearsal period to one evening in order to set lighting cues and work with the minimal set elements. Accordingly, we decided to collaborate with our digital media production department and record *Fables* outdoors,

SONGS FOR A NEW WORLD | September/October 2020
University of Oklahoma
Photography by Wendy Mutz



which provided a better setting for the elements and animals portrayed in the stories and gave students an opportunity to create digital theatre projects. Digital media students assisted with the filming and editing of all shows, which significantly lessened the workload of the faculty.

Finally, even with students adhering to daily testing and the University making considerable efforts to keep viral spread to a minimum, Tulane experienced a COVID-19 outbreak two weeks prior to filming. Among the infected were three company members who were subsequently quarantined as well as one student who was contact traced and quarantined. Due to quarantine protocols, one COVID-19 positive student and the contact-traced student were isolated for a period extending beyond the filming date. In order to accommodate these students and include their projects, they filmed their material from remote locations, and we took special measures to compile and edit the footage.

PRODUCING A SHOW DURING THE COVID-19 ERA ASKS US TO BE INNOVATIVE AND CREATIVE...

Following filming and post-production work, we parceled the shows into three events and streamed them over a series of evenings in mid-December under the title, The Tulane Chamber Musical Festival. As per our licensing agreements, the shows were streamed admission free on the Tulane Musical Theatre Workshop's YouTube channel and removed after the final performance.

As an educator, the experience presented several challenges. In some cases, the students had difficulty learning their material, especially the music. This could have been because of the lack of practice facilities due to COVID-19 restrictions. Also, due to limited in-person rehearsals, more responsibility was placed on the students to prepare the material on their own and find opportunities outside of rehearsal to work safely with their castmates. This proved challenging due to the students' increased workload with online classes and a lack of approved facilities to safely meet and rehearse.

On a positive note, with so many of the students' classes being held online, they were eager to rehearse in person and have some social interaction even with social-distancing protocols. They were also enthusiastic about working on the newer shows and embracing the challenge of creating characters without being influenced by a cast recording or video content on the internet. Overall, I deemed the project a great success for the workshop and the Tulane musical theatre program.

With so many variables and concerns to consider, this pandemic demands that we—as directors, choreographers, music directors, producers, and most importantly, educators—reevaluate the educational benefit we are trying to achieve through musical theatre production. Although there might be numerous technological challenges, this unique situation can offer opportunities for collaboration between other departments beyond music, theatre, and dance. While the added faculty workload of preparing online instruction and dealing with the complexities of a hybrid situation can be daunting, engaging more student participation in the production process can alleviate some of the pressures created by these unprecedented teaching measures. And most importantly, producing a show during the COVID-19 era asks us to be innovative and creative—both important concepts we are teaching in our classes.

Due to COVID-19 restrictions, musical theatre programs should take pride in presenting content of any kind through whatever delivery system works best given the circumstances. Many programs might be faced with coronavirus precautions and limited financial or technological resources that make presenting a medium- or large-scale work impossible. This unprecedented time in theatre

education can present a wonderful opportunity for programs to be flexible and creatively address these challenges in musical theatre performance through the innovative and diverse repertoire from creators of small musicals. The small musical repertoire offers viable and valuable educational options for in-person and virtual performances during the COVID-19 pandemic.

SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

Arizona State University (Brian DeMaris), Baldwin Wallace University (Victoria Bussert), Ball State University (André Garner), Baylor University (Guilherme Almeida), Belmont University (Nancy Allen), Binghamton University (Tommy Iafrate), Boise State University (Richard Klautsch), Boston Conservatory (Thomas Gregg, Scott Edmiston), Brigham Young University (Nathan Balsler), Carnegie Mellon University (Catherine Moore), Chapman College (Wilson Mendieta), Chico State University (Matthew Teague Miller), Columbia College Chicago (Amy Uhl), Fairmont State University (Troy Snyder), Florida State University (Kate Gelabert), Illinois Wesleyan University (Scott Susong), James Madison University (Jacob Brent), Kennesaw State University (Timothy Ellis, Amanda Wansa Morgan), Marymount Manhattan College (Jill Stevenson), Oklahoma City University (Karen Coe Miller), Pace University (Laurie Brown Kindred, JV Mercanti), Point Park University (Kim Martin), Rider University (Robin Lewis), San Diego State University (Stephen Brotebeck), Texas Christian University (Harry Parker, Jessica Humphrey), Texas State University (Kaitlin Hopkins), Texas Tech University (Dean Nolan), Trinity University (Nathan Stith), Tulane University (Michael McKelvey), University of Alabama (Stacy Alley), University of Alabama at Birmingham (Valerie Accetta), University of the Arts (Katie Donovan, Lindsay Cram), University of Central Florida (Earl Weaver), University of Hartford (Tracey Moore), University of Michigan (Linda Goodrich, Vince Cardinal), University of Northern Colorado (Ryan Driscoll), University of Oklahoma (Ashton Byrum), Weber State University (Andrew Barratt Lewis), West Virginia University (Jeremiah Downes), and Wright State University (Joe Deer)

WORKS CITED

- Alsved, M., et al. "Exhaled Respiratory Particles During Singing and Talking." *Aerosol Science and Technology*, vol. 51, no. 11, 2020, pp. 1245-48. doi:10.1080/02786826.2020.1812502. "Are Virtual Performances and/or Digital Rights Available for All Titles?" *Concord Theatricals*, help.concordtheatricals.com/knowledgebase/are-virtual-performances-and-or-digital-rights-available-for-all-titles/. Accessed 1 Nov. 2020.
- "ASCAP, BMI & Other Musical Theatre Workshops." *MusicalWriters.com*, www.musicalwriters.com/musical-theatre-workshops/. Accessed 29 Oct. 2020.
- "Available for Streaming." *Music Theatre International*, www.mtishows.com/available-for-streaming. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.
- Bauer-Wolf, Jeremy. "Theatre Classics, Contemporary Sensibilities." *Inside Higher Ed*, 22 June 2017, www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/06/22/colleges-face-challenges-when-producing-historical-theater. Accessed 22 October 2020.
- Broadway Licensing*. www.broadwaylicensing.com. Accessed 20 Oct. 2020.
- Brotebeck, Stephen. "Re: Production Information." Received by Michael McKelvey, 23 Oct. 2020.
- Byrum, Ashton. Personal interview. 14 Oct. 2020.
- Concord Theatricals*. www.concordtheatricals.com. Accessed 19 Oct. 2020.
- Combs, Marianne. "Bloody Bloody Andrew Jackson' Draws Protest in Minneapolis." *Minnesota Public Radio*, 6 June 2014, blogs.mprnews.org/state-of-the-arts/2014/06/bloody-bloody-andrew-jackson-draws-protest-in-minneapolis/. Accessed 20 Oct. 2020.
- COVID-19 Scenario Planning Guidelines*. Voice and Speech Trainers Association, 1 July 2020, www.vasta.org/content.aspx?page_id=86&club_id=516524. Accessed 19 Oct. 2020.

