



# Music Virtual Learning

## Music Appreciation/Musical Theatre 1735-Present Day

May 13, 2020



Lesson: May 13, 2020

**Objective/Learning Target: Students will be introduced to aspects of musical theater from 1735-present day.**

# Bell Work

What do you remember about the history of musical theatre from yesterday's lesson?

1. Where did musical theatre originate?
2. What were the primary costumes used in early theatre?
3. Who was allowed to perform?
4. What genre is the precursor to musical theatre as we know it today?



# Picking up where we left off.

In our last lesson we talked about America lagging behind a bit due to its later discovery date in relationship to other countries. Before America's birthday in 1776, the musical production *Flora*, an English Opera, was performed in America and England in 1735. This was the first known opera performed in America and is still popular today!



# The great divide!

Like many musical genres in American history, we will see a division of classical music and more popular music. This happened as there was a divide between those who were affluent and cultured and those who were not. Opera found it's own audience with those of means and in the highest social class. Middle to lower class people found themselves enjoying a new genre of entertainment known as burlesque. Burlesque was a new type of musical theater known for its fancy costumes and large dance numbers. Burlesque shows were mostly **parodies**, or imitations used to make fun of famous people or plays.



# Musical Theatre Evolves

Musical theatre began to evolve in the mid- to late-1800s. This was the result of major social and technical changes. Transportation was improving, so it was easier for people to travel to theaters. Better jobs and better salaries meant people had more money to spend on entertainment. And the invention of electricity led to street lights, which made it safer for people to go out at night.




# The First Musical!

***The Black Crook*** was the first modern musical in New York, performed in 1866. It was 5 1/2 hours long and ran for 474 performances. *The Black Crook's* hodgepodge plot stole elements from Goethe's *Faust*, Weber's *Der Freischutz*, and several other well-known works. The evil Count Wolfenstein tries to win the affection of the lovely villager Amina by placing her boyfriend Rodolphe in the clutches of Hertzog, a nasty **crook**-backed master of **black** magic (hence the show's title). The ancient Hertzog stays alive by providing the Devil (Zamiel, "The Arch Fiend") with a fresh soul every New Year's Eve. While an unknowing Rodolphe is being led to this hellish fate, he selflessly saves the life of a dove, which magically turns out to be Stalacta, Fairy Queen of the Golden Realm, who was masquerading as the bird. (Still with me?) The grateful Queen whisks Rudolphe to safety in fairyland before helping to reunite him with his beloved Amina. The Fairy Queen's army then battles the Count and his evil horde. The Count is defeated, Satan's demons drag the magician Hertzog down to hell, and Rodolphe and Amina live happily ever after.

It was a HIT!



REVIVING AND REIMAGINING  
**THE BLACK CROOK!**  
THE  
FIRST AMERICAN MUSICAL  
AND THE MOST COSTLY,  
**MAGNIFICENT**  
**SPECTACLE** EVER STAGED  
IN AMERICA  
LECTURE AND PERFORMANCE BY  
**JOSHUA WILLIAM GELB**  
WED. NOVEMBER 1<sup>st</sup> AT 5:30 PM  
AT HOUGHTON LIBRARY



JOSHUA WILLIAM GELB is a director, performer, and theorist. He will be introducing a new production of *The Black Crook* at the Albany City Center (ACTC). His work has also appeared at Amherst, The Theater Project, Theater Across the Campus, Skidmore Latin and Greek Clubs for Fantasy, Theater for Arts, and the Edinburgh Fringe. He is an associate artist with Boston City Theater, and a member of the 2012 Lincoln Center Opera's Lab.

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Schloss  
Presented by  
Manuel Rivera-Lir  
and Theater Across the Campus



# 1920's

In the 1920's we begin to see another shift in how musicals are produced. Vaudeville and Cabaret style musicals become very popular during this time. These types of shows had featured musical numbers but they did not necessarily have a dramatic plot line to follow. It was more about the show stopping numbers than it was about the story line. There were a variety of acts that included singing, dancing, comedy or acts featuring animals. You can kind of think if it like the 1920's version of the X-Factor or America's Got Talent without the judging. Acts were generally upbeat, optimistic and entertaining. Here are a couple examples of Vaudeville acts.

