

Opereta and Musical Theater

Section I - Operetta

Operetta is a genre of light opera, *light* in terms both of music and subject matter. It is also closely related, in English-language works, to forms of musical theatre.

- Operetta grew out of the French *opéra comique* around the middle of the 19th century (mid-1800's), to satisfy a need for short, light works in contrast to the full-length entertainment of the increasingly serious *opéra comique*. By this time, the "comique" part of the genre name had become misleading: *Carmen* (1875) is an example of an *opéra comique* with a tragic plot. The definition of "comique" meant something closer to "humanistic," meant to portray "real life" in a more realistic way, representing tragedy and comedy next to each other, as Shakespeare had done centuries earlier. With this new connotation, *opéra comique* had dominated the French operatic stage since the decline of *tragédie lyrique*.
- **Tragédie en musique** (Musical tragedy), also known as **tragédie lyrique** (French lyric tragedy), is a genre of French opera introduced by Jean-Baptiste Lully and used by his followers until the second half of the eighteenth century. Operas in this genre are usually based on stories from Classical mythology or the Italian romantic epics of Tasso and Ariosto. The stories may not have a tragic ending - in fact, they generally don't - but the atmosphere must be noble and elevated. The standard *tragédie en musique* has five acts. Earlier works in the genre were preceded by an allegorical prologue and, during the lifetime of Louis XIV, these generally celebrated the king's noble qualities and his prowess in war. Each of the five acts usually follows a basic pattern, opening with an aria in which one of the main characters expresses their feelings, followed by dialogue in recitative interspersed with short arias (*petits airs*), in which the main business of the plot occurs. Each act traditionally ends with a *divertissement*, offering great opportunities for the chorus and the ballet troupe. Composers sometimes changed the order of these features in an act for dramatic reasons.
- **Hervé** real name **Louis Auguste Florimond Ronger**, (1825–1892) was a French singer, composer, librettist, conductor and scene painter. Most researchers acknowledge that the credit for creating the operetta form in Paris should go to Hervé. In 1842 he wrote the little *opérette*, *L'Ours et le pacha*, based on the popular vaudeville show by Scribe and Saintine. In 1848, Hervé made his first notable appearance on the Parisian stage, with *Don Quichotte et Sancho Pança* (after Cervantes), which can be considered the starting point for the new French musical theatre tradition. Hervé's most famous works are the Gounod-parody *Le Petit Faust* (1869) and *Mam'zelle Nitouche* (1883).
- **Jacques Offenbach** (1819-1180) was a German-born French composer, cellist and impresario of the romantic period. Born in Cologne, the son of a synagogue cantor, Offenbach showed early musical talent. At the age of 14, he was accepted as a student at the Paris Conservatoire but found academic study unfulfilling and left after a year. He is remembered for his nearly 100 operettas of

the 1850s–1870s and his uncompleted opera *The Tales of Hoffmann*. He was a powerful influence on later composers of the operetta genre, particularly Johann Strauss, Jr. and Arthur Sullivan. His best-known works were continually revived during the 20th century, and many of his operettas continue to be staged in the 21st. *The Tales of Hoffman* remains part of the standard opera repertory. He developed and popularized operetta, giving it its enormous vogue during the Second Empire and afterwards. Offenbach's earliest one-act pieces included *Les deux aveugles*, *Le violoneux* and *Ba-ta-clan* (all 1855), and his first full-length operetta success was *Orphée aux enfers* (1858). These led to the so-called "Offenbachiade": works including *Geneviève de Brabant* 1859, *Le pont des soupirs* 1861, *La belle Hélène* 1864, *Barbe-bleue* and *La Vie parisienne* both 1866, *La Grande-Duchesse de Gérolstein* 1867, *La Périchole* 1868 and *Les brigands* 1869. Offenbach's tradition was then carried on by Robert Planquette, André Messager, and others.

- What characterizes Offenbach's operettas is both the grotesque way they portray life, and the extremely frivolous way this is done, often bordering on the pornographic. Émile Zola describes the back-stage and on-stage situation in the Théâtre des Variétés during the Second Empire in his novel *Nana*, which takes place in late 1860s and describes the career of operetta diva/courtesan Nana. The character was closely modeled after Offenbach's female star Hortense Schneider, and Offenbach's librettist Ludovic Halévy gave Émile Zola the details. Considering how Zola's *Nana* describes an Offenbach-style operetta performance in Paris, it is not surprising that the mostly male, upper-class audience crowded the various theaters every evening. Upper-class audiences in other cities like Vienna and Berlin longed to see these shows in their home towns as well, which inspired worldwide performance of Offenbach's works.
 - The highly erotic way Offenbach's operettas were originally played, with stars like Hortense Schneider created a scandalized reaction from certain parts of the general public. Operetta was considered a "frivolous" art form. Indeed, together with its grotesque qualities, frivolity is one of the defining elements of "authentic" operetta à la Offenbach and Hervé.
 - By his own reckoning, Offenbach composed more than 100 operas. Both the number and the noun are open to question: some works were so extensively revised that he evidently counted the revised versions as new, and commentators generally refer to all but a few of his stage works as operettas, rather than operas. Offenbach reserved the term *opérette* (English: operetta) or *opérette bouffe* for some of his one-act works, more often using the term *opéra-bouffe* for his full-length ones (though there are a number of one- and two-act examples of this type). It was only with the further development of the *Operette* genre in Vienna after 1870 that the French term *opérette* began to be used for works longer than one act.^[139] Offenbach also used the term *opéra-comique* for at least 24 of his works in either one, two or three acts.
 - Offenbach's earliest operettas were one-act pieces for small casts. More than 30 of these were presented before his first full-scale "*opéra bouffon*", *Orphée aux enfers*, in 1858, and he composed over 20 more of them during the rest of his career.^{[4][141]} Lamb, following the precedent of Henseler's 1930 study of the composer, divides the one-act pieces into five categories: "(i) country idylls; (ii) urban operettas; (iii) military operettas; (iv) farces; and (v) burlesques or parodies."^[142] Offenbach enjoyed his greatest success in the 1860s. His most popular operettas from the decade have remained among his best known.

- **Texts and word setting** The first ideas for plots usually came from Offenbach, with his librettists working on lines agreed with him. Lamb writes, "In this respect Offenbach was both well served and skilful at discovering talent. Like Sullivan, and unlike Johann Strauss II, he was consistently blessed with workable subjects and genuinely witty librettos."^[4] He took advantage of the rhythmic flexibility of the French language, but sometimes took this to extremes, forcing words into unnatural stresses.^[143] Harding comments that he "wrought much violence on the French language".^[144] A frequent characteristic of Offenbach's word setting was the nonsensical repetition of isolated syllables of words for comic effect; an example is the quintet for the kings in *La belle Hélène*: "Je suis l'époux de la reine/Poux de la reine/Poux de la reine" and "Le roi barbu qui s'avance/Bu qui s'avance/Bu qui s'avance."^[n 23]
- **Musical structure** In general, Offenbach followed simple, established forms. His melodies are usually short and unvaried in their basic rhythm, rarely, in Hughes's words, escaping "the despotism of the four-bar phrase".^[145] In modulation Offenbach was similarly cautious; he rarely switched a melody to a remote or unexpected key, and kept mostly to a tonic-dominant-subdominant pattern.^[146] Within these conventional limits, he employed greater resource in his varied use of rhythm; in a single number he would contrast rapid patten for one singer with a broad, smooth phrase for another, illustrating their different characters.^[146] Similarly, he often switched quickly between major and minor keys, effectively contrasting characters or situations.^[147] When he wished to, Offenbach could use unconventional techniques, such as the leitmotiv, used throughout to accompany the eponymous Docteur Ox (1877)^[148] and to parody Wagner in *La carnaval des revues* (1860).^[149]
- **Orchestration** In his early pieces for the Bouffes-Parisiens, the size of the orchestra pit had restricted Offenbach to an orchestra of 16 players.^[150] He composed for flute, oboe, clarinet, bassoon, two horns, piston, trombone, timpani and percussion and a small string section of seven players.^[151] After moving to the Salle Choiseul he had an orchestra of 30 players.^[151] The musicologist and Offenbach specialist Jean-Christophe Keck notes that when larger orchestras were available, either in bigger Paris theatres or in Vienna or elsewhere, Offenbach would compose, or rearrange existing music, accordingly. Surviving scores show his instrumentation for additional wind and brass, and even extra percussion. When they were available he wrote for cor anglais, harp, and, exceptionally, Keck records, an ophicleide (*Le Papillon*), tubular bells (*Le carnaval des revues*), and a wind machine (*Le voyage dans la lune*).^[151]
 - Hughes describes Offenbach's orchestration as "always skilful, often delicate, and occasionally subtle." He instances Pluton's song in *Orphée aux enfers*,^[n 24] introduced by a three-bar phrase for solo clarinet and solo bassoon in octaves immediately repeated on solo flute and solo bassoon an octave higher.^[152] In Keck's view, "Offenbach's orchestral scoring is full of details, elaborate counter-voices, minute interactions coloured by interjections of the woodwinds or brass, all of which establish a dialogue with the voices. His refinement of design equals that of Mozart or Rossini."
- **Compositional method** Offenbach often composed amidst noise and distractions. According to Keck, Offenbach would first make a note of melodies a libretto suggested to him in a notebook or straight onto the librettist's manuscript. Next using full score manuscript paper he wrote down vocal parts in the centre, then a piano accompaniment at the bottom possibly with notes on

orchestration. When Offenbach felt sure the work would be performed, he began full orchestration, often employing a codified system.