Culwell-Block, Logan. "Concord Theatricals Announces Approved Streaming Platforms for Online Productions." *Playbill*, 1 Oct. 2020, www.playbill.com/article/concord-theatricals-announces-approved-streaming-platforms-for-online-productions. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

Dimond, Christopher. "Re: Chamber Musicals." Received by Michael McKelvey, 21 July 2020.

Dramatists Play Service. www.dramatists.com. Accessed 20 Oct. 2020.

Fisher, Liz. "Re: The Lab." Received by Michael McKelvey, 13 Nov. 2020.

Flinn, Denny Martin. *Musical! A Grand Tour*. Schirmer, 1997.

Gwon, Adam. "Re: Chamber Musicals." Received by Michael McKelvey, 8 July 2020.

Hamner, L., et al. "High SARS-CoV-2 Attack Rate Following Exposure at a Choir Practice—Skagit County, Washington, March 2020." *MMWR Early Release*, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, vol. 69, no. 19, 2020, pp. 606-10. doi:10.15585/mmwr.mm6919e6.

He, Ruichen et al. "Aerosol Generation from Different Wind Instruments." *Journal of Aerosol Science*, vol. 151, no. 105669, 2021. doi:10.1016/j.aerosci.2020.105669.

J.S. Held. *Return to Campus, School of Liberal Arts Guide*. Tulane University, June 2020.

Kenrick, John. *Musical Theatre, A History*. Continuum International Publishing Group, 2010.

Kerrigan, Kait. "The Lab." Received by Michael McKelvey. 27 Oct. 2020.

Lowdermilk, Brian. "The Lab." Received by Michael McKelvey. 27 Oct. 2020.

McDonald, Tim and Jodi Picoult. Personal interview. 27 Oct. 2020.

Music Theatre International. www.mtishows.com. Accessed 19 Oct. 2020.

Nápoles, Jessica et al. *COVID-19 Response Committee Report*. American Choral Directors Association, 15 June 2020, acda.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/ACDA-COVID-19-Committee-Report.pdf.

Naunheim, Matthew R., et al. "Safer Singing During the SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic: What We Know and What We Don't." *Journal of Voice*, 2020, [www.jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997\(20\)30245-9/pdf](http://www.jvoice.org/article/S0892-1997(20)30245-9/pdf). Accessed 19 Oct. 2020.

Norman, Tony. "A Musical About Intolerance Faces the Music Before It Opens at Point Park University." *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, 25 Nov. 2019, www.post-gazette.com/opinion/tony-norman/2019/11/26/Point-Park-University-Adding-Machine-Musical-commentary/stories/201911260011. Accessed 20 Oct. 2020.

Prignano, John. "Re: Updated List." Received by Michael McKelvey. 18 June 2020.

Return to Stage and Performing Arts Playbook. American Guild of Musical Artists and Stage Directors and Choreographers Society, 3rd ed., 8 Oct. 2020. www.musicalartists.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/AGMA.SDC-Return-to-Stage-and-Performing-Arts-Playbook-Version3-10.8.20.pdf. Accessed 7 Dec. 2020.

"Scientific Brief: SARS-CoV-2 and Potential Airborne Transmission." *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, 5 Oct. 2020, www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/more/scientific-brief-sars-cov-2.html. Accessed 20 Nov. 2020.

"Titles Not Available to Stream." *Music Theatre International*, www.mtishows.com/unavailable-streaming. Accessed 5 Dec. 2020.

Theatrical Rights Worldwide. www.theatricalrights.com. Accessed 20 Oct. 2020.

Michael E. McKelvey, DMA is the interim director of musical theatre and a professor of practice at Tulane University. He has also served as an associate professor at Point Park University and St. Edward's University. An award-winning stage and music director, Dr. McKelvey is the artistic director of Summer Lyric Theatre and The Storyville Collective and a proud member of the Stage Directors and Choreographers Society.



ALEXANDRA BILLINGS

a conversation
by André Garner



Alexandra Billings is an educator and activist whose journey has withstood a litany of obstacles, including attempted suicide, homelessness, prostitution, drug addiction, and HIV-AIDS. As an educator, she has achieved master teacher status as one of the foremost Viewpoints teachers in the world and is currently an assistant professor of acting at the University of Southern California. As an activist, Billings is a defender of transgender and LGBTQ rights and was awarded the Human Rights Campaign Visibility Award in 2016. Billings is one of the first openly transgender actresses to appear on television with roles in *Transparent*, *Grey's Anatomy*, and *How To Get Away With Murder*. She's also conquered Broadway with roles in *The Nap*, and most recently, "Madame Morrible" in *Wicked*.

Billings is not just a dynamic, public persona but also a friend. I first met her as a graduate student in 2012. As a BIPOC academic, I admired her unabashed authenticity and infectious spirit, which make her a revelation to her students.

ANDRÉ GARNER: I'd like to talk about how you started teaching.

ALEX BILLINGS: I started teaching when I was 16 or 17 years old. I come from a long line of teachers—my mother, father, and my grandmother (on my father's side) were teachers. My dad was a professor at Harbor College and was not only a music teacher but also a music director, so I was both in musical theatre and teaching it at the same time. And then I left teaching when I was in my 20s for about five or six years because I began my transition in 1980. At that time, it was illegal—what I was. It was against the law. I couldn't teach anywhere. There was nothing I could do.

AG: It's crazy to think that was true.

AB: I went back to teaching in the mid-1990s, and once I learned the Viewpoints, when I was at Steppenwolf, my life changed. Steppenwolf was teaching this summer intensive where there were over fifty students enrolled every summer. Teachers like Martha Plimpton, Lois Smith, and Gary Sinise . . . one summer, Tina [Landau] said out of the blue, "I gotta go do this thing, so I need you to teach class

for me." I said, "Tina, I've never taught this before in my life. I can't do this." She said, "You've taken it with me for three years. You know this work. You love this work. You'll be fine." And so, I did it.

