

Study Of Gays And Lesbians In Broadway Musicals

Smita Mohanty

Research Scholar, Department of English KIIT Deemed to be University.

ABSTRACT

The significance of music and musical preferences in lesbian and gays cultures is well-documented, but empirical study on lesbian and gay individuals' musical preferences is uncommon or even nonexistent. Concerning the means through which lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals attain a sense of sexual identity, there is substantial dispute. It turns out that musical preferences differ significantly by gender, just as they do in the general population. It is my goal that the present cultural dialogues, altering technologies, and organizations' support will provide the circumstances for genuine transformation, both on and off the stage. The purpose of our study is to investigate the significance of the sexual orientation of the musicians (music by lesbians and homosexuals) and the significance of music linked with lesbians and gays. We aim to gain a deeper understanding of how gay and lesbian cultures and communities are supported through music. In this paper the best musicals with strong gay themes, based on quality, historical significance, and LG+ content have been discussed.

Keywords: Gay, Lesbian, Music, LGBTQ, Musical, Broadway etc.

I. INTRODUCTION

There are several anecdotal connections between certain music and artists and gay and lesbian culture. In Belgium and the Netherlands, for instance, a top 100 list of 'gay and lesbian' music is compiled annually, and ABBA's Dancing Queen is a perennial favorite. There is also an entry on "Gay and Lesbian Music" in the authoritative music encyclopedia, the New Grove Dictionary of Music and Musicians, which discusses, among others, Judy Garland and Madonna. Although a great deal of scholarly research has examined the significance of music in lesbian and homosexual cultures, studies on the individual musical preferences of lesbians and gays are sparse, especially outside the Anglophone world.

Some surviving musicians were admitted, but Boulez and all others who were deemed uncomfortable with their sexual orientation being

known were excluded. In any case, obtaining the identities of 'out' British classical-music composers from anyone in the country

where the closet was born had been extremely difficult.

Throughout several decades, LGBTQ+ theatre was governed by the politics of the day. During past eras, when the government and society turned a blind eye, theatre served to educate and fill the void. Examining LGBTQ+ plays, musicals, and political events over the previous century reveals distinct recurring themes. The concept known as "repressive tolerance" has limited LGBTQ+ representation in both the theatrical and political spheres. Every advance has been greeted with a new restriction, from stereotyped caricatures to legislative discrimination. In order to advance, we must recognize this repressive tolerance and combat its structural restrictions. LGBTQ+ folks will never

be viewed as equal members of society as long as this oppressive narrative persists. It all starts with understanding our past so that we do not repeat it. Representation is important. Tales matter.

Since its inception, the American musical has been a utopian space for exploring new ideas and themes while simultaneously promoting community. Within a usual two-and-a-half-hour time frame, characters fall in love, endure stress and struggle, find methods to negotiate their identities and wants within society, endure loss, and finally celebrate life despite its complexity, impermanence, and sometimes tragic nature. Audiences leave musical theatre performances with what is known as an eleven o'clock lift - a final number intended to be memorable, typically encapsulating the show's central themes and perhaps recommending a way to improve one's life. Historically, musical theatre has been a place of LGBT optimism, whether for generations of gays forced to remain closeted, those persecuted by McCarthyism and political profiling, or those who have suffered with and died from AIDS.

Musical theatre, typically a larger-than-life performance art in which its characters respond to life's difficulties (no matter how small) through song and dance, is defined by its irregular and comprehensive framework in a way that may be irrevocable. Often, a performance's music belies its folk music and operetta roots, but the act may also include pop and rock elements. The choreography of musical theatre frequently pulls from a variety of movement vocabularies, resulting in an amalgam of ballet, tap, modern, and jazz dance. Depending on the director and the actors in any given role, the acting style of a musical can switch from harsh realism and melodrama within the span of a single song. When these aspects are combined into a musical, even if they are perfectly blended, the resulting performance will nearly always appear weird and contrived in comparison to any other play or film, and certainly to the musical's distant cousin, real life. Due to its utopian themes, counter-normative form and structure, and huge number of homosexual and bisexual composers and performers, it is perhaps not unexpected that conventional culture has reduced this art form to a simple equation: musical theatre equals gay.

Theater historians and theorists — homosexual and heterosexual — continue to investigate the history of this stereotype, but popular culture continues to perpetuate the notion that knowledge of musicals is an indicator of a person's sexuality, despite much research on favor of the musical. As there is no single style of musical theatre (there are countless structural variations, such as the rock musical, the book musical, the dance-based musical, and the sung-through musical), it makes no sense to designate all musical theatre as homosexual. Musical theatre is a refuge for LGBT practitioners and audiences.

Even more intriguing than the sexual orientations of musical theater's writers are the LGBT