



Music Virtual Learning

Music Appreciation/Intro to Musical Theater

May 12, 2020



Lesson: May 12, 2020

Objective/Learning Target: Students will be introduced to the history of musical theater.

Bell Work

Answer the following questions and test your knowledge of musical theater.

1. What does the term “musical theater” mean?
2. What elements will you encounter in a musical theater performance?
3. Have you seen a musical theater performance?



What is Musical Theatre?

Musical theatre is a form of theatrical performance that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting and dance. These performances are most commonly called **musicals**. Musicals are performed at schools, playhouses and performance halls. The biggest stage in the U.S. for musical performances is Broadway in New York City.



Origins of Musical Theater

Musical theater originated over 2,500 years ago in Ancient Greece! The Greeks staged comedies and tragedies in outdoor amphitheaters. The writing of the story line and the different characters created the drama and the information needed to tell the story. Music was minimal during this time, but the theater component was definitely established.



What's behind the mask?

Masks were commonly used to portray different characters. It was not uncommon for the same person to play multiple roles. This was most easily achieved by changing into a different robe or cloak and putting on the mask of a different character. Today we see the same person playing the same character throughout the entire musical and using stage makeup instead of masks. It is also important to note that only males were allowed to perform. So all the female roles in a musical would have been played by males. The masks were very helpful in this regard.



When in Rome.....do as the Romans do!

The Romans were one of the first to add song and dance routines accompanied by instrumental music. Keep in mind that the instruments of the time were primitive and the voices were mostly untrained. The goal was to provide entertainment and a means for people to get out and have a good time.



Medieval Times

During Medieval times, performers would travel to various places and sing songs or tell dramatic stories to large audiences. Churches also used the same idea and set sacred textual ideas to music.



Renaissance Era

Performances in the Renaissance Era continued the use of masks but also introduced the idea of clowns. The use of backdrops and other staging ideas emerged during the era. The rule that men and boys were the only ones allowed to perform in public still applies during this time.



If it ain't Baroque...don't fix it!

The Baroque Era added a great deal of drama to music in general. There were so many musical advances during this time as different string instruments were invented as well as the harpsichord. Everything was decorated extravagantly with gold and fine finishings. Opera emerges and used singers and instruments to tell a story. Every word in an opera is sung. Operas can be funny, romantic or tragic. The church began to add large scale sacred works, similar to operas, to tell different stories from the bible. They are called Cantatas and Oratorios.



The Opera trend continues!

Operas were a great source of entertainment and the tradition began to expand throughout the world to France, Great Britain and Germany. By the 1800's, many operas had been written by some of the most famous composers such as Monteverdi, Puccini, Mozart and Rossini.

Enjoy Figaro's Aria from Mozart's, The Barber of Seville.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7qHZkkgowdY>

You may also enjoy the Tom and Jerry version!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QFFOHqx520E&t=16s>



Lesson Recap

The history of musical theater began very early with the ancient Greeks and Romans using masks and simple wardrobes in amphitheaters. In the Renaissance, we see the use of staging and the addition of music both in the secular and sacred arena. Opera is introduced in the Baroque era and remains popular to this very day. Staging, costumes, voices and other aspects of performance become more complex and ornate during this time. Opera is the precursor for the musical theater we know today.



Where do we go from here?

America, compared to other countries, was relatively new and behind the artistic curve since this country was not founded until 1492. It takes us awhile to catch up in all aspects of forming a country. It is not until the mid 1700's to 1800 that some of the performances that have been widely performed overseas make their debut in America. In the next lesson we will discover the shift from opera to musical theatre as we know it today. Listen to a couple other famous opera clips to close the lesson.

Verdi: Rigoletto / Act 3 - La donna è mobile

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=6&v=cWMXDhFJ1bg&feature=emb_title

Verdi: La traviata / Act 1 - "Follie! Delirio vano è questo!"

https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=22&v=BFYSDEyQ4XA&feature=emb_title

Bravo!