AG: Speaking of your experience with Tina Landau, who influenced you as a teacher?

AB: My father was my first guide as a teacher, and weirdly—this is a terrible thing to say—so was my mother. My mother was such a terrible teacher that I remember when I was a young teacher saying, "Now, what would my mother do?," and do the opposite. And it always worked! She was very uncaring and unkind to her students. And in my head, I would think that her students know that she feels that way about them. Even though you don't say it, they know how you feel, and that's why they're behaving badly.

AG: What attributes make a successful teacher?

AB: For me, a successful teacher is one who works from a place of joy. Nobody enjoys what they're doing every single day, but in order for you to be successful in sharing the gift that you have, you've got to find a center of joyful release. Otherwise, what I notice is that teachers teach from a cerebral place—of knowledge—and it's usually about exporting facts and figures, statistics, ego, or a God complex. That's usually what happens when you teach from your headspace.

So, I think if you're going to be successful in imparting the knowledge that you have, you have to teach from a place of joyful expression. We're human beings. You can't have just one thing to release into the room—that's impossible. Besides, there's no such thing as an acting teacher. Nobody teaches acting—it doesn't exist. It's a guise under which lies your specific philosophy of art. Teachers have a philosophy of art they're imparting, and they're trying to get those humans to live truthfully in that philosophy. But nobody teaches acting. There's no such thing.

AG: It's interesting to hear you speak of acting in an esoteric way during a time when the COVID-19 pandemic is forcing universities to find alternatives for traditional face-to-face instruction. How do you navigate this "new frontier" and still hold true to your core beliefs about teaching?

AB: Acting—if you break it down to mathematics or facts—is not acting. If you break it down to technique, it doesn't fall into a container. It's not like building a house. If you're going to become an architect, you learn very specific techniques about how to do the thing you're going to do. If you teach an architect the wrong way to construct a building, the building will fall down.

Art is theological. It's an idea. It's a feeling. It changes. Even the technique changes because what was true in the 1800s about acting most likely isn't true today. Because really, what are we actually doing in the room? That's the great question. We're getting these human beings to be clear, specific storytellers. Everything else is individual.

AG: How have you evolved as a teacher over the last forty years?

AB: What's important to me now is that they *experience* what happens in class, and then later, they can have their *feelings* about it. I don't try to sell people on what I do. I also don't think I know everything. [laughs] There was a time in the past when I really felt that I had a handle on everything that was going on in the room. And now, I know that's not true at all, especially with everything that's going on in the world right now.

AG: What do you mean?

AB: For the first time, I recently taught a whole class on Zoom by myself, and I was terrified because I thought... it's not going to be the thing I know how to do. So, I avoided it. It was Hugh's [O'Gorman] class. I was supposed to teach four classes and I chickened out of three. Finally, he said, "Look, I totally get it. I get that you're just as frightened as the students are." And something in me clicked and I went—that's it—it's my ego.

You see, if I don't walk in the room knowing shit . . . I've been doing this for thirty-something years—I know what the *thing* is. That's not true, I thought, over this thing. I don't know what *this* thing is, and I can't walk into *this* room. And I was reminded—that's the place I *always* needed to be in because that is the place the students are in every single time they walk into a classroom. They're absolutely terrified, and they believe for some reason—simply because I've been doing it for a really long time—that I *know* everything, and the only thing that I know that I know is that I have more hours in the room. That's it. I've just been practicing it longer. So, it solidified . . . it was really remarkable that last class, and it went freakishly well. *Freakishly* well!

AG: Conversely, do you feel students have changed over the course of your teaching career?



THAT'S MY LIFE. THAT'S JUST NORMAL FOR ME ... MOSTLY, MY LIFE HAS BEEN ABOUT THAT— ABOUT PEOPLE WHO DON'T SEE ME. THAT'S TUESDAY.

AB: No. A student is a student. I don't think that changes. I think cultures are different because that's all learned behavior. Strangely, even when they come from different cultures, they usually ask the same kinds of questions. We're all human. We all experience loss, grief, pain, joy, freedom, and happiness. We all experience those things. I don't think students have changed. What's changed has been the "container."

I was just talking to [David] Warshofsky today, the head of our department at USC, and I said, "Do you remember"—you probably remember, André—"the kind of art that happened during the AIDS plague?" It was incredible! We would write these plays or perform in these benefits or sing these songs or be in these musicals. We would do, create, and invent all day, and then at night, we'd go bury somebody. Or we would go to someone's house where there'd be hundreds of candles and their body lying on the floor because their parents wouldn't take them.

During that viral pandemic—the second that I've lived through—the artistic voice shifted. That's the moment we're in right now. These young people are shifting. They've lived twenty-something years on the planet—two decades. And now, everything they knew for the last twenty years is gone. Bodies are being loaded into trucks filled with ice. That's the world that they live in now.

And as artists—like I said, remember there's no such thing as teaching acting—what they're doing is trying to find the stories. How do I tell the story? And I don't know how to tell the story because I can't go into a theater! I have to use this [gestures to computer] fucking thing! Our job is to guide them into the truthful place where they can tell the story of the human condition. That's the job of the acting teacher, in my opinion. Now we have to help them through this portal.

AG: I can remember serving as your teaching assistant at Cal State, Long Beach, and I would ask about the day's lesson plan and you would respond, "I don't know, angel. We'll see when we get in there." Is that still your approach when entering a class?

AB: Oh yeah! I always equate it to being on a car trip. I know where we need to end up—like, we're going to go to the Grand Canyon, so I know that eventually we have to get somewhere near the Grand Canyon, but how we get there... we may stop five times. The car may run out of gas. The oil may need changing. We may have a flat tire. We may pick up a hitchhiker. I have no idea what's gonna happen. I have no idea.

AG: I'm happy to hear it's still happening!

AB: It is, and it drives everybody just as crazy! [laughs] It's not just you, darling!

AG: I want to move on to some of your acting experiences and start with the critically acclaimed TV show, *Transparent*. How was it being involved with such a popular show?

AB: Well... first of all, it actually wasn't that popular. [laughs] It wasn't. We were *really* popular with the critics. The critics loved us! We won all these awards, but they were all awards from *in* the

business—from other actors. We won Emmys. We won a Peabody Award, but again, these are all from people in the business. Our first season was received really well by the audience because it was the first of its kind. There was no such thing. It didn't exist. Jill [Soloway] invented the transgender sitcom—the idea of a transgender lead in a sitcom.