- **Parody and influences** Offenbach was well known for parodying other composers' music. Some of them saw the joke and others did not. Adam, Auber and Meyerbeer enjoyed Offenbach's parodies of their scores.^[53] Meyerbeer made a point of attending all Bouffes-Parisiens productions, always seated in Offenbach's private box.^[65] Among the composers who were not amused by Offenbach's parodies were Berlioz and Wagner.^[154] Offenbach mocked Berlioz's "strivings after the antique",^[155] and his initial light-hearted satire of Wagner's pretensions later hardened into genuine dislike.^[156] Berlioz reacted by bracketing Offenbach and Wagner together as "the product of the mad German mind",^[154] and Wagner, ignoring Berlioz, retaliated by writing some unflattering verses about Offenbach.^[154]
 - In general, Offenbach's parodistic technique was simply to play the original music in unexpected and incongruous circumstances. He slipped the banned revolutionary anthem *La Marseillaise* into the chorus of rebellious gods in *Orphée aux enfers*, and quoted the aria "Che farò" from Gluck's *Orfeo* in the same work; in *La belle Hélène* he quoted the patriotic trio from Rossini's *Guillaume Tell* and parodied himself in the ensemble for the kings of Greece, in which the accompaniment quotes the *rondeau* from *Orphée aux enfers*. In his one act pieces, Offenbach parodied Rossini's "Largo al factotum" and familiar arias by Bellini. In *Croquefer* (1857), one duet consists of quotations from Halévy's *La Juive* and Meyerbeer's *Robert le Diable* and *Les Huguenots*.^{[142][157]} Even in his later, less satirical period, he included a parodic quotation from Donizetti's *La fille du régiment* in *La fille du tambour-major*.
 - Other examples of Offenbach's use of incongruity are noted by the critic Paul Taylor: "In *La belle Hélène*, the kings of Greece denounce Paris as 'un vil séducteur' to a waltz tempo that is itself unsuitably seductive ... the potty-sounding phrase 'L'homme à la pomme' becomes the absurd nucleus of a big cod-ensemble."^[158] Another lyric set to absurdly ceremonious music is "Votre habit a craqué dans le dos" ("Your coat has split down the back") in *La vie parisienne*.^[15] The Grand Duchess of Gérolstein's rondo "Ah! Que j'aime les militaires" is rhythmically and melodically similar to the finale of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony, but it is not clear whether the similarity is parodic or coincidental.^[15]
 - In Offenbach's last decade, he took note of a change in public taste: a simpler, more romantic style was now preferred. Harding writes that Lecocq had successfully moved away from satire and parody, returning to "the genuine spirit of opéra-comique and its peculiarly French gaiety."^[144] Offenbach followed suit in a series of 20 operettas; the musician and writer Antonio de Almeida names the finest of these as *La fille du tambour-major* (1879).^[128]
- **Other works**
 - Offenbach's two serious operas, *Die Rheinnixen*, a failure, was not revived until the 21st century. His second attempt, *The Tales of Hoffmann*, was originally intended as a grand opera.^[160] When the work was accepted by Léon Carvalho for production at the Opéra-Comique, Offenbach agreed to make it an opéra comique with spoken dialogue. It was incomplete when he died;^[161] Faris speculates that, but for Georges Bizet's premature death, Bizet rather than Guiraud would have been asked to complete the piece and would have done so more satisfactorily.^[162] The critic Tim Ashley writes, "Stylistically, the opera reveals a remarkable amalgam of French and

German influences ... Weberian chorales preface Hoffmann's narrative. Olympia delivers a big coloratura aria straight out of French grand opera, while Antonia sings herself to death to music reminiscent of Schubert."

- Although he wrote ballet music for many of his operettas, Offenbach wrote only one ballet, *Le papillon*. The score was much praised for its orchestration, and it contained one number, the "Valse des rayons", that became an international success.^[163] Between 1836 and 1875 he composed several individual waltzes and polkas, and suites of dances.^[164] They include a waltz, *Abendblätter* ("Evening Papers") composed for Vienna with Johann Strauss's *Morgenblätter* ("Morning Papers") as a companion piece.^[165] Other orchestral compositions include a piece in 17th-century style with cello solo, which became a standard work of the cello repertoire. Little of Offenbach's non-operatic orchestral music has been regularly performed since his death.^[32]
- Offenbach composed more than 50 non-operatic songs between 1838 and 1854, most of them to French texts, by authors including Alfred de Musset, Théophile Gautier and Jean de La Fontaine, and also ten to German texts. Among the most popular of these songs was "À toi" (1843), dedicated to the young Hérminie d'Alcain as an early token of his love.^[166]
- **Arrangements** Although the overtures to *Orphée aux enfers* and *La belle Hélène* are well known and frequently recorded, the scores usually performed and recorded were not composed by Offenbach, but were arranged by Carl Binder and Eduard Haensch, respectively, for the Vienna premieres of the two works. Offenbach's own preludes are much shorter.^[167]
 - In 1938, Manuel Rosenthal assembled the popular ballet *Gaité Parisienne* from his own orchestral arrangements of melodies from Offenbach's stage works, and in 1953 the same composer assembled a symphonic suite, *Offenbachiana*, also from music by Offenbach.^[168] Jean-Christophe Keck regards the 1938 work as "no more than a vulgarly orchestrated pastiche";^[169] in Gammond's view, however, it does "full justice" to Offenbach.^[170]
- **Legacy and reputation**
 - The musician and author Fritz Spiegl wrote in 1980, "Without Offenbach there would have been no Savoy Opera ... no *Die Fledermaus* or *Merry Widow*."^[171] The two creators of the Savoy operas, the librettist, Gilbert, and the composer, Sullivan, were both indebted to Offenbach and his partners for their satiric and musical styles, even borrowing plot components.^[172] For example, Faris argues that the mock-oriental *Ba-ta-clan* influenced *The Mikado*, including its character names: Offenbach's Ko-ko-ri-ko and Gilbert's Ko-Ko;^[173] Faris also compares *Le pont des soupirs* (1861) and *The Gondoliers* (1889): "in both works there are choruses *à la barcarolle* for gondoliers and *contadini* [in] thirds and sixths; Offenbach has a Venetian admiral telling of his cowardice in battle; Gilbert and Sullivan have their Duke of Plaza-Toro who led his regiment from behind."^[93] Offenbach's *Les Géorgiennes* (1864), like Gilbert and Sullivan's *Princess Ida* (1884), depicts a female stronghold challenged by males in disguise.^{[174][n 25]} The best-known instance in which a Savoy opera draws on Offenbach's work is *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879), where both Gilbert and Sullivan follow the lead of *Les brigands* (1869) in their treatment of the police, plodding along ineffectually in heavy march-time.^[110] *Les brigands* was presented in London in 1871, 1873 and 1875; for the first of these, Gilbert made an English translation of Meilhac and Halévy's libretto.^[110]

- However much the young Sullivan was influenced by Offenbach,^[n 26] the influence was evidently not in only one direction. Hughes observes that two numbers in Offenbach's *Maitre Péronilla* (1878) bear "an astonishing resemblance" to "My name is John Wellington Wells" from Gilbert and Sullivan's *The Sorcerer* (1877).
- It is not clear how directly Offenbach influenced Johann Strauss. He had encouraged Strauss to turn to operetta when they met in Vienna in 1864, but it was not until seven years later that Strauss did so.^[179] However, Offenbach's operettas were well established in Vienna, and Strauss worked on the lines established by his French colleague; in 1870s Vienna, an operetta composer who did not do so was quickly called to order by the press.^[179] In Gammond's view, the Viennese composer most influenced by Offenbach was Franz von Suppé, who studied Offenbach's works carefully and wrote many successful operettas using them as a model.^[180]
- In his 1957 article, Lubbock wrote, "Offenbach is undoubtedly the most significant figure in the history of the 'musical,'" and traced the development of musical theatre from Offenbach to Irving Berlin and Rodgers and Hammerstein, via Franz Lehár, André Messager, Sullivan and Lionel Monckton.
- **Reputation**
 - During Offenbach's lifetime, and in the obituary notices in 1880, fastidious critics (dubbed "Musical Snobs Ltd" by Gammond) showed themselves at odds with public appreciation.^[181] In a 1980 article in *The Musical Times*, George Hauger commented that those critics not only underrated Offenbach, but wrongly supposed that his music would soon be forgotten.^[182] Although most critics of the time made that erroneous assumption, a few perceived Offenbach's unusual quality; in *The Times*, Francis Hueffer wrote, "none of his numerous Parisian imitators has ever been able to rival Offenbach at his best."^[183] Nevertheless, the paper joined in the general prediction: "It is very doubtful whether any of his works will survive."^[183] *The New York Times* shared this view: "That he had the gift of melody in a very extraordinary degree is not to be denied, but he wrote *currente calamo*,^[n 27] and the lack of development of his choicest inspirations will, it is to be feared, keep them from reaching even the next generation".^[184] After the posthumous production of *The Tales of Hoffmann*, *The Times* partially reconsidered its judgment, writing, "*Les Contes de Hoffmann* [will] confirm the opinion of those who regard him as a great composer in every sense of the word".^[131] It then lapsed into what Gammond calls "Victorian sanctimoniousness"^[185] by taking it for granted that the opera "will uphold Offenbach's fame long after his lighter compositions have passed out of memory."^[186]
 - The critic Sacheverell Sitwell compared Offenbach's lyrical and comic gifts to those of Mozart and Rossini.^[187] Friedrich Nietzsche called Offenbach both an "artistic genius" and a "clown", but wrote that "nearly every one" of Offenbach's works achieves half a dozen "moments of wanton perfection". Émile Zola commented on Offenbach and his work in a novel (*Nana*)^[188] and an essay, "La féerie et l'opérette IV/V".^[189] While granting that Offenbach's best operettas are full of grace, charm and wit, Zola blames Offenbach for what others have made out of the genre. Zola calls operetta a "public enemy" and a "monstrous beast". While some critics saw the satire in Offenbach's works as a social protest, an attack against the establishment, Zola saw the works as a homage to the social system in the Second Empire.^[189]

- Otto Klemperer was an admirer; late in life he reflected: "At the Kroll we did *La Périchole*. That's a really delightful score. So is *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *Belle Hélène*. Those who called him 'The Mozart of the Boulevards' were not much mistaken".^[190] Debussy, Bizet, Mussorgsky and Rimsky-Korsakov loved Offenbach's operettas.^[191] Debussy rated them higher than *The Tales of Hoffmann*: "The one work in which [Offenbach] tried to be serious met with no success."^[n 28] A London critic wrote, on Offenbach's death: I somewhere read that some of Offenbach's latest work shows him to be capable of more ambitious work. I, for one, am glad he did what he did, and only wish he had done more of the same.
- It was only later, when audiences widened and became more middle and lower class, that operetta became more "serious" and "nostalgic". Many of the originally pornographic French (and Viennese) operettas were later played in a toned-down, "classical" version, which is how audiences today are mostly presented with the genre — in an opera house with opera singers, rather than in a private theatre with courtesans in the lead roles.^[3]
- **Operetta in German**
- **Austria-Hungary**
- Johann Strauss II
- The most significant composer of operetta in the German language was the Austrian Johann Strauss II (1825–1899). His first operetta was *Indigo und die vierzig Räuber* (1871). His third operetta, *Die Fledermaus* (1874), became the most performed operetta in the world, and remains his most popular stage work. Its libretto was based on a comedy written by Offenbach's librettists.^[4] In all, Strauss wrote 16 operettas and one opera, most with great success when first premiered. Many of his lesser operettas are now largely forgotten, since his later librettists were less talented and he often composed independently of the plot.
- Strauss's operettas, waltzes, polkas, and marches often have a strongly Viennese style, and his popularity causes many to think of him as the national composer of Austria. The Theater an der Wien never failed to draw huge crowds when his stage works were first performed. After many of the numbers the audience would call noisily for encores.
- Franz von Suppé, a contemporary of Strauss, closely modeled his operettas after Offenbach. The Viennese tradition was carried on by Franz Lehár, Oscar Straus, Carl Zeller, Karl Millöcker, Leo Fall, Richard Heuberger, Edmund Eysler, Ralph Benatzky, Robert Stolz, Emmerich Kálmán and Nico Dostal in the 20th century.
- **Germany**
- In the same way that Vienna was the center of Austrian operetta, Berlin was the center of German operetta. Berlin operetta often had its own style, including, especially after World War I, elements of jazz and other syncopated dance rhythms, a transatlantic style, and the presence of ragged marching tunes. Berlin operettas also sometimes included aspects of burlesque, revue, farce, or cabaret.
- Paul Lincke, father of the Berlin operetta
- Paul Lincke pioneered the Berlin operetta in 1899 with *Frau Luna*, which includes "*Berliner Luft*" ("Berlin Air"),^[5] which became the unofficial anthem of Berlin. His *Lysistrata* (1902) includes the song and tune "The Glow-Worm", which remains quite popular internationally. Much later, in the

1920s and 1930s, Kurt Weill took a more extreme form of the Berlin operetta style and used it in his operas, operettas, and musicals.

