Musicals 101: Broadway in the 21st Century

Contact Information & Schedule

Instructor: Alan Teasley, alanteasley@yahoo.com, (919) 812-0185
Dates & Times: Ten Thursdays: September 11 - November 20, 2025, 9:00-10:15 am, via ZOOM. Note: Class sessions are recorded. The recordings are available within 48 hours after the class ends and remain available for several weeks after the course ends.

Course Website: www.musicals-101.com

For each class meeting, a separate page of the site will provide materials students can use to preview the class content as well as links to the online videos shown in class.

Course Description

Broadway's first twenty seasons of the 21st century were bookended by the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. During those two decades, 269 musicals opened on Broadway. In this course we'll look at several overall trends: the mix of new works and revivals, the dominant genres, such as screen-to-stage adaptations and "jukebox musicals," as well as original musicals not based on pre-existing scores. We will also explore some of the controversies that emerged in this particular area of show business, as Broadway responded to changing social, political and economic forces. In each class we will make a closer study of some of the memorable musicals that exemplify the trends and controversies of the period. Possible "spotlight" musicals are listed in the outline of course content below. Class is primarily lecture with video and audio clips; students will be able to ask questions and make comments during each class.

Instructor Bio

Alan Teasley began his career as a high school English and drama teacher. After retiring from the Durham Public Schools in 2006, he taught in Duke's Master of Arts in Teaching Program. A member of the OLLI Advisory Council, he is an avid theatergoer with a particular fondness for American musicals. This is his eighteenth course on musical theater for OLLI. Previous courses have focused on Stephen Sondheim, Rodgers & Hammerstein, Kander & Ebb, Frank Loesser, Lerner & Loewe, Jerry Herman, Bock & Harnick, Leonard Bernstein, Stephen Schwartz, Jerome Kern, Jule Styne, the ten musicals that have won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama, six "Off-Broadway Classics," "British Musicals on Broadway," and "The Women of Broadway"—a survey of musicals with book, lyrics, and/or music by women. He has also presented a two-course survey of "Broadway's Silver Age," focused on the musicals of Richard Rodgers & Lorenz Hart, George & Ira Gershwin, Irving Berlin, and Cole Porter. He has also been known to just pack together a group of shows he likes and give the package a classy name like "Six Singular Sensations."

Class Participation

The instructor's lectures will provide background about the trends and specific musicals, but the bulk of class time will be listening to excerpts from the scores or watching videos about the shows. Students can ask questions and make comments during class via the Zoom chat feature. Since the titles are announced in advance, and most of the scores are readily available on CD, streaming services, or YouTube, students can conduct their own preview of each show using materials on the course website. Students are welcome to contact the instructor via email between classes.

All participants are expected to abide by the OLLI Code of Conduct.

Recommended Book

Kantor, Michael, and Laurence Maslon. (2019) ***Broadway: The American Musical, Third Edition***. Guilford, CT: Applause Theatre & Cinema Books. ISBN 978-1-4930-4767-3 (paperback) This is the companion book to the PBS documentary film of the same name, a six-part series first broadcast in 2004. The third edition of the book has been updated to include shows that opened in the 2018-19 Broadway season. The book provides a comprehensive treatment of American musicals and hundreds of photos. It's worth the heft and the cost—a doorstopper of a tome listing on Amazon.com for about $40.

Session Topics

Class 1: 9/11/25 **Musicals in the First 20 Seasons of the New Century**
- Introduction to the Course
- Trends among the 269 musicals of these two decades
- The four categories of shows we'll explore

Diving in: Jukebox Musicals, Part 1: 2000-2010
- Sample shows: *Mamma Mia!, Movin' Out, Jersey Boys, Rock of Ages*

Class 2: 9/18/25 **Jukebox Musicals, Part 2: 2010-2020**
- Sample shows: *Beautiful: The Carole King Musical, An American in Paris, On Your Feet!, Moulin Rouge*

Revues, 2000-2020 (as distinct from Jukebox Musicals)
- Sample shows: *Sondheim on Sondheim, After Midnight*

Class 3: 9/25/25 **Screen-to-Stage Musicals, Part 1: 2000-2010**
- 20th century hits continuing their runs: *The Phantom of the Opera, Beauty and the Beast, The Lion King, Chicago*
- Sample new shows: *The Producers, Throughly Modern Millie, Hairspray, Spamalot, Billy Elliott*

10/2/25: **No Class: OLLI Closed for Yom Kippur**

Class 4: 10/9/25 **Screen-to-Stage Musicals, Part 2: 2010-2020**
- Sample shows: *Shrek the Musical, Once, Newsies, Kinky Boots, Aladdin, Anastasia, The Band's Visit, SpongeBob SquarePants*

Class 5: 10/16/25 **Revivals, Remounts, and "Revisals," 2000-2020**
- Examples:
  - Rodgers & Hammerstein:
    - *South Pacific, The King and I, Carousel, Oklahoma!*
  - Sondheim:
    - *Follies* (x2), *Into the Woods, Pacific Overtures, Sweeney Todd*
    - *Company, Sunday in the Park with George* (x2)
  - Other classic shows:
    - *Fiddler on the Roof* (x2) , *Wonderful Town, Gypsy* (x2)
    - *Les Misérables, The Gershwin's Porgy and Bess, My Fair Lady* (x2) *Cabaret, Annie*

Class 6: 10/23/25 **Other Original Musicals, Part 1 (2000-2005)**
- Shows include: *Avenue Q, Wicked, The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, The Light in the Piazza*

Class 7: 10/30/25 **Other Original Musicals, Part 2 (2005-2010)**
- Shows include: *Spring Awakening, In the Heights, Next to Normal*

Class 8: 11/6/25 **Other Original Musicals, Part 3 (2010-2015)**
- Shows include: *The Book of Mormon, Matilda the Musical, A Gentleman's Guide to Love and Murder, Fun Home,*

Class 9: 11/13/25 **Other Original Musicals, Part 4 (2015-2020)**
- Shows include: *Hamilton, Waitress, Come from Away, Dear Evan Hansen, Hadestown*

Class 10: 11/20/25 **Post-Pandemic Broadway: Four Seasons, 2021-2025**
- After the "Great Reopening" of 2021, are the trends holding?
- Are there any new developments?
- New shows include: *A Strange Loop, Six: The Musical, Kimberly Akimbo, Hell's Kitchen, The Outsiders, Maybe Happy Ending*
- Revivals include: *Company, Sweeney Todd, Merrily We Roll Along*