AG: Let's pivot to your forays on Broadway. Your first stint was in the play, *The Nap*.

AB: Yes! I'm so fancy! It's ridiculous! The reason that it happened... Richard Bean, who wrote *One Man, Two Guvnors*, wrote a play called, *The Nap*, about a guy who plays pool, basically. And he wrote a character in it who is transgender. And they were middle-aged, and the character was a one-armed gangster that had a wooden arm. Hilarious! But of course, he said out loud at a meeting one time at the Manhattan Theatre Club [that] it was based on a transgender friend of his. And he says, "Where the fuck am I going to find a middle-aged, transgender actress who's funny?" Weirdly, because this is how the business works, Judith Light was sitting in on that meeting. And she turned to Richard, and she said, "I know somebody!" And that's how I got that job.

AG: We always say how the business is very predicated on who you know.

AB: Yeah, and let me be really clear—because this is very important for young actors—it's not just who you know. It's also how you behave. Because no one's going to hire Jeffrey Tambor. It's not gonna happen. You've got to be a team player. You've got to be compassionate and kind. You have to get along with people in the business or you won't work.

AG: You speak some truth right there! And here's some more truth—you recently graced the Broadway stage as Madame Morrible in *Wicked*.

AB: Oh! This is a great story. So, I'd never seen the show before because *The Wizard of Oz* is a talisman for me. When this musical first happened, everybody said, "Oh they're making a musical of *The Wizard of Oz*." I said, "Fuck no! No!" But everybody who saw it said, "No, Alex, you really should see it. You need to go see it."

But I heard the music, and the music was fabulous! So, I [sang] a couple of the songs in my cabaret show many, many times... but I didn't know what it was about, except that it's about witches. That's all I knew. So, my manager calls last year and says, "Listen, they want you." I had no idea who *they* were. "They," he says, "they want you to do *Wicked*. They want to make an offer for you to play a role in *Wicked*." And I'm thinking—cause I don't know the show—oh, some little theatre in Poughkeepsie, Idaho wants me to play one of the witches, one of the ladies in *Wicked*. Isn't that... that's gay! But I thought, I can't. I know it's really high. They're going to have to lower the key. I told my manager that they're going to have to do all these things to make it more sensible for me to sing it. Is it really worth it? And he goes, "Alex. No, no, no, no. The people on *Broadway* want you to be in *Wicked*." And then I went—still thinking that they want me for one of the leads—"That's ridiculous! They're going to have to restage stuff, and I'm like, too old!" And he goes, "No, Alex. No! There's an old lady role in it."

Once I finally found out what the hell I was doing, I was very excited! Weirdly, this role has been played by friends of mine—Rondi Reed and other women I knew—so I called them, talked to them, and they all said, "Oh my God. The role of a lifetime! You'll love it. It's a *dream*! You do just enough to be funny. You have a big scene with Glenda where you get to tell her off. You've got a couple of songs, and then you're out. You're gone." And I was like, "Great!" That's what happened, and they were absolutely right. It was one of the greatest gigs I've ever had. And hopefully, I'll go back into it if we ever come back.

AG: How long were you there before it shut down?

AB: I was there three months—a very short amount of time.

AG: I'd like to take a sharp turn to talk about your activism—it seems to inform so much about who you are. You're very active on social media. What's the most challenging aspect of advocating for future transgender and queer individuals?

AB: Trying to stay even-tempered when I have to explain the same goddamn thing over and over again to the same goddamn people over and over again for the last forty goddamn years. That's the challenge. I'm so tired of having the same conversations.

AG: You spoke of ignorance earlier. Bigotry is seeded in ignorance. I had never seen or met a transgender person until you. Getting to know you during our time together at Cal State, Long Beach allowed me to lose some of my ignorance. You taught me about acceptance and inclusion. How do you feel when you interact with someone who refuses to see you?

AB: Well [*laughs*], it's a really good question. It's complicated because... first of all, I want to go back to something you said because I find it fascinating. I hear that a lot—what you just said to me, which was, "You were the first trans person I ever met or saw," because that's not true, statistically. It's important to know this because the *accurate* statement is, "You are the first trans person I ever met that I *saw*." And the only reason you saw me is because you were *forced* to see me. It wasn't a choice. You didn't say to yourself, "I'm really curious about this tribe of humans... I'm gonna go find out about them." That's not what happened. What happened was, you said, "I really want this experience, and this person comes with it, and I have to *deal* with it." That's what's usually happened to me my whole life.

When you say, "What do I do when people don't see me?"—that's my life. That's just normal for me... mostly, my life has been about that—about people who don't see me. That's Tuesday. That's not like, [*feigning hysteria*] "Oh my God! People don't see me for who I am!" That's just the way it fucking is.

It's the underside of that question that resonates deeper. What happens when I meet somebody who sees me immediately? That's really the interesting question for me because those people are few and far between. I have a handful of humans who are part of my chosen family who are those people. So, I don't spend a lot of time, André, trying to get people to see or hear me. I don't feel like—oh my goodness, what will I do? There's no room at the table for me! Now, I feel like—oh, there's room at the table. *You* just don't see it. I can see it, and so, I'm going to sit down. So, move over! I'm sitting down!

It's really a matter of—what do I do when people really go out of their way to recognize me? And that's always shocking, and it's a little embarrassing for me. I get a little, like, embarrassed, and then, I get small. I don't know what to do with it... but the other way, you know, it makes sense to me. And especially now... times are changing.

AG: It's called evolution.

AB: You're exactly right.

André Garner is currently an assistant professor of acting at Ball State University. Broadway credits: *How The Grinch Stole Christmas*, *The Music Man*, *Marie Christine*, and *Grease*. Off-Broadway: *Little Ham*, *From My Hometown*. National tours: *The Color Purple*, *Dreamgirls*, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, and *Miss Saigon*. International: *A Chorus Line*.





WORKING | December 2019
University of the Arts
Direction by Katie Donovan
Music Direction by Rob Tucker | Choreography by Fionx Chin
Set Design by Katie Donovan | Costume Design by Gina Colacci
Lighting Design by Colin Sass | Sound Design by Larry Fowler
Photography by Paola Noguerras

BOOK REVIEW

by Amanda Wansa Morgan

REFRAMING THE MUSICAL: RACE, CULTURE AND IDENTITY Edited by Sarah Whitfield

SPRINGER, 2019; pp. 241. \$34.00 Paperback.