- The Berlin-style operetta coexisted with more bourgeois, charming, home-loving, and nationalistic German operettas — some of which were called *Volksoperetten* (folk operettas). A prime example is Leon Jessel's extremely popular 1917 *Schwarzwaldmädel* (*Black Forest Girl*).^[6] These bucolic, nostalgic, home-loving operettas were officially preferred over Berlin-style operettas after 1933, when the Nazis came to power and instituted the *Reichsmusikkammer* (State Music Institute), which deprecated and banned "decadent" music like jazz and similar "foreign" musical forms.
- Notable German operetta composers include Paul Lincke, Eduard Künneke, Walter Kollo, Jean Gilbert, Leon Jessel, Rudolf Dellinger, and Walter Goetze.

- **Operetta in English**

- *H.M.S. Pinafore*

- English-language operettas were first composed in England in the 1860s^[dubious - discuss] — for example, Arthur Sullivan's *Cox and Box* (1866). Gilbert and Sullivan solidified the format in England with their long-running collaboration during the Victorian era. With W. S. Gilbert writing the libretti and Sullivan composing the music, the pair produced 14 comic operas, which were later called Savoy Operas. Most were enormously popular in Britain, the U.S., and elsewhere. Sullivan and Gilbert and their producer Richard D'Oyly Carte themselves call their joint works comic operas to distinguish this family-friendly fare from the risqué French operettas of the 1850s and 1860s.^[7] Their works, such as *H.M.S. Pinafore*, *The Pirates of Penzance* and *The Mikado*, continue to enjoy regular performances throughout the English-speaking world.^[8]

- English operetta continued into the 1890s, with works by composers such as Edward German, Ivan Caryll and Sydney Jones. These quickly evolved into the lighter song-and-dance pieces known as Edwardian musical comedy. Beginning in 1907, with *The Merry Widow*, many of the Viennese operettas were adapted very successfully for the English stage. Old-fashioned musicals in Britain retained an "operetta-ish" flavour, at least musically, into the 1950s.

- American operetta composers included Victor Herbert, whose works at the beginning of the 20th century were influenced by both Viennese operetta and Gilbert and Sullivan.^[9] He was followed by Sigmund Romberg and Rudolph Friml. More modern American operettas include Leonard Bernstein's *Candide*. Nevertheless, American operetta largely gave way, by the end of World War I, to musicals, such as the Princess Theatre musicals, and revues, followed by the musicals of Rodgers and Hart, Cole Porter, Irving Berlin and others.

- **Definitions**

- *Candide* has been performed as a Broadway musical, and as an operetta at New York City Opera and elsewhere.
- Operettas have similarities to both operas and musicals, and the boundaries between the genres are sometimes blurred. For instance, American composer Scott Joplin insisted that his serious but ragtime-influenced work *Treemonisha* (1911) was an opera, but some reference works characterize it as an operetta. Likewise, some of Leonard Bernstein's works he designated as operas (e.g., *Trouble in Tahiti*) are categorized as operettas, and his operetta *Candide* is sometimes considered a musical.

- **Operettas and operas**

- Operettas are usually shorter than operas, and are usually of a light and amusing character. Operettas are often considered less "serious" than operas.
- Topical satire is a feature common to many operettas. However, satire is used in some "serious" operas as well: Formerly, in countries such as France, operas expressed politics in code — for example, the circumstances of the title character in the opera *Robert le diable* referred, at its first performance, to the French king's parental conflict and its resolution.
- Normally some of the libretto of an operetta is spoken rather than sung. Instead of moving from one musical number to another, the musical segments — e.g. aria, recitative, chorus — are interspersed with periods of dialogue. There is usually no musical accompaniment to the dialogue, although sometimes some musical themes are played quietly under it. Short passages of recitative are, however, sometimes used in operetta, especially as an introduction to a song.
- **Operettas and musicals**
- The operetta is a precursor of the modern musical theatre or the "musical".^[10] In the early decades of the 20th century, the operetta continued to exist alongside the newer musical, with each influencing the other.
- The main difference between the two genres is that most operettas can be described as light operas with acting, whereas most musicals are plays with singing and dancing. This can be seen in the performers chosen in the two forms. An operetta's cast will normally consist of classically trained opera singers. A musical may use actors who are not operatically trained, and usually the principals are called upon to dance. These distinctions can be blurred: Ezio Pinza and other opera singers have appeared on Broadway. There are features of operetta in Kern and Hammerstein's *Show Boat* (1927), among others.^[11]
- The characters in a musical may be more complex than those in an operetta, given the generally larger amount of dialogue. For example, the characters in Lerner and Loewe's musical *My Fair Lady*, which is based on George Bernard Shaw's 1914 play *Pygmalion*, are essentially unchanged from those in Shaw's stage work, because the musical version is quite faithful to the original (except for the changed ending, which is pessimistic in the play), even to the point of retaining most of Shaw's dialogue. *Man of la Mancha*, adapted by Dale Wasserman from his own ninety-minute television play *I, Don Quixote*, retains much of the dialogue in that play, cutting only enough to make room for the musical numbers which were added when the play was converted into a stage musical.
- **Musical theatre** is a form of theatrical performance that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting, and dance. The story and emotional content of a musical – humor, pathos, love, anger – are communicated through the words, music, movement and technical aspects of the entertainment as an integrated whole. Although musical theatre overlaps with other theatrical forms like opera and dance, it may be distinguished by the equal importance given to the music as compared with the dialogue, movement and other elements. Since the early 20th century, musical theatre stage works have generally been called, simply, **musicals**.
- Although music has been a part of dramatic presentations since ancient times, modern Western musical theatre emerged during the 19th century, with many structural elements established by the works of Gilbert and Sullivan in Britain and those of Harrigan and Hart in America. These were followed by the numerous Edwardian musical comedies and the musical theatre works of

American creators like George M. Cohan. The Princess Theatre musicals and other smart shows like *Of Thee I Sing* (1931) were artistic steps forward beyond revues and other frothy entertainments of the early 20th century and led to such groundbreaking works as *Show Boat* (1927) and *Oklahoma!* (1943). Some of the most famous and iconic musicals through the decades that followed include *West Side Story* (1957), *The Fantasticks* (1960), *Hair* (1967), *A Chorus Line* (1975), *Les Misérables* (1985), *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986), *Rent* (1996), *The Producers* (2001) and *Wicked* (2003).

- Musicals are performed around the world. They may be presented in large venues, such as big-budget Broadway or West End productions in New York City or London. Alternatively, musicals may be staged in smaller fringe theatre, Off-Broadway or regional theatre productions, or on tour. Musicals are often presented by amateur and school groups in churches, schools and other performance spaces. In addition to the United States and Britain, there are vibrant musical theatre scenes in continental Europe, Asia, Australasia, Canada and Latin America.
- **Book musicals**
- *A Gaiety Girl* (1893) was one of the first hit musicals
- Since the 20th century, the "book musical" has been defined as a musical play where songs and dances are fully integrated into a well-made story with serious dramatic goals that is able to evoke genuine emotions other than laughter.^{[2][3]} The three main components of a book musical are its *music*, *lyrics* and *book*. The book or script of a musical refers to the story, character development, and dramatic structure, including the spoken dialogue and stage directions, but it can also refer to the dialogue and lyrics together, which are sometimes referred to as the *libretto* (Italian for "little book"). The music and lyrics together form the *score* of a musical but the interpretation of a musical by its creative team heavily influences the way in which a musical is presented. That team includes a director, a musical director, usually a choreographer and sometimes an orchestrator. A musical's production is also creatively characterized by technical aspects, such as set design, costumes, stage properties (props), lighting and sound, which generally change from the original production to succeeding productions. Some famous production elements, however, may be retained from the original production; for example, Bob Fosse's choreography in *Chicago*.
- There is no fixed length for a musical. While it can range from a short one-act entertainment to several acts and several hours in length (or even a multi-evening presentation), most musicals range from one and a half to three hours. Musicals are usually presented in two acts, with one short intermission and the first act frequently longer than the second. The first act generally introduces nearly all of the characters and most of the music, and often ends with the introduction of a dramatic conflict or plot complication while the second act may introduce a few new songs but usually contains reprises of important musical themes and resolves the conflict or complication. A book musical is usually built around four to six main theme tunes that are reprised later in the show, although it sometimes consists of a series of songs not directly musically related. Spoken dialogue is generally interspersed between musical numbers, although "sung dialogue" or recitative may be used, especially in so-called "sung-through" musicals such as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Les Misérables*, and *Evita*. Several shorter musicals on Broadway and in the West End have been presented in one act in recent decades.
- Moments of greatest dramatic intensity in a book musical are often performed in song. Proverbially, "when the emotion becomes too strong for speech you sing; when it becomes too

strong for song, you dance." In a book musical, a song is ideally crafted to suit the character (or characters) and their situation within the story; although there have been times in the history of the musical (e.g. from the 1890s to the 1920s) when this integration between music and story has been tenuous. As *New York Times* critic Ben Brantley described the ideal of song in theatre when reviewing the 2008 revival of *Gypsy*: "There is no separation at all between song and character, which is what happens in those uncommon moments when musicals reach upward to achieve their ideal reasons to be."^[4] Typically, many fewer words are sung in a five-minute song than are spoken in a five-minute block of dialogue. Therefore, there is less time to develop drama in a musical than in a straight play of equivalent length, since a musical usually devotes more time to music than to dialogue. Within the compressed nature of a musical, the writers must develop the characters and the plot.