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWryDF\\_yyH0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xWryDF_yyH0)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwQ6v\\_nYPMs&list=PL6AKtYEpTJJIZlpMaJX4qkn0KrwHezye](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LwQ6v_nYPMs&list=PL6AKtYEpTJJIZlpMaJX4qkn0KrwHezye)



# All Aboard the Show Boat!

In 1927, musicals return to the initial idea of using songs to help advance a story line. Show Boat, written by musical icons Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein, was the premier musical in 1927. It was about a group of performers, stagehands and deck workers on a Mississippi show boat. The musical tackles some sensitive issues for the time which included racial prejudice and enduring love. This musical has been revived several times over the course of time and has won numerous awards. With this new idea of musical production, audiences could experience humor, music and dance as well as the sometimes serious nature of the storyline. Show Boat created the template for future musicals. He's a clip of one of the more popular numbers from the musical, Ol Man River.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eh9WayN7R-s>



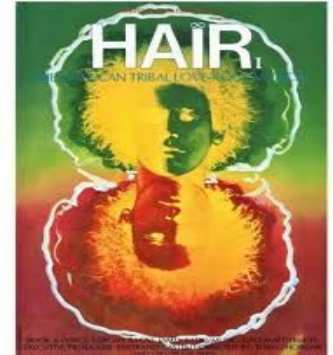
# 1940's-The Golden Age of Musical Theatre

Some of the most iconic musicals came out of the 1940's. Shows like West Side Story, The Sound of Music and Oklahoma pushed the envelope in regards to staging, storylines, music and costumes. In 1947, the Tony Award was established to celebrate excellence in theatre.



# The End of the Golden Age

While many musicals during the golden age touched on sensitive topics of race, war, and love, they never breached the threshold of becoming inappropriate or obscene in nature. That is until 1967 and the off Broadway premier of "Hair." The work reflects the creators' observations of the hippie counterculture and sexual revolution of the late 1960s, and several of its songs became anthems of the anti-Vietnam War peace movement. The musical's profanity, its depiction of the use of illegal drugs, its treatment of sexuality, its irreverence for the American flag, and its nude scene caused much comment and controversy. The musical broke new ground in musical theatre by defining the genre of "rock musical", using a racially integrated cast, and inviting the audience onstage for the finale.



# Meanwhile...across the pond in Britain....

After 1970, Britain took musical writing to another level. Rock musicals such as the Rocky Horror Picture Show, and pop musicals such as Phantom of the Opera, add a pop twist to classical music and continue the tradition of adding music to dramatic storylines. They were known as “mega musicals” because of their large budgets, technical demands in regards to lighting, sound, sets and special effects.



# Modern Musicals

Musicals written in 2000 and beyond either take a more conservative approach to writing, or continue to explore and advance the ways musicals are written. Thoroughly Modern Millie was premiered in 2000. The plot takes place in the 1920's and is very much written in the conservative style. Hamilton, which premiered in 2015, uses hip-hop music as the musical score, something that had never been done before. Writing musicals is challenging because writers want to engage with all types of audiences, tell their story, and hopefully make some money in the process.



# Jukebox Musicals

Modern musicals also include what are called Jukebox Musicals. These musicals include popular music played on the radio to help advance the storyline. The most famous jukebox musicals are Mama Mia, which features music from the band Abba, and Jersey Boys, which tells the story of Frankie Valli and the Four Seasons.



# Here's what we know...

Musicals are ancient art forms that have evolved over time to fit the period in which they were created. They are centered around telling a story about the societal elements of the time period, pushing the limits of what can be done on stage with lighting, sound and special effects, continue to find new ways of writing to incorporate other elements of pop culture, and work to appeal to a wide variety of audiences in order to reach them with their message.





# There's something out there for you!

Do you have a favorite musical? Do any of the musicals that we've covered today seem interesting to you? There is literally a musical out there for everybody!

Go to youtube and search some songs from musicals that may interest you and give them a listen. There are some musicals that you can see in their entirety online. Some have been made into movies. Others are still running on Broadway and cannot be viewed online. Enjoy the search! Go out there and find the musical for you!