Reframing the Musical: Race, Culture and Identity, edited by Sarah Whitfield, is a timely and resonant collection of essays written by thirteen musical theatre scholars from across North America and Europe. A refreshing resource, this collection of essays provides unique perspectives ranging from musings over the representations of queer love stories in musical theatre to illuminating the struggle of appropriation versus appreciation in representations of race in the storytelling of different musicals.

The contributing writers represent different backgrounds and a vast array of identities. Some authors present a clearly opinionated point of view regarding the musical they discuss while others take a more objective approach and straightforwardly provide the relevant information about a musical and its historical impact. Therefore, one should not expect much unity between chapters as each essay presents a unique topic, tone, and a fantastic and diverse viewpoint. For some, this lack of unity may be distracting, but for others, it may be invigorating and engaging as the essays take the reader on a journey through starkly different corners of the musical theatre canon. If readers are hoping to—as the title suggests—reframe their perspectives on shows they have been familiar with for many years, the variety of voices and perspectives can be quite refreshing.

The book is divided into three parts that include three to five chapters—each one with an essay focused on a distinctive topic. Part One, titled, “Reframing Identity/Identities,” includes the essays, “White Storytellers and Black Lives in *The Fortress of Solitude*” (Galella), “Seeing as a Filipino: *Here Lies Love* at the National Theatre” (Chow), and “Disney’s *The Lion King* on Broadway as a Vital Sign for Understanding Civic and Racialized Presence in the Early Twenty-First Century” (Granger). In Chapter One, Donatella Galella dives right into topics of White privilege and racialized spaces and sounds by historically examining the writing and production of *The Fortress of Solitude* from a removed, third-person point of view. In Chapter Two, Broderick D.V. Chow unpacks a more personalized experience of seeing *Here Lies Love* as a Filipino. Chow discusses his feelings of pride over representation counterbalanced with his dismay over some of the writing, original production decisions, and the fact that the show is not written by writers of Asian descent. Similar to Chow, Brian Granger weighs the pros and cons of the original musical structure and direction of *The Lion King* in Chapter Three and shares an account of his first viewing of the production on Broadway. Conversely, he pivots to discuss criticism of the original

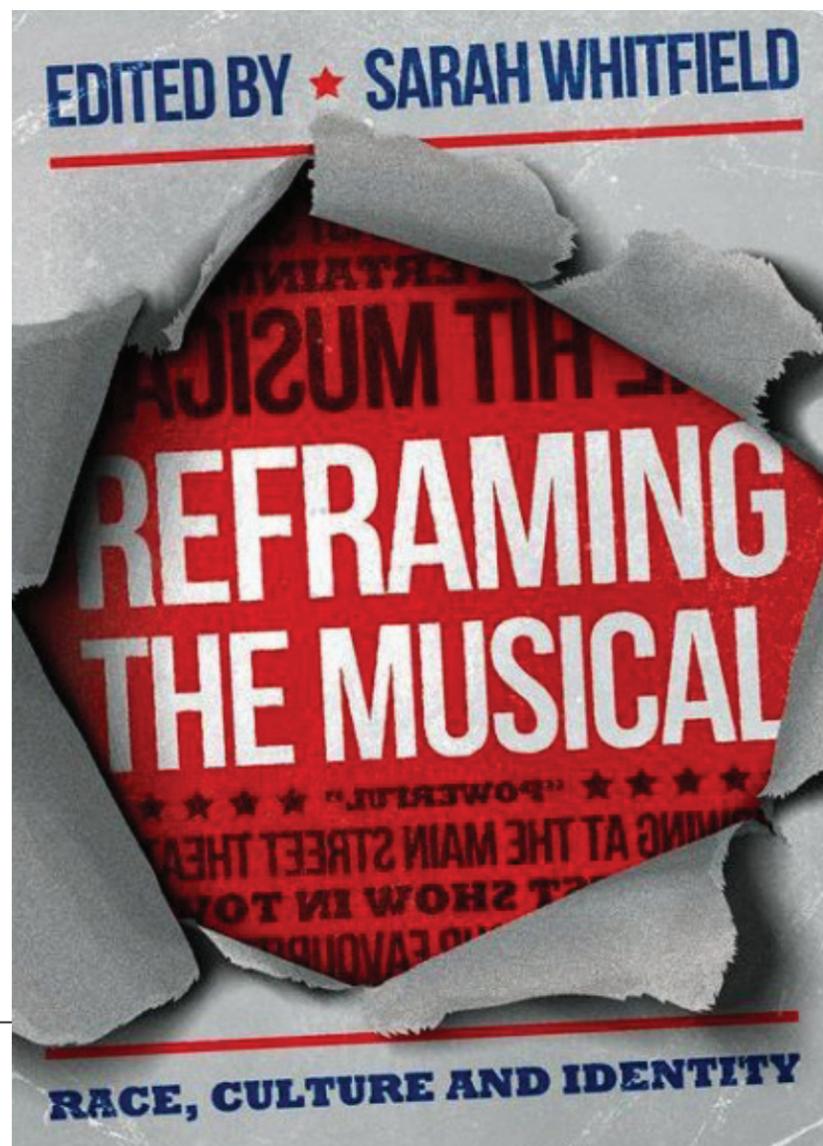
production choices and the lasting impact those choices have had on representation on Broadway. Part One explores its topic of “Reframing Identity/Identities” as promised; however, similar to the rest of the book, some chapters provided more of a condensed history lesson for the purpose of exposure and representation while others took a more editorial perspective, cited personal anecdotes, and included the author’s personal and emotional relationship with the musical discussed.

Part Two, titled, “Challenging Historiographies,” contains five essays. In her chapter, “Beyond the Rue Pigalle: Recovering Ada ‘Bricktop’ Smith as ‘Muse,’ Mentor and Maker of Transatlantic Musical Theatre,” Maya Cantu gives the reader a history lesson on a lesser known but very important Black performer, writer, and mentor named Ada “Bricktop” Smith. This celebratory chapter on Smith is followed by a controversial look at the work of Oscar Hammerstein II by Arianne Johnson Quinn, who illustrates the poor reception of Hammerstein’s work in Britain and illuminates examples of racism, White supremacy, and political motivations in works throughout his canon. Chapter Six pivots into a larger discussion surrounding the lack of respect and acknowledgment of the work of music directors—particularly Black music directors and conductors on Broadway. Sean Mayes’ chapter, “Black Conductors Make History...,” looks less at the impact of an individual musical and more at representation in the industry’s creative teams while also acknowledging the invisible workload of a music director. Chapter Eight, by Alejandro Postigo, provides an overview of the “Evolution of Musical Theatre in Spain...” and includes the types of musicals produced in Spain (e.g., traditional Spanish musicals, revues, imports of “global” musicals) and the similarities and differences between those

types of productions. Part Two closes with a celebratory outline of *Shuffle Along—Or the Making of the Musical Sensation of 1921 and All That Followed* by sharing the historical background of the collaboration between Savion Glover and George C. Wolfe as well as the impact of that production on Broadway and BIPOC representation on Broadway-level creative teams.

Part Three delves into “Musical Structures: Identity and Social Change.” Chapter Nine begins this section, titled, “Musematic Relationships in Jeanine Tesori’s score for *Fun Home*,” and exists almost exclusively as a script and score analysis that relates musical choices in the score to emotional elements of the characters and plot while also expanding to topics related to the LGBTQ identity of the protagonist. The next chapter abruptly pivots to explore the cultural consciousness of the musical *Hair* and offers a completely different tone and objective than the previous chapter. This chapter interestingly relates more closely to Chapter Twelve, “Bonding Over Phobia...,” which examines *Hamilton* and the conundrum of its outward representation combined with problematic writing, casting, production practices, and advertising. Similarly, Chapter Nine relates to Chapter Eleven, “What About Love? Claiming and Reclaiming LGBTQ+ Spaces in Twenty-First Century Musical Theatre,” as it takes a thorough look at various musicals that portray LGBTQ relationships through different lenses and styles. The chapters in this section—compelling as they are—are not as closely related as the chapters in previous sections and seemed somewhat shoehorned into an overarching category that did not quite fit. This section could have potentially benefitted from being reorganized into two smaller sections.

For musical theatre educators, these essays provide numerous points of view coupled with commendable research. Each chapter provides a valuable page of references to additional helpful texts for further research. This book would be a wonderful tool as a supplemental text to any musical theatre



history and literature course. It is by no means exhaustive enough to be a primary text, but it would certainly enhance discussions around the historical and social ramifications of the musical theatre pieces named within. This book would also be an engaging read for musical theatre scholars wishing to diversify their perspectives on the included musicals and themes. Furthermore, this book could be used in courses that focus on theatre for social change, careers in theatre, musical theatre writing and composition, or even a course in building one's repertoire. The book could also be very helpful in dramaturgical research for any director or dramaturgical team.

This book successfully explores the different, yet related, topics of race, culture, and identity by providing the reader with a diverse group of voices and viewpoints. Understandably, these topics cannot be completely unpacked in one, 241-page book; however, this book can pique the interest of a variety of readers from professors wishing to expand and diversify their libraries to the student looking for an analysis of a specific show and its impact on the industry and the world. The overall variety in tone and structure of each chapter may lead readers to pick and choose what sections to read or use in a teaching environment, and some readers may want to quickly discern each author's main point for the sake of clarity when toggling back and forth between such unrelated topics. While the collection of authors includes a diverse representation of backgrounds, educations, current teaching appointments, and geographical locations, it could have been helpful if the editor had included more thorough biographies for each author to contextualize each point of view and provide readers with more information on how to further engage with each author.

The topics of the essays in this collection are very relevant in 2020, and the perspectives of the authors are important and should be widely shared. I hope that editor Sarah Whitfield will continue to collect additional fascinating essays from such diverse authors and that Springer Press continues to authorize the creation of multiple volumes of this kind, which will be an incredibly valuable resource for scholars and educators who hope to access, review, and use these important essays in their classrooms.

Amanda Wansa Morgan serves as coordinator of musical theatre and is an associate professor at Kennesaw State University, where she teaches classes in musical theatre performance, voice, acting, and MT history and literature. She is a professional music director, director, actor, composer, and voice coach with multiple credits across the Southeast. www.amandawansamorgan.com

BOOK REVIEW

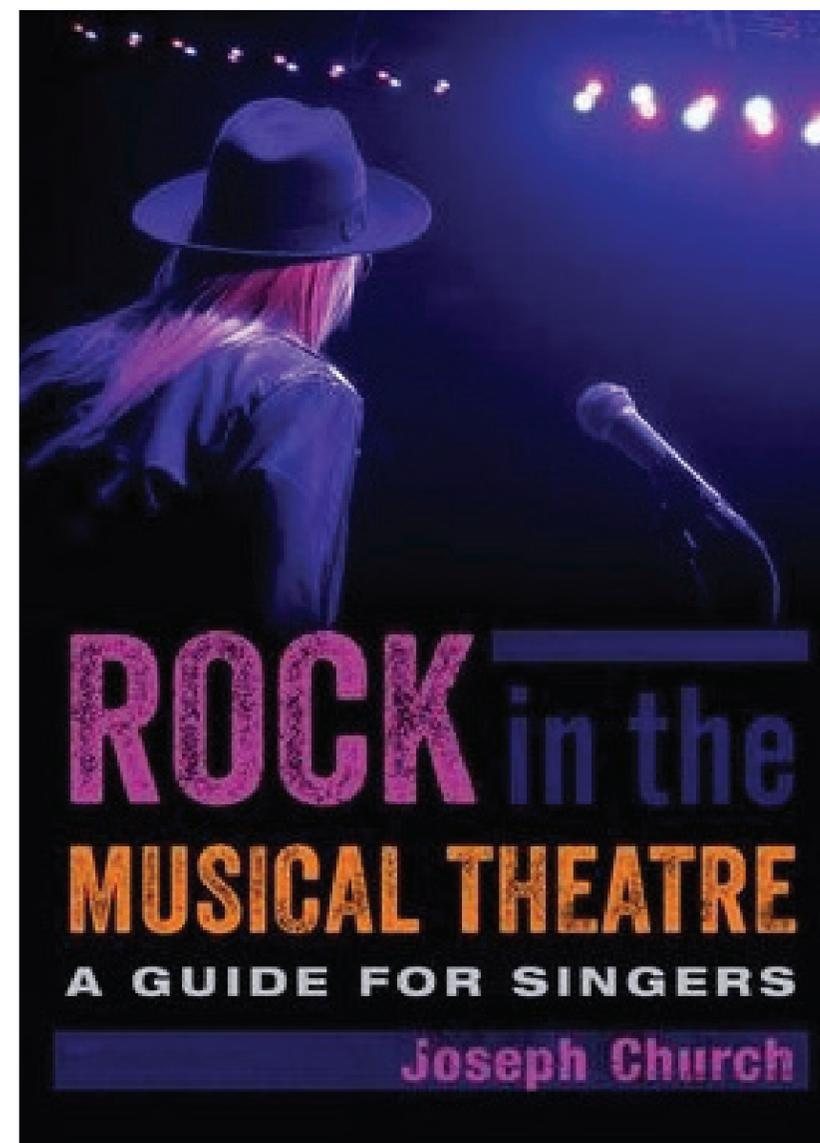
by Jenna Lee Moore

ROCK IN THE MUSICAL THEATRE: A GUIDE FOR SINGERS by Joseph Church

Oxford University Press, 2019; pp. 197. \$35.00 Paperback; \$23.99 eBook; \$99.00 Hardcover.

Rock in the Musical Theatre: A Guide for Singers is a must read for all musical theatre performers, vocal coaches, and music directors working within the vast pop/rock repertoire in musical theatre today. Joseph Church is an active music director on Broadway, most known for *The Lion King* and *The Who's Tommy*. He has been teaching musical theatre performance and composition at NYU-Steinhardt for over twenty years. His first book, *Music Direction for the Stage: A View from the Podium*, is the only comprehensive text published on musical theatre music direction. It was published by Oxford

University Press in 2015. Church states that his purpose for writing *Rock in the Musical Theatre* is to teach readers "how to maintain the authenticity of rock while performing believably in a theatrical setting" (xv). Church goes on to state, "Giving a convincing performance on stage, one that is believable to an audience, one that an audience can identify and sympathize with, is the overriding goal . . . Rock songs add additional obstacles to believability because their aesthetics and mechanics are so distinctive" (xv). With his primary audience being performers of rock in musical theatre, Church examines the main dilemma we find when performing rock songs in a theatrical context. Musical theatre is a musical-dramatic art form where lyrics remain at the forefront for the purposes of storytelling. Songs intend to further the plot. In contrast, rock music values rhythm and self-expression over melody and lyrics. Sometimes the words are unintelligible. *Rock in the Musical Theatre* examines various ways a performer can have an engaging and believable performance, which acts as a story-telling mechanism while still living in the world and style of rock music.



Rock in the Musical Theatre: A Guide for Singers is organized into three sections. The first section gives the reader an overview of the history of rock music, the aesthetics of rock music, and the history of rock in musical theatre. Church discusses the importance of authenticity when performing rock in musical theatre. This includes specific choices in style and performance practice, which will help the rock song in a musical sound authentic to the genre. Church examines many of the differences between a stand-alone rock song and a rock song within the context of a musical, such as form, format, the connection between music and lyrics, vocal arrangements, vocalism, improvisation, and song themes.

The second section of the book digs deep into the technical elements of performing rock in musical theatre. Because musical theatre is a storytelling medium, the first chapter in this section discusses acting within a rock song. This includes identifying various themes found in rock, such as alienation, rebellion, uninhibited sensual pleasure, defense of individualism, and self-actualization. This section includes an interview with Michael Cerveris, a Broadway actor who has appeared in many rock musicals, including the roles of Tommy in *The Who's Tommy* and Hedwig in *Hedwig and the Angry Inch*. Since the primary audience of the book is the musical theatre performer, it is especially insightful to hear the experience and process of an actor who has performed in many rock musicals of various styles.

The next chapter discusses the musical elements of rock in musical theatre including how the melody is formed, the phrase structure and its relationship to lyrics, sense of groove, and the importance of rhythm. Church regularly emphasizes the significance of rhythm and groove in rock. He reiterates that the singer is a part of and often determines the groove. He discusses the various types of rock, such as hard rock, pop-rock, blues, gospel, soul, R&B, and rap, and how musical elements shift and change.

In the following chapter, Church examines the vocalisms in rock and includes various exercises for singers who want to expand their knowledge and rock singing abilities, including the use of the microphone and how that affects performance. While mentioning the importance of dance in authentic musical theatre rock performances, Church does not discuss dance further due to lack of personal knowledge on the subject.

The final chapter in the second section of the book is a selective annotated survey of rock songs in various meters and subdivisions. Church gives performance tips for each song—a valuable resource for any performer looking to increase their understanding of rock singing.

In the final section of *Rock in the Musical Theatre: A Guide for Singers*, Church chooses various songs from the rock musical theatre repertoire spanning diverse styles and contexts. He includes a brief history of each song as well as a discussion of musical style. He follows by describing his approach to coaching each song from a music, acting, and vocal standpoint. For example, in the song, "Suddenly Seymour" from *Little Shop of Horrors*, Church discusses the characterization of Seymour and how he is a "downtown" character. He states that "Seymour begins as a drudge (Jerry Lewis) and transforms to a smooth operator (Montgomery Clift)" throughout the course of the song (142). Church discusses how to approach musical elements such as dynamics, intensity, tempo, and groove by using specific musical examples from the song. The attention to style detail in this section is incredibly beneficial to both musical theatre performers as well as coaches or music directors who may be working in this genre.

As stated by Broadway music director, Alex Lacamoire, in the forward to the book, "Rock'n'Roll is the springboard most modern popular music comes from" (vi). With the emergence of rock musicals in the repertoire today, *Rock in the Musical Theatre: A Guide for Singers* is a must read for anyone working on the performance side of the musical theatre industry. As a musical theatre performer and

music director, I have always struggled to make rock music authentic to the genre while still telling the story in musical theatre. *Rock in the Musical Theatre* has given me specific tools to approach this style of music within the context of musical theatre. I have many students in my class and my private voice studio who are uncomfortable and unfamiliar with singing rock. Church's insight into the style elements of many rock songs will be beneficial to those students who are new to rock singing and find it daunting. I plan to recommend this book to my voice studio and incorporate many of Church's suggestions when coaching a rock show as a music director. I would highly recommend the book to all musical theatre performers, music directors, directors, voice teachers, and acting coaches working in this medium.

Jenna Lee Moore is an assistant professor of musical theatre at Southeast Missouri State University. Music directing credits include the New York Musical Festival, Actor's Playhouse, River Campus Summer Arts Festival, Dobbins Conservatory of Theatre and Dance, Pennsylvania Youth Theatre, and more. As an active singer/actor, favorite roles included Rosie in *Mamma Mia*, Nancy in *Martha*, Marcellina in *Le nozze di Figaro*, and Zita in *Gianni Schicchi*. Article publications in *Voice and Speech Review*, the *Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance Journal*, and *Gender, Education, Music, and Society*. Dr. Moore holds a Doctor of Musical Arts in vocal pedagogy and performance from the Frost School of Music at the University of Miami.



SUBJECT AREA EDITORS

ACTING

Charles Gilbert cgilbert@uarts.edu

DIRECTING | HISTORY

David Coolidge dwcoolidge@anderson.edu
Matthew Miller mtmiller@csuchico.edu
Nathan Stith nstith@trinity.edu

DANCE | MOVEMENT

Julie Lyn Barber julielynbarber@gmail.com

VOCAL COACHING | MUSIC DIRECTION

Joel Gelpe jgelpe@ithaca.edu
Christine Riley criley@mmm.edu

SINGING

Terry Greenland tgreenland@uarts.edu
Thomas Gregg tgregg@bostonconservatory.edu
Michael McKelvey mmckelvey@tulane.edu



SPAMALOT | October 2020
Oklahoma City University
Direction by Karen Coe Miller
Music Direction by Matthew Mailman
Choreography by Sheri Hayden
Set Design by Jason Foreman
Costume Design by Reagan William
Lighting Design by Aaron Mooney
Sound Design by Jacob Henry
Photography by Wendy Mutz



MTEA EXECUTIVE BOARD

[2020-2023]

President | Stacy Alley, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa, AL USA

Immediate Past President | Jonathan Flom, The Danish National School for the Performing Arts, Fredericia, DENMARK

Vice President for Conferences | Jacob Brent, James Madison University, Harrisonburg, VA USA

Vice President for Membership | Matthew Teague Miller, Cal State University, Chico, Chico, CA USA

Vice President for International Representatives | Dale Cox, University of Southern Queensland, Queensland, AUSTRALIA

Treasurer | Stephen Brotebeck, San Diego State University, San Diego, CA USA

Secretary | Amanda Wansa Morgan, Kennesaw State University, Kennesaw, GA USA

Lead Diversity Officer | Timothy Espinosa, Fullerton College, Fullerton, CA USA

Director of Communications | Andrew Barratt Lewis, Weber State University, Ogden, UT USA

Director of Marketing | Natalie Pitchford, Lovett School, Atlanta, GA USA

MTEA Journal Editor-in-Chief | Amelia Rollings Bigler, Western Kentucky University, Bowling Green, KY USA

Region 1 Director | Tommy lafrate, SUNY Binghamton, Binghamton, NY USA

Region 2 Director | David Coolidge, Anderson University, Anderson, IN USA

Region 3 Director | Tara Snyder, University of Central Florida, Orlando, FL USA

Region 4 Director | Jessica Humphrey, Texas Christian University, Ft. Worth, TX USA

Region 5 Director | Wilson Mendieta, Chapman College, Orange, CA USA

At-Large Members | Kikau Alvaro (Virginia Commonwealth University, Richmond, VA USA); Nathan Balker (Brigham Young University, Provo, UT USA); Jeremiah Downes (West Virginia University, Morgantown, VA USA); André Garner (Ball State University, Muncie, IN USA); Scott Susong (Illinois Wesleyan University, Bloomington, IN USA); Cody Walker (Triple Threat Productions and Studios, Las Vegas, NV USA)

CHAPLIN | October 2020
Nazareth College of Rochester
Direction by Valerie Wright
Music Direction by Corinne Aquilina
Choreography by Valerie Wright
Set Design by Allen Shannon
Costume Design by Yuanting Zhao
Lighting Design by Emily Stork
Sound Design by Kyle Critelli
Photography by Evan Mikoll

KEYSTONE
PICTURES



SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

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.



HOW TO SUBMIT

- The deadline for submissions for the fifth volume is July 15, 2021.
- 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 MLA 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 style.mla.org/ and owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style.
- 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

- 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 (e.g., "Coach's Corner"), subject to editing for format, style, and length.
- 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.

CHESS | November 2020
Illinois Wesleyan University
Direction by Scott Susong
Music Direction by Charlie Berggren
Choreography by Josh Levinson
Set Design by Kristin Ellert
Costume Design by Amanda M. Bedker
Lighting Design by Julie E. Ballard
Sound Design by Stephanie Farina
Photography by Megan Christoferson



FEATURED PHOTOGRAPHY

Photo 01 | *Madagascar - A Musical Adventure*, The Biz Performing Arts, December 2019
Directed by André Gress. Photography by Lara Pereira.

Photo 02 | *RENT*, The Biz Performing Arts, September 2019
Directed by André Gress. Photography by Lara Pereira.

Photo 03 | *Grand Hotel*, McCallum Fine Arts Academy, January 2020
Directed by Joshua Denning. Photography by Jonathan Orenstein.

Photo 04 | *Head Over Heels*, Indiana University, November 2020
Directed by DJ Gray and Lauren Haughton Gillis. Photography by DJ Gray.

Photo 05 | *Beast Mode Champion: The Pro-Wrestling Rock Musical*, Elon University, November 2020
Directed by Kirby Wahl. Photography by Dan Gibson and J McMerty.

Photo 06 | *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, Arkansas State University, April 2018
Directed by Lisa Bohn. Photography by Claire Abernathy.

Photo 07 | *Pippin*, Binghamton University, November 2020
Directed by Tommy lafrate. Photography by Dana Tyner and Arleigh Wasserman.

Photo 08 | *Macbeth*, Binghamton University, October, 2020
Directed by Tom Kremer. Screen Capture by Kari Bayait.

The statements and opinions contained in this journal are solely those of the individual authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the editors or the publisher, the Musical Theatre Educators' Alliance (MTEA), or its board. The editor-in-chief and the publisher disclaim responsibility for any injury to persons or property resulting from any ideas contained in these pages. Individual authors were responsible for obtaining the necessary permission to reproduce copyrighted material from other sources. The material in this journal cannot be reprinted without permission from the publisher/author(s).



MTEEA

MUSICAL THEATRE
EDUCATORS' ALLIANCE

www.musicaltheatreeducators.org