- The material presented in a musical may be original, or it may be adopted or born from novels (*Wicked* and *Man of La Mancha*), plays (*Hello, Dolly!*), classic legends (*Camelot*), historical events (*Evita*) or films (*The Producers* and *Billy Elliot*). On the other hand, many successful musical theatre works have been adapted for musical films, such as *The Sound of Music*, *West Side Story*, *My Fair Lady* and *Chicago*.
- **Comparisons with opera**
- George Gershwin
- Musical theatre is closely related to the theatrical form of opera, but the two are usually distinguished by weighing a number of factors. Musicals generally have a greater focus on spoken dialogue (though some musicals are entirely accompanied and sung through; and on the other hand, some operas, such as *Die Zauberflöte*, and most operettas, have some unaccompanied dialogue); on dancing (particularly by the principal performers as well as the chorus); on the use of various genres of popular music (or at least popular singing styles); and on the avoidance of certain operatic conventions. In particular, a musical is almost always performed in the language of its audience. Musicals produced in London or New York, for instance, are invariably sung in English, even if they were originally written in another language (e.g. *Les Misérables* was originally written in French). While an opera singer is primarily a singer and only secondarily an actor (and rarely needs to dance), a musical theatre performer is often an actor first and then a singer and dancer. Someone who is equally accomplished at all three is referred to as a "triple threat". Composers of music for musicals often consider the vocal demands of roles with musical theatre performers in mind. Today, large theatres staging musicals generally use amplification of the actors' singing voices in a way that would generally be disapproved of in an operatic context.
- Some works (e.g. by George Gershwin, Leonard Bernstein and Stephen Sondheim) have received both "musical theatre" and "operatic" productions.^{[5][6]} Similarly, some older operettas or light operas (such as *The Pirates of Penzance* by Gilbert and Sullivan) have had modern productions or adaptations that treat them as musicals. For some works, production styles are almost as important as the work's musical or dramatic content in defining into which art form the piece falls.^[7] Sondheim said, "I really think that when something plays Broadway it's a musical, and when it plays in an opera house it's opera. That's it. It's the terrain, the countryside, the expectations of the audience that make it one thing or another."^[8] Although this article primarily concerns musical theatre works that are "non-operatic", the overlap remains between lighter operatic forms and

more musically complex or ambitious musicals. In practice, it is often difficult to distinguish among the various kinds of musical theatre, including "musical play", "musical comedy", "operetta" and "light opera".

- **Other forms**

- Chinese Opera

- There are various Eastern traditions of theatre that include music, such as Chinese Opera, Taiwanese opera, Noh and Musical theatre in India, including Sanskrit drama, Classical Indian dance and Yakshagana.^[9] India has, since the 20th century, produced numerous musical films, referred to as "Bollywood" musicals, and in Japan a series of musicals based on popular Anime and Manga comics has developed in recent decades. Shorter or simplified "junior" versions of many musicals are available for schools and youth groups, and very short works created or adapted for performance by children are sometimes called minimusicals.^{[10][11]}

- **History**

- **Antecedents of musical theatre**

- ***Antiquity to Middle Ages***

- The antecedents of musical theatre in Europe can be traced back to the theatre of ancient Greece, where music and dance were included in stage comedies and tragedies during the 5th century BCE.^[12] The dramatists Aeschylus and Sophocles composed their own music to accompany their plays and choreographed the dances of the chorus. The 3rd-century BCE Roman comedies of Plautus included song and dance routines performed with orchestrations. The Romans also introduced technical innovations. For example, to make dance steps more audible in large open air theatres, Roman actors attached metal chips called *sabilla* to their stage footwear, creating the first tap shoes.^[13] By the Middle Ages, theatre in Europe consisted mostly of travelling minstrels and small performing troupes of performers singing and offering slapstick comedy.^[14] In the 12th and 13th centuries, religious dramas, such as *The Play of Herod* and *The Play of Daniel* taught the liturgy, set to church chants. Later "mystery plays" were created that told a biblical story in a sequence of entertaining parts. Several pageant wagons (stages on wheels) would move about the city, and a group of actors would tell their part of the story. Once finished, the group would move on with their wagon, and the next group would arrive to tell its part of the story. These plays developed into an autonomous form of musical theatre, with poetic forms sometimes alternating with the prose dialogues and liturgical chants. The poetry was provided with modified or completely new melodies.^[15]

- ***Renaissance to the 1800s***

- A view of Rhodes by John Webb, to be painted on a backshutter for the first performance of *The Siege of Rhodes* (1856)
- The European Renaissance saw older forms evolve into commedia dell'arte, an Italian tradition where raucous clowns improvised their way through familiar stories, and later, opera buffa. In England, Elizabethan and Jacobean plays frequently included music, with performances on organs, lutes, viols and pipes for up to an hour before and during the performance.^[16] Plays, perhaps particularly the heavier histories and tragedies, were frequently broken up with a short musical play, perhaps derived from the Italian intermezzo, with music, jokes and dancing, or were followed by an afterpiece known as a jigg, often consisting of scandalous or libellous dialogue set to popular

tunes (anticipating the Ballad Opera).^[17] Court masques also developed during the Tudor period that involved music, dancing, singing and acting, often with expensive costumes and a complex stage design, sometimes by a renowned architect such as Inigo Jones, presented a deferential allegory flattering to a noble or royal patron.^[18] Ben Jonson wrote many masques, often collaborating with Jones. William Shakespeare often included masque-like sections in his plays.^[19]

- The musical sections of masques developed into sung plays that are recognizable as English operas, the first usually being thought of as William Davenant's *The Siege of Rhodes* (1656), originally given in a private performance.^[20] In France, meanwhile, Molière turned several of his farcical comedies into musical entertainments with songs (music provided by Jean Baptiste Lully) and dance in the late 17th century. His *Psyche* was the model for an English opera by Thomas Shadwell, *The Miser* produced in 1672.^[21] Davenant produced *The Tempest* in 1667, which was the first Shakespeare plot set to music, and was then adapted by Shadwell into an opera in 1674 (composed by Matthew Locke and others).^[21] About 1683, John Blow composed *Venus and Adonis*, often considered the first true English-language opera.^[22] Blow was followed by Henry Purcell and a brief period of English opera. After the death of Charles II in 1685, English opera began to fall out of fashion.^[20]
- A William Hogarth painting based on *The Beggar's Opera* (c. 1728)
- By the 18th century, two forms of musical theatre were popular in Britain: ballad operas, like John Gay's *The Beggar's Opera* (1728), that included lyrics written to the tunes of popular songs of the day (often spoofing opera), and comic operas, with original scores and mostly romantic plot lines, like Michael Balfe's *The Bohemian Girl* (1845). Meanwhile, on the continent, singspiel, comédie en vaudeville, opéra comique and other forms of light musical entertainment were emerging. Other musical theatre forms developed by the 19th century, such as music hall, melodrama, burlesque and vaudeville. Melodramas and burlettas, in particular, were popularized partly because most London theatres were licensed only as music halls and not allowed to present plays without music. In any event, what a piece was called did not necessarily define what it was. The Broadway extravaganza *The Magic Deer* (1852) advertised itself as "A Serio Comico Tragico Operatical Historical Extravaganzical Burletical Tale of Enchantment."^[14]
- The first recorded long-running play of any kind was *The Beggar's Opera*, which ran for 62 successive performances in 1728. It would take almost a century before the first play broke 100 performances, with *Tom and Jerry*, based on the book *Life in London* (1821), and the record soon reached 150 in the late 1820s.^[23] Colonial America did not have a significant theatre presence until 1752, when London entrepreneur William Hallam sent a company of twelve actors to the colonies with his brother Lewis as their manager.^[24] They established a theatre in Williamsburg, Virginia and opened with *The Merchant of Venice* and *The Anatomist*. The company moved to New York in the summer of 1753, performing ballad-operas such as *The Beggar's Opera* and ballad-farces like *Damon and Phillida*.^[24] By the 1840s, P.T. Barnum was operating an entertainment complex in lower Manhattan.^[25] Theatre in New York moved from downtown gradually to midtown from around 1850, seeking less expensive real estate prices, and did not arrive in the Times Square area until the 1920s and 1930s. Broadway's first "long-run" musical was a 50 performance hit called *The Elves* in 1857. New York runs continued to lag far behind those in London, but Laura Keane's "musical burletta" *Seven Sisters* (1860) shattered previous New York records with a run of 253 performances.^[26]

- **Development of musical comedy**

- **1850s to 1880s**

- Around 1850, the French composer Hervé was experimenting with a form of comic musical theatre that came to be called opérette.^[27] The best known composers of operetta were Jacques Offenbach from the 1850s to the 1870s and Johann Strauss II in the 1870s and 1880s. Offenbach's fertile melodies, combined with his librettists' witty satire, formed a model for the musical theatre that followed. In 1957, Mark Lubbock traced the development of musical theatre from Offenbach to Gilbert and Sullivan and eventually to Irving Berlin and Rodgers and Hammerstein, writing: "Offenbach is undoubtedly the most significant figure in the history of the 'musical'."^[28] In the mid-19th century in England, musical theatre consisted of mostly of music hall, adaptations of the French operettas (played in bad, risqué translations) and musical burlesques (the culmination of which were seen at the Gaiety Theatre beginning in 1868). In reaction to these, a few family-friendly entertainments were created, such as the German Reed Entertainments.^[29]
- In America, the first original theatre piece in English that conforms to the modern conception of a musical, adding dance and original music that helped to tell the story, is generally considered *The Black Crook*, which premiered in New York on September 12, 1866. The production was a staggering five-and-a-half hours long, but despite its length, it ran for a record-breaking 474 performances. The same year, *The Black Domino/Between You, Me and the Post* was the first show to call itself a "musical comedy." Comedians Edward Harrigan and Tony Hart produced and starred in musicals on Broadway between 1878 (*The Mulligan Guard Picnic*) and 1885, with book and lyrics by Harrigan and music by his father-in-law David Braham. These musical comedies featured characters and situations taken from the everyday life of New York's lower classes and represented a significant step from burletta, minstrel shows, music hall and burlesque, towards a more legitimate theatrical form. They starred high quality singers (Lillian Russell, Vivienne Segal, and Fay Templeton) instead of the ladies of questionable repute who had starred in earlier musical forms.
- The length of runs in the theatre changed rapidly around the same time that the modern musical emerged. As transportation improved, poverty in London and New York diminished, and street lighting made for safer travel at night, the number of potential patrons for the growing number of theatres increased enormously. Plays could run longer and still draw in the audiences, leading to better profits and improved production values. The first play to achieve 500 consecutive performances was the London (non-musical) comedy *Our Boys*, opening in 1875, which set an astonishing new record of 1,362 performances.^[23] This run was not equaled on the musical stage until World War I, but musical theatre soon broke the 500 performance mark in London, most notably by the series of more than a dozen long-running Gilbert and Sullivan family-friendly comic opera hits, including *H.M.S. Pinafore* in 1878 and *The Mikado* in 1885. These were sensations on both sides of the Atlantic^[30] and, along with the other changes in the theatre, raised the standard for what was considered a successful run. Only a few 19th century musical pieces exceeded the run of the Mikado: *The Chimes of Normandy (Les Cloches de Corneville)* ran for 705 performances in 1878 in London, and Alfred Cellier and B. C. Stephenson's 1886 hit, *Dorothy* (a show midway between comic opera and musical comedy), set a new record with 931 performances.

- Gilbert and Sullivan's influence on later musical theatre was profound, creating examples of how to "integrate" musicals so that the lyrics and dialogue were designed to advance a coherent story.^{[31][32]} Their works were admired and copied by early authors and composers of musicals such as Ivan Caryll, Lionel Monckton, P. G. Wodehouse,^{[33][34]} and Victor Herbert, and later Jerome Kern, Ira Gershwin, Lorenz Hart, Alan Jay Lerner,^[30] Yip Harburg,^[35] Irving Berlin, Ivor Novello, Oscar Hammerstein II and Andrew Lloyd Webber.^[36] Other British composers of the 1870s and 1880s included Edward Solomon and F. Osmond Carr. The most popular British shows, beginning with the Savoy operas, also enjoyed profitable New York productions and tours of Britain, America, Europe, Australasia and South Africa. These shows were fare for "respectable" audiences, a marked contrast from the risqué burlesques, melodramas, minstrel shows, bawdy music hall shows and French operettas that dominated the stage prior to Gilbert and Sullivan and drew a sometimes seedy crowd looking for less wholesome entertainment.^[29]
- **1890s to the new century**
- Charles Hoyt's *A Trip to Chinatown* (1891) was Broadway's long-run champion (until *Irene* in 1919), running for 657 performances. Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operas were both pirated and imitated in New York by productions such as Reginald de Koven's *Robin Hood* (1891) and John Philip Sousa's *El Capitan* (1896). *A Trip to Coontown* (1898) was the first musical comedy entirely produced and performed by African Americans in a Broadway theatre (largely inspired by the routines of the minstrel shows), followed by the ragtime-tinged *Clorindy, or the Origin of the Cakewalk* (1898), and the highly successful *In Dahomey* (1902). Hundreds of musical comedies were staged on Broadway in the 1890s and early 20th century composed of songs written in New York's Tin Pan Alley by composers such as Gus Edwards, John Walter Bratton and George M. Cohan (*Little Johnny Jones* (1904)). Still, New York runs continued to be relatively short, with a few exceptions, compared with London runs, until the 1920s.^[23] Tours, however, were often extensive, beginning with the original Broadway cast.^[37]
- Meanwhile, musicals had spread to the London stage by the Gay Nineties. George Edwardes had left the management of Richard D'Oyly Carte's Savoy Theatre. He took over the Gaiety Theatre and, at first, he improved the quality of the old burlesques. He perceived that audiences wanted a new alternative to the Savoy-style comic operas and their intellectual, political, absurdist satire. He experimented with a modern-dress, family-friendly musical theatre style, with breezy, popular songs, snappy, romantic banter, and stylish spectacle at the Gaiety, Daly's Theatre and other venues. These drew on the traditions of comic opera and also used elements of burlesque and of the Harrigan and Hart pieces. He replaced the bawdy women of burlesque with his "respectable" corps of dancing, singing Gaiety Girls to complete the musical and visual fun. The success of the first of these, *In Town* in 1892 and *A Gaiety Girl* in 1893, confirmed Edwardes on the path he was taking. These "musical comedies", as he called them, revolutionized the London stage and set the tone for the next three decades.
- Edwardes' early Gaiety hits included a series of light, romantic "poor maiden loves aristocrat and wins him against all odds" shows, usually with the word "Girl" in the title, including *The Shop Girl* (1894) and *A Runaway Girl* (1898), with music by Ivan Caryll and Lionel Monckton. These shows were immediately widely copied at other London theatres (and soon in America), and the

Edwardian musical comedy swept away the earlier musical forms of comic opera and operetta. At Daly's Theatre, Edwardes presented slightly more complex comedy hits. *The Geisha* (1896) by Sidney Jones with lyrics by Harry Greenbank and Adrian Ross and then Jones' *San Toy* (1899) each ran for more than two years and also found great international success, for example in Australian productions by J. C. Williamson.

- The British musical comedy *Florodora* (1899) by Leslie Stuart and Paul Rubens made a splash on both sides of the Atlantic, as did *A Chinese Honeymoon* (1901), by British lyricist George Dance and American-born composer Howard Talbot, which ran for a record setting 1,074 performances in London and 376 in New York. The story concerns couples who honeymoon in China and inadvertently break the kissing laws (shades of *The Mikado*). *The Belle of New York* (1898) ran for 697 performances in London after a brief New York run, becoming the first American musical to run for over a year in London. After the turn of the 20th century, Seymour Hicks (who joined forces with American producer Charles Frohman) wrote popular shows with composer Charles Taylor and others, and Edwardes and Ross continued to churn out hits like *The Toreador* (1901), *A Country Girl* (1902), *The Orchid* (1903), *The Girls of Gottenberg* (1907) and *Our Miss Gibbs* (1909). Other Edwardian musical comedy hits included *The Arcadians* (1909) and *The Quaker Girl* (1910).^[38]
- **Operetta and World War I**
- Virtually eliminated from the English-speaking stage by competition from the ubiquitous Edwardian musical comedies in the 1890s, operettas returned to London and Broadway in 1907 with *The Merry Widow*, and operettas and musicals became direct competitors for a time. In the early years of the 20th century, English-language adaptations of 19th century continental operettas, as well as operettas by a new generation of European composers, such as Franz Lehár and Oscar Straus, among others, spread throughout the English-speaking world. In America, Victor Herbert produced a string of famous operettas (*The Fortune Teller* (1898), *Babes in Toyland* (1903), *Mlle. Modiste* (1905), *The Red Mill* (1906) and *Naughty Marietta* (1910)), often with librettist Harry B. Smith, as well as some intimate musical plays with modern settings. In English-speaking countries, during World War I, German-language operetta lost its popularity.^[39]
- Among other British and American composers and librettists of the 1910s, the team of P. G. Wodehouse, Guy Bolton and Jerome Kern stood out. Following in the footsteps of Gilbert and Sullivan, their "Princess Theatre shows" paved the way for Kern's later work by showing that a musical could combine light, popular entertainment with continuity between its story and songs:^[31]
- "These shows built and polished the mold from which almost all later major musical comedies evolved. ... The characters and situations were, within the limitations of musical comedy license, believable and the humor came from the situations or the nature of the characters. Kern's exquisitely flowing melodies were employed to further the action or develop characterization. The integration of song and story is periodically announced as a breakthrough in ... musical theater. Great opera has always done this, and it is easy to demonstrate such integration in Gilbert and Sullivan or the French opera bouffe. However, early musical comedy was often guilty of inserting songs in a hit-or-miss fashion. The Princess Theatre musicals brought about a change in approach.

P. G. Wodehouse, the most observant, literate, and witty lyricist of his day, and the team of Bolton, Wodehouse, and Kern had an influence felt to this day.^[40]

- The theatre-going public needed escapist entertainment during the dark times of World War I, and they flocked to the theatre. Harry Tierney and Joseph McCarthy's 1919 hit musical *Irene* ran for 670 performances, a Broadway record that held until 1938's *Hellzapoppin*. The British public supported far longer runs like that of *Maid of the Mountains* (1,352 performances) and especially *Chu Chin Chow*. Its run of 2,238 performances was more than twice as many as any previous musical, setting a record that stood for nearly forty years until *Salad Days*. Revues like *The Bing Boys Are Here* in Britain, and those of Florenz Ziegfeld and his imitators in America, were also extraordinarily popular. A new generation of composers of operettas emerged in the 1920s, such as Rudolf Friml and Sigmund Romberg.^[14]
- The primacy of British musical theatre from the 19th century through 1920 was gradually replaced by American innovation in the 20th century. Edwardes' competitor and counterpart in the U.S. was Charles Frohman and his Theatrical Syndicate. George M. Cohan's and Herbert's musical entertainments after the turn of the century gave way to the Princess Theatre shows and a profusion of other musicals as Kern and other Tin Pan Alley composers began to bring new musical styles such as ragtime and jazz to the theatres. The Shubert Brothers took control of the Broadway theatres after the war as new writers like the Gershwin brothers (George and Ira), Irving Berlin and Rodgers and Hart began to produce shows. Musical theatre writer Andrew Lamb notes, "The triumph of American works over European in the first decades of the twentieth century came about against a changing social background. The operatic and theatrical styles of nineteenth-century social structures were replaced by a musical style more aptly suited to twentieth-century society and its vernacular idiom. It was from America that the more direct style emerged, and in America that it was able to flourish in a developing society less hidebound by nineteenth-century tradition."^[41]
- **The Roaring Twenties and the Great Depression**
- The musicals of the Roaring Twenties, borrowing from vaudeville, music hall and other light entertainments, tended to emphasize star actors and actresses, big dance routines, and popular songs, at the expense of plot. Typical of the decade were lighthearted productions like *Sally*; *Lady Be Good*; *Sunny*; *No, No, Nanette*; *Oh, Kay!* and *Funny Face*. While the books of these shows may have been forgettable, they featured stars such as Marilyn Miller and Fred Astaire and produced dozens of enduring popular songs ("standards") by, most notably, Jerome Kern, the Gershwin brothers, Irving Berlin, Cole Porter, Vincent Youmans, and the team of Richard Rodgers and Lorenz Hart. Throughout the first half of the 20th century, popular music was dominated by musical theatre composers and lyricists. These musicals and the standards they produced, including "Fascinating Rhythm", "Tea for Two" and "Someone to Watch Over Me", became popular on both sides of the Atlantic ocean.
- Many shows were revues, series of sketches and songs with little or no connection between them. The best-known of these were the annual *Ziegfeld Follies*, spectacular song-and-dance revues on Broadway featuring extravagant sets, elaborate costumes, and beautiful chorus girls. These spectacles also raised production values, and mounting a musical generally became more expensive. *Shuffle Along*, an all-African American show was a hit on Broadway.^[42] In London, stars

such as Ivor Novello and Noël Coward became popular. Meanwhile, operettas, which had been nearly absent from the English-speaking stage since World War I, had a last burst of popularity; works by continental European composers were successful, as were those by Sigmund Romberg and Rudolf Friml in America, which included *Rose-Marie* and *The Student Prince* respectively. The last hit operetta of the era on Broadway was Romberg's *The New Moon* in 1928.^[43]

- Progressing far beyond the comparatively frivolous musicals and sentimental operettas of the decade, *Show Boat*, which premiered on December 27, 1927 at the Ziegfeld Theatre in New York, represented an even more complete integration of book and score than the Princess Theatre musicals, with dramatic themes told through the music, dialogue, setting and movement. This was accomplished by combining the lyricism of Kern's music with the skillful craft of Oscar Hammerstein II, who adapted Edna Ferber's novel and wrote lyrics for the show. One historian wrote, "Here we come to a completely new genre – the musical play as distinguished from musical comedy. Now ... the play was the thing, and everything else was subservient to that play. Now ... came complete integration of song, humor and production numbers into a single and inextricable artistic entity."^[44] However, Bordman argues, "*Show Boat* is certainly an operetta with its many arioso passages, its musical depth and seriousness, and its romantic story set, in typical operetta fashion, in the long ago and far away."^[40] Nevertheless, as the Great Depression set in during the post-Broadway national tour of *Show Boat*, the public turned back to light, brassy, escapist entertainment, and no follow-up was produced so seriously treating serious social themes until *Oklahoma!* in 1943.^[40]
- The motion picture mounted a challenge to the stage. At first, films were silent and presented only limited competition to theatre. But by the end of the 1920s, films like *The Jazz Singer* could be presented with synchronized sound. "Talkie" films at low prices effectively killed off vaudeville by the early 1930s. Historian John Kenrick commented: "Top vaudeville stars filmed their acts for one-time pay-offs, inadvertently helping to speed the death of vaudeville. After all, when 'small time' theatres could offer 'big time' performers on screen at a nickel a seat, who could ask audiences to pay higher amounts for less impressive live talent?"^[45]
- **1930s**
- The Great Depression affected theatre audiences on both sides of the Atlantic, as people had little money to spend on entertainment. Only a few stage shows exceeded a run on Broadway or in London of 500 performances during the decade.
- Many shows continued the lighthearted song-and-dance style of their 1920s predecessors. The revue *The Band Wagon* (1931) starred dancing partners Fred Astaire and his sister Adele, while Cole Porter's *Anything Goes* (1934) confirmed Ethel Merman's position as the First Lady of musical theatre, a title she maintained for many years. British writers such as Noël Coward and Ivor Novello continued to deliver old fashioned, sentimental musicals, such as *The Dancing Years*. Similarly, Rodgers & Hart returned from Hollywood to churn out a series of Broadway hits, including *On Your Toes* (1936, with Ray Bolger, the first Broadway musical to make dramatic use of classical dance), *Babes In Arms* (1937), and *The Boys From Syracuse* (1938), and Cole Porter wrote a similar string of hits, including *Anything Goes* (1934) and *DuBarry Was a Lady* (1939). The longest-running piece of musical theatre of the 1930s was *Hellzapoppin* (1938), a revue with

audience participation, which played for 1,404 performances, setting a new Broadway record that was finally beaten by *Oklahoma!* five years later.

- However, a few creative teams began to build on *Show Boat's* innovations, experimenting with musical satire, topical books and operatic scope. *Of Thee I Sing* (1931), a political satire with music by George Gershwin and lyrics by Ira Gershwin and Morrie Ryskind, was the first musical awarded the Pulitzer Prize.^[46] *As Thousands Cheer* (1933), a revue by Irving Berlin and Moss Hart in which each song or sketch was based on a newspaper headline, marked the first Broadway show in which an African-American, Ethel Waters, starred alongside white actors. Waters' numbers included "Supper Time", a woman's lament for her husband who has been lynched.^[47] *Porgy and Bess* (1935), by the Gershwin brothers and DuBose Heyward, featured an all African-American cast and blended operatic, folk, and jazz idioms. It has entered the permanent opera repertory and, in some respects, it foreshadowed such "operatic" musicals as *West Side Story* and *Sweeney Todd*. *The Cradle Will Rock* (1937), with a book and score by Marc Blitzstein and direction by Orson Welles, was a highly political pro-union piece that, despite the controversy surrounding it, managed to run for 108 performances. Richard Rodgers and Larry Hart's *I'd Rather Be Right* (1937) was a political satire with George M. Cohan as President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and Kurt Weill's *Knickerbocker Holiday*, based on source writings by Washington Irving, depicted New York City's early history while good-naturedly satirizing the good intentions of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.
- Despite the economic woes of the decade and the competition from film, the musical survived. In fact, the move towards political satire in *Of Thee I Sing*, *I'd Rather Be Right* and *Knickerbocker Holiday*, together with the musical sophistication of the Gershwin, Kern, Rodgers and Weill musicals and the fast-paced staging and naturalistic dialogue style created by director George Abbott, showed that musical theatre was beginning to evolve beyond the gags and showgirls musicals of the *Gay Nineties* and *Roaring Twenties* and the sentimental romance of operetta.
- **The Golden Age (1940s to 1960s)**
- **1940s**
- The 1940s would begin with more hits from Porter, Irving Berlin, Rodgers and Hart, Weill and Gershwin, some with runs over 500 performances as the economy rebounded, but artistic change was in the air.
- Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* completed the revolution begun by *Show Boat*, by tightly integrating all the aspects of musical theatre, with a cohesive plot, songs that furthered the action of the story, and featured dream ballets and other dances that advanced the plot and developed the characters, rather than using dance as an excuse to parade scantily clad women across the stage.^[3] Rodgers and Hammerstein hired ballet choreographer Agnes de Mille, who used everyday motions to help the characters express their ideas. It defied musical conventions by raising its first act curtain not on a bevy of chorus girls, but rather on a woman churning butter, with an off-stage voice singing the opening lines of *Oh, What a Beautiful Mornin'* unaccompanied. It drew rave reviews, set off a box-office frenzy and received a Pulitzer Prize. Brooks Atkinson wrote in *The New York Times* that the show's opening number changed the history of musical theater: "After a verse like that, sung to a buoyant melody, the banalities of the old musical stage became intolerable."^[48] It was the first "blockbuster" Broadway show, running a total of 2,212 performances, and was made into a hit film. It remains one of the most frequently produced of the team's projects. William

A. Everett and Paul R. Laird wrote that this was a "show, that, like *Show Boat*, became a milestone, so that later historians writing about important moments in twentieth-century theatre would begin to identify eras according to their relationship to *Oklahoma!*"^[49]

- "After *Oklahoma!*, Rodgers and Hammerstein were the most important contributors to the musical-play form... The examples they set in creating vital plays, often rich with social thought, provided the necessary encouragement for other gifted writers to create musical plays of their own".^[44] The two collaborators created an extraordinary collection of some of musical theatre's best loved and most enduring classics, including *Carousel* (1945), *South Pacific* (1949), *The King and I* (1951), and *The Sound of Music* (1959). Some of these musicals treat more serious subject matter than most earlier shows: the villain in *Oklahoma!* is a suspected murderer and psychopath with a fondness for lewd post cards; *Carousel* deals with spousal abuse, thievery, suicide and the afterlife; *South Pacific* explores miscegenation even more thoroughly than *Show Boat*; and the hero of *The King and I* dies onstage.
- The show's creativity stimulated Rodgers and Hammerstein's contemporaries and ushered in the "Golden Age" of American musical theatre.^[48] Americana was displayed on Broadway during the "Golden Age", as the wartime cycle of shows began to arrive. An example of this is *On the Town* (1944), written by Betty Comden and Adolph Green, composed by Leonard Bernstein and choreographed by Jerome Robbins. The story is set during wartime and concerns three sailors who are on a 24 hour shore leave in New York City, during which each falls in love. The show also gives the impression of a country with an uncertain future, as the sailors and their women also have. Irving Berlin used sharpshooter Annie Oakley's career as a basis for his *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946, 1,147 performances); Burton Lane, E. Y. Harburg, and Fred Saisy combined political satire with Irish whimsy for their fantasy *Finian's Rainbow* (1947, 725 performances); and Cole Porter found inspiration in William Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew* for *Kiss Me, Kate* (1948, 1,077 performances). The American musicals overwhelmed the old-fashioned British Coward/Novello-style shows, one of the last big successes of which was Novello's *Perchance to Dream* (1945, 1,021 performances). The formula for the Golden Age musicals reflected one or more of four widely held perceptions of the "American dream": That stability and worth derives from a love relationship sanctioned and restricted by Protestant ideals of marriage; that a married couple should make a moral home with children away from the city in a suburb or small town; that the woman's function was as homemaker and mother; and that Americans incorporate an independent and pioneering spirit or that their success is self-made.^[50]
- **1950s**
- Damon Runyon's eclectic characters were at the core of Frank Loesser's and Abe Burrows' *Guys and Dolls*, (1950, 1,200 performances); and the Gold Rush was the setting for Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe's *Paint Your Wagon* (1951). The relatively brief seven-month run of that show didn't discourage Lerner and Loewe from collaborating again, this time on *My Fair Lady* (1956), an adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* starring Rex Harrison and Julie Andrews, which at 2,717 performances held the long-run record for many years. Popular Hollywood films were made of all of these musicals. *The Boy Friend* (1954) ran for 2,078 performances in London, briefly becoming the third longest-running musical in West End or Broadway history (after *Chu Chin Chow* and *Oklahoma!*), until it was demoted by *Salad Days*. It marked Julie Andrews' American debut.

- Another record was set by *The Threepenny Opera*, which ran for 2,707 performances, becoming the longest-running off-Broadway musical until *The Fantasticks*. The production also broke ground by showing that musicals could be profitable off-Broadway in a small-scale, small orchestra format. This was confirmed in 1959 when a revival of Jerome Kern and P. G. Wodehouse's *Leave It to Jane* ran for more than two years. The 1959–1960 Off-Broadway season included a dozen musicals and revues including *Little Mary Sunshine*, *The Fantasticks* and *Ernest in Love*, a musical adaptation of Oscar Wilde's 1895 hit *The Importance of Being Earnest*.^[51]
- *West Side Story* (1957), which transported *Romeo and Juliet* to modern day New York City and converted the feuding Montague and Capulet families into opposing ethnic gangs, the Jets and the Sharks. The book was adapted by Arthur Laurents, with music by Leonard Bernstein and lyrics by newcomer Stephen Sondheim. It was embraced by the critics, but failed to be a popular choice for the "blue-haired matinee ladies," who preferred the small town River City, Iowa of Meredith Willson's *The Music Man* to the alleys of Manhattan's Upper West Side. Apparently Tony Award voters were of a similar mind, since they favored the former over the latter. *West Side Story* had a respectable run of 732 performances (1,040 in the West End), while *The Music Man* ran nearly twice as long, with 1,375 performances. However, the film of *West Side Story* was extremely successful.^[52] Laurents and Sondheim teamed up again for *Gypsy* (1959, 702 performances), with Jule Styne providing the music for a backstage story about the most driven stage mother of all-time, stripper Gypsy Rose Lee's mother Rose. The original production ran for 702 performances, and was given four subsequent revivals, with Angela Lansbury, Tyne Daly, Bernadette Peters and Patti LuPone later tackling the role made famous by Ethel Merman.
- Although directors and choreographers have had a major influence on musical theatre style since at least the 19th century,^[53] George Abbott and his collaborators and successors took a central role in integrating movement and dance fully into musical theatre productions in the Golden Age.^[54] Abbott introduced ballet as a story-telling device in *On Your Toes* in 1936, which was followed by Agnes DeMille's ballet and choreography in *Oklahoma!*^[55] After Abbott collaborated with Jerome Robbins in *On the Town* and other shows, Robbins combined the roles of director and choreographer, emphasizing the story-telling power of dance in *West Side Story*, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962) and *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964). Bob Fosse choreographed for Abbott in *The Pajama Game* (1956) and *Damn Yankees* (1957), injecting playful sexuality into those hits. He was later the director-choreographer for *Sweet Charity* (1968), *Pippin* (1972) and *Chicago* (1975). Other notable director-choreographers have included Gower Champion, Tommy Tune, Michael Bennett, Gillian Lynne and Susan Stroman. Prominent directors have included Hal Prince, who also got his start with Abbott,^[54] and Trevor Nunn.^[56]
- During the Golden Age, automotive companies and other large corporations began to hire Broadway talent to write corporate musicals, private shows only seen by their employees or customers.^{[57][58]} The 1950s ended with Rodgers and Hammerstein's last hit, *The Sound of Music*, which also became another hit for Mary Martin. It ran for 1,443 performances and shared the Tony Award for Best Musical. Together with its extremely successful 1965 film version, it has become one of the most popular musicals in history.

- **1960s**

- In 1960, *The Fantasticks* was first produced off-Broadway. This intimate allegorical show would quietly run for over 40 years at the Sullivan Street Theatre in Greenwich Village, becoming by far the longest-running musical in history. Its authors produced other innovative works in the 1960s, such as *Celebration* and *I Do! I Do!*, the first two-character Broadway musical. The 1960s would see a number of blockbusters, like *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964; 3,242 performances), *Hello, Dolly!* (1964; 2,844 performances), *Funny Girl* (1964; 1,348 performances), and *Man of La Mancha* (1965; 2,328 performances), and some more risqué pieces like *Cabaret*, before ending with the emergence of the rock musical. Two men had considerable impact on musical theatre history beginning in this decade: Stephen Sondheim and Jerry Herman.
- The first project for which Sondheim wrote both music and lyrics was *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* (1962, 964 performances), with a book based on the works of Plautus by Burt Shevelove and Larry Gelbart, and starring Zero Mostel. Sondheim moved the musical beyond its concentration on the romantic plots typical of earlier eras; his work tended to be darker, exploring the grittier sides of life both present and past. Other early Sondheim works include *Anyone Can Whistle* (1964, which ran only nine performances, despite having stars Lee Remick and Angela Lansbury), and the successful *Company* (1970), *Follies* (1971) and *A Little Night Music* (1973). Later, Sondheim found inspiration in unlikely sources: the opening of Japan to Western trade for *Pacific Overtures* (1976), a legendary murderous barber seeking revenge in the Industrial Age of London for *Sweeney Todd* (1979), the paintings of Georges Seurat for *Sunday in the Park with George* (1984), fairy tales for *Into the Woods* (1987), and a collection of presidential assassins in *Assassins* (1990).
- While some critics have argued that some of Sondheim's musicals lack commercial appeal, others have praised their lyrical sophistication and musical complexity, as well as the interplay of lyrics and music in his shows. Some of Sondheim's notable innovations include a show presented in reverse (*Merrily We Roll Along*) and the above-mentioned *Anyone Can Whistle*, in which the first act ends with the cast informing the audience that they are mad.
- Jerry Herman played a significant role in American musical theatre, beginning with his first Broadway production, *Milk and Honey* (1961, 563 performances), about the founding of the state of Israel, and continuing with the blockbuster hits *Hello, Dolly!* (1964, 2,844 performances), *Mame* (1966, 1,508 performances), and *La Cage aux Folles* (1983, 1,761 performances). Even his less successful shows like *Dear World* (1969) and *Mack & Mabel* (1974) have had memorable scores (*Mack & Mabel* was later reworked into a London hit). Writing both words and music, many of Herman's show tunes have become popular standards, including "Hello, Dolly!", "We Need a Little Christmas", "I Am What I Am", "Mame", "The Best of Times", "Before the Parade Passes By", "Put On Your Sunday Clothes", "It Only Takes a Moment", "Bosom Buddies", and "I Won't Send Roses", recorded by such artists as Louis Armstrong, Eydie Gorme, Barbra Streisand, Petula Clark and Bernadette Peters. Herman's songbook has been the subject of two popular musical revues, *Jerry's Girls* (Broadway, 1985), and *Showtune* (off-Broadway, 2003).
- The musical started to diverge from the relatively narrow confines of the 1950s. Rock music would be used in several Broadway musicals, beginning with *Hair*, which featured not only rock music but

also nudity and controversial opinions about the Vietnam War, race relations and other social issues.^[59]

- **Social themes**

- After *Show Boat* and *Porgy and Bess*, and as the struggle in America and elsewhere for minorities' civil rights progressed, Hammerstein, Harold Arlen, Yip Harburg and others were emboldened to write more musicals and operas that aimed to normalize societal toleration of minorities and urged racial harmony. Early Golden Age works that focused on racial tolerance included *Finian's Rainbow*, *South Pacific*, and *The King and I*. Towards the end of the Golden Age, several shows tackled Jewish subjects and issues, such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Milk and Honey*, *Blitz!* and later *Rags*. The original concept that became *West Side Story* was set in the Lower East Side during Easter-Passover celebrations; the rival gangs were to be Jewish and Italian Catholic. The creative team later decided that the Polish (white) vs. Puerto Rican conflict was fresher.^[60]
- Tolerance as an important theme in musicals has continued in recent decades. The final expression of *West Side Story* left a message of racial tolerance. By the end of the 1960s, musicals became racially integrated, with black and white cast members even covering each other's roles, as they did in *Hair*.^[61] Homosexuality has been explored in musicals, beginning with *Hair*, and even more overtly in *La Cage aux Folles*, *Falsettos* and others. The 1998 musical *Parade* is a sensitive exploration of both anti-Semitism and historical American racism.

- **1970s to present**

- **1970s**

- After the success of *Hair*, rock musicals flourished in the 1970s, with as *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Godspell*, *The Rocky Horror Show* and *Two Gentlemen of Verona*. Some of these rock musicals began with "concept albums" and then moved to film or stage, such as *Tommy*. Others had no dialogue or were otherwise reminiscent of opera, with dramatic, emotional themes; these sometimes started as concept albums and were referred to as rock operas. The musical also went in other directions. Shows like *Raisin*, *Dreamgirls*, *Purlie*, and *The Wiz* brought a significant African-American influence to Broadway. More varied musical genres and styles were incorporated into musicals both on and especially off-Broadway. At the same time, Stephen Sondheim found success with a series of musicals mentioned above.
- 1975 brought to the stage a dance musical called "tremendous" by the *New York Times* reviewer, Clive Barnes.^[62] *A Chorus Line* emerged from recorded group therapy-style sessions Michael Bennett conducted with "gypsies" – those who sing and dance in support of the leading players – from the Broadway community. From hundreds of hours of tapes, James Kirkwood, Jr. and Nick Dante fashioned a book about an audition for a musical, incorporating many real-life stories from the sessions; some who attended the sessions eventually played variations of themselves or each other in the show. With music by Marvin Hamlisch and lyrics by Edward Kleban, *A Chorus Line* first opened at Joseph Papp's Public Theater in lower Manhattan. What initially had been planned as a limited engagement eventually moved to the Shubert Theatre on Broadway for a run of 6,137 performances, becoming the longest-running production in Broadway history up to that time. The show swept the Tony Awards and won the Pulitzer Prize, and its hit song, *What I Did for Love*, became an instant standard.

- Broadway audiences welcomed musicals that varied from the usual style and substance. John Kander and Fred Ebb explored the rise of Nazism in Germany in *Cabaret* and Prohibition-era *Chicago*, which relied on old vaudeville techniques to tell its tale of murder and the media. *Pippin*, by Stephen Schwartz, was set in the days of Charlemagne. Federico Fellini's autobiographical film *8½* became Maury Yeston's *Nine*. At the end of the decade, *Evita* and *Sweeney Todd* were precursors to the darker, big budget musicals of the 1980s that depended on dramatic stories, sweeping scores and spectacular effects. But during this same period, old-fashioned values were still embraced in such hits as *Annie*, *42nd Street*, *My One and Only*, and popular revivals of *No, No, Nanette* and *Irene*. Although many film versions of musicals were made in the 1970s, few were critical or box office successes, with the notable exceptions of *Fiddler on the Roof (film)*, *Cabaret (1972 film)* and *Grease (film)*.^[63]
- **1980**
- The 1980s saw the influence of European "mega-musicals", or "pop operas", on Broadway, in the West End and elsewhere. These typically featured a pop-influenced score, had large casts and sets and were identified by their notable effects – a falling chandelier (in *The Phantom of the Opera*), a helicopter landing on stage (in *Miss Saigon*) – and big budgets. Many were based on novels or other works of literature. The most important writers of mega-musicals include the French team of Claude-Michel Schönberg and Alain Boublil, responsible for *Les Misérables*, which became the longest-running international musical hit in history. The team, in collaboration with Richard Maltby, Jr., continued to produce hits, including *Miss Saigon*, inspired by the Puccini opera *Madame Butterfly*.
- The British composer Andrew Lloyd Webber saw similar success with *Evita*, based on the life of Argentina's Eva Perón; *Cats*, derived from the poems of T. S. Eliot (both of which musicals originally starred Elaine Paige); *Starlight Express*, performed on roller skates; *The Phantom of the Opera*, derived from the Gaston Leroux novel, "Le Fantôme de l'Opéra"; and *Sunset Boulevard* (from the classic film of the same name). These works ran (or are still running) for decades in both New York and London and had extraordinary international and touring success. The mega-musicals' huge budgets redefined expectations for financial success on Broadway and in the West End. In earlier years, it was possible for a show to be considered a hit after a run of several hundred performances, but with multimillion-dollar production costs, a show must run for years simply to turn a profit.
- **1990s**
- In the 1990s, a new generation of theatrical composers emerged, including Jason Robert Brown and Michael John LaChiusa, and who began with productions Off-Broadway. The most conspicuous success of these artists was Jonathan Larson's show *Rent* (1996), a rock musical (based on the opera *La bohème*) about a struggling community of artists in Manhattan. While the cost of tickets to Broadway and West End musicals was escalating beyond the budget of many theatregoers, *Rent* was marketed to increase the popularity of musicals among a younger audience. It featured a young cast and a heavily rock-influenced score; the musical became a hit. Its young fans, many of them students, calling themselves RENTheads, camped out at the Nederlander Theatre in hopes of winning the lottery for \$20 front row tickets, and some saw the show dozens of times. Other shows

on Broadway followed *Rent*'s lead by offering heavily discounted day-of-performance or standing-room tickets, although often the discounts are offered only to students.^[64]

- The 1990s also saw the influence of large corporations on the production of musicals. The most important has been The Walt Disney Company, which began adapting some of its animated film musicals for the stage, starting with *Beauty and the Beast* (1994), *The Lion King* (1997) and *Aida* (2000), the latter two with music by Elton John. *The Lion King* is the highest-grossing musical in Broadway history.^[65] *The Who's Tommy* (1993), a theatrical adaptation of the rock opera *Tommy*, achieved a healthy run of 899 performances but was criticized for sanitizing the story and "musical theatre-izing" the rock music.^[66]
- Despite the growing number of large-scale musicals in the 1980s and 1990s, a number of lower-budget, smaller-scale musicals managed to find critical and financial success, such as *Falsettoland* and *Little Shop of Horrors*, *Bat Boy: The Musical* and *Blood Brothers*. The topics of these pieces vary widely, and the music ranges from rock to pop, but they often are produced off-Broadway, or for smaller London theatres, and some of these stagings have been regarded as imaginative and innovative.^[67]
- **2000s**
- Trends
- In the new century, familiarity has been embraced by producers and investors anxious to guarantee that they recoup their considerable investments, if not show a healthy profit. Some took (usually modest-budget) chances on the new and unusual, such as *Urinetown* (2001), *Avenue Q* (2003), *Caroline or Change* (2004), *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* (2005), *The Light in the Piazza* (2005), *Spring Awakening* (2006), *In the Heights* (2007), *Next to Normal* (2009) and *American Idiot* (2010). But most took a safe route with revivals of familiar fare, such as *Fiddler on the Roof*, *A Chorus Line*, *South Pacific*, *Gypsy*, *Hair*, *West Side Story* and *Grease*, or with other proven material, such as films (*The Producers*, *Spamalot*, *Hairspray*, *Legally Blonde*, *The Color Purple*, *Xanadu*, *Billy Elliot* and *Shrek*) or well-known literature (*The Scarlet Pimpernel* and *Wicked*) hoping that the shows would have a built-in audience as a result. Some critics consider the reuse of film plots, especially those from Disney (such as *Mary Poppins*, and *The Little Mermaid*) a redefinition of the Broadway and West End musical as a tourist attraction, rather than a creative outlet.^[14]
- Today it is less likely that a sole producer, such as David Merrick or Cameron Mackintosh, backs a production. Corporate sponsors dominate Broadway, and often alliances are formed to stage musicals, which require an investment of \$10 million or more. In 2002, the credits for *Thoroughly Modern Millie* listed ten producers, and among those names were entities composed of several individuals.^[68] Typically, off-Broadway and regional theatres tend to produce smaller and therefore less expensive musicals, and development of new musicals has increasingly taken place outside of New York and London or in smaller venues. For example, *Spring Awakening* and *Grey Gardens* were developed Off-Broadway before being launched on Broadway.
- Several musicals returned to the spectacle format that was so successful in the 1980s, recalling extravaganzas that have been presented at times, throughout theatre history, since the ancient Romans staged mock sea battles. Examples include the musical adaptations of *The Lord of the Rings* (2007), *Gone With the Wind* (2008) and *Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark* (2011). These musicals involved songwriters with little theatrical experience, and the expensive productions generally lost

money. Conversely, *Avenue Q*, *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* and *Xanadu*, among others, have been presented in smaller-scale productions, mostly uninterrupted by an intermission, with short running times, and enjoyed financial success. In 2013, *Time* magazine reported a trend Off-Broadway has been "immersive" theatre, citing shows such as *Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812* (2012) and *Here Lies Love* (2013) in which the staging takes place around and within the audience.^[69] The shows set a joint record, each receiving 11 nominations for Lucille Lortel Awards.^[70] and feature contemporary scores.^{[71][72]}

- Jukebox musicals
- Another trend has been to create a minimal plot to fit a collection of songs that have already been hits. Following the earlier success of *Buddy - The Buddy Holly Story*, these have included *Movin' Out* (2002, based on the tunes of Billy Joel), *Jersey Boys* (2006, The Four Seasons), *Rock of Ages* (2009, featuring classic rock of the 1980s) and many others. This style is often referred to as the "jukebox musical".^[73] Similar but more plot-driven musicals have been built around the canon of a particular pop group including *Mamma Mia!* (1999, based on the songs of ABBA), *Our House* (2002, based on the songs of Madness), and *We Will Rock You* (2002, based on the songs of Queen).
- Film and TV musicals
- Live-action film musicals were nearly dead in the 1980s and early 1990s, with exceptions of *Victor/Victoria*, *Little Shop of Horrors* and the 1996 film of *Evita*.^[74] In the new century, Baz Luhrmann began a revival of the film musical with *Moulin Rouge!* (2001). This was followed by *Chicago* in 2002; *Phantom of the Opera* in 2004; *Dreamgirls* in 2006; *Hairspray*, *Across the Universe*, *Enchanted* and *Sweeney Todd* all in 2007; *Mamma Mia!* in 2008; *Nine* in 2009; *Burlesque* in 2010; *Les Misérables* and *Pitch Perfect* in 2012, . Dr. Seuss's *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* (2000) and *The Cat in the Hat* (2003), turned children's books into live-action film musicals. After the immense success of Disney and other houses with animated film musicals beginning with *The Little Mermaid* in 1989 and running throughout the 1990s (including some more adult-themed films, like *South Park: Bigger, Longer & Uncut* (1999)), fewer animated film musicals were released in the first decade of the 21st century.^[74] The genre made a comeback beginning in 2010 with *Tangled* (2010), *Rio* (2011) and *Frozen* (2013). In Asia, India continues to produce numerous "Bollywood" film musicals, and Japan produces "Anime" and "Manga" film musicals.
- Made for TV musical films were popular in the 1990s, such as *Gypsy* (1993), *Cinderella* (1997) and *Annie* (1999). Several made for TV musicals in the first decade of the 21st century were adaptations of the stage version, such as *South Pacific* (2001), *The Music Man* (2003) and *Once Upon A Mattress* (2005), and a televised version of the stage musical *Legally Blonde* in 2007. Additionally, several musicals were filmed on stage and broadcast on Public Television, for example *Contact* in 2002 and *Kiss Me, Kate* and *Oklahoma!* in 2003. The made-for-TV musical *High School Musical*, and its several sequels, enjoyed particular success and were adapted for stage musicals and other media.
- Some television shows have set episodes as a musical. Examples include episodes of *Ally McBeal*, *Xena*, the *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* episode *Once More, with Feeling*, *That's So Raven*, *Daria*, *Oz*, *Scrubs* (one episode was written by the creators of *Avenue Q*), *Batman: The Brave and the Bold*, episode "Mayhem of the Music Meister", and the 100th episode of *That '70s Show*, called *That '70s Musical*. Others have included scenes where characters suddenly begin singing and dancing in a

musical-theatre style during an episode, such as in several episodes of *The Simpsons*, *30 Rock*, *Hannah Montana*, *South Park* and *Family Guy*. The television series *Cop Rock* extensively used the musical format, as do the series *Flight of the Conchords*, *Glee* and *Smash*.

- There have also been musicals made for the internet, including *Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*, about a low-rent super-villain played by Neil Patrick Harris. It was written during the WGA writer's strike.^[75] Since 2006, reality TV shows have been used to help market musical revivals by holding a talent competition to cast (usually female) leads. Examples of these are *How Do You Solve a Problem Like Maria?*, *Grease: You're the One that I Want!*, *Any Dream Will Do*, *Legally Blonde - The Musical: The Search for Elle Woods*, *I'd Do Anything* and *Over the Rainbow*.
- In 2013, NBC made the first live television broadcast of a musical in over 50 years, *The Sound of Music Live!*.^[76] Although the production received mixed reviews, it was a ratings success, prompting suggestion by television executives that live musicals may be produced as an annual holiday event.^[77]
- **International musicals**
- The U.S. and Britain were the most active sources of book musicals from the 19th century through much of the 20th century (although Europe produced various forms of popular light opera and operetta, for example Spanish Zarzuela, during that period and even earlier). However, the light musical stage in other countries has become more active in recent decades.
- Musicals from other English-speaking countries (notably Australia and Canada) often do well locally, and occasionally even reach Broadway or the West End (e.g., *The Boy from Oz* and *The Drowsy Chaperone*). South Africa has an active musical theatre scene, with revues like *African Footprint* and *Umoja* and book musicals, such as *Kat and the Kings* and *Sarafina!* touring internationally. Locally, musicals like *Vere*, *Love and Green Onions*, *Over the Rainbow: the all-new all-gay... extravaganza* and *Bangbroek Mountain* and *In Briefs – a queer little Musical* have been produced successfully.
- Successful musicals from continental Europe include shows from (among other countries) Germany (*Elixir* and *Ludwig II*), Austria (*Tanz der Vampire*, *Elisabeth*, *Mozart!* and *Rebecca*), Czech Republic (*Dracula*), France (*Notre Dame de Paris*, *Les Misérables*, *Angélique*, *Marquise des Anges* and *Roméo et Juliette*) and Spain (*Hoy No Me Puedo Levantar* and *The Musical Sancho Panza*).
- Japan has recently seen the growth of an indigenous form of musical theatre, both animated and live action, mostly based on Anime and Manga, such as *Kiki's Delivery Service* and *Tenimyu*. The popular *Sailor Moon* metaseries has had twenty-nine Sailor Moon musicals, spanning thirteen years. Beginning in 1914, a series of popular revues have been performed by the all-female Takarazuka Revue, which currently fields five performing troupes. Elsewhere in Asia, the Indian Bollywood musical, mostly in the form of motion pictures, is tremendously successful.^[78]
- Hong Kong's first modern musical, produced in both Mandarin and Cantonese, is *Snow.Wolf.Lake* (1997). Beginning with a 2002 tour of *Les Misérables*, numerous Western musicals have been imported to mainland China and staged in English.^[79] Attempts at localizing Western productions in China began in 2008 when *Fame* was produced in Mandarin with a full Chinese cast at the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing.^[80] Since then, other western productions have been staged in China in Mandarin with a Chinese cast. The first Chinese production in the style of Western musical theatre was *The Gold Sand* in 2005.^[79] In addition, Li Dun, a well-known Chinese producer,

produced *Butterflies*, based on a classic Chinese love tragedy, in 2007 as well as *Love U Teresa* in 2011.^[79]

- Other countries with an especially active musicals scene include the Netherlands, Italy, Poland, Sweden, Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Russia, and Turkey.^[citation needed]
- **Relevance**
- The Broadway League announced that in the 2007–08 season, 12.27 million tickets were purchased for Broadway shows for a gross sale amount of almost a billion dollars.^[81] The League further reported that during the 2006–07 season, approximately 65% of Broadway tickets were purchased by tourists, and that foreign tourists were 16% of attendees.^[82] (These figures do not include off-Broadway and smaller venues.) The Society of London Theatre reported that 2007 set a record for attendance in London. Total attendees in the major commercial and grant-aided theatres in Central London were 13.6 million, and total ticket revenues were £469.7 million.^[83] Also the international musicals scene has been particularly active in recent years. However, as Stephen Sondheim has noted:
 - You have two kinds of shows on Broadway – revivals and the same kind of musicals over and over again, all spectacles. You get your tickets for *The Lion King* a year in advance, and essentially a family... pass on to their children the idea that that's what the theater is – a spectacular musical you see once a year, a stage version of a movie. It has nothing to do with theater at all. It has to do with seeing what is familiar.... I don't think the theatre will die per se, but it's never going to be what it was.... It's a tourist attraction."^[84]
 - The success of original material like *Urinetown*, *Avenue Q*, *Spelling Bee* and *In the Heights*, as well as creative re-imaginings of film properties, including *Thoroughly Modern Millie*, *Hairspray*, *Billy Elliot* and *The Color Purple*, and plays-turned-musicals, such as *Spring Awakening*, prompts theatre historian John Kenrick to write: "Is the Musical dead? ...Absolutely not! Changing? Always! The musical has been changing ever since Offenbach did his first rewrite in the 1850s. And change is the clearest sign that the musical is still a living, growing genre. Will we ever return to the so-called 'golden age,' with musicals at the center of popular culture? Probably not. Public taste has undergone fundamental changes, and the commercial arts can only flow where the paying public allows."^[14]

Bibliography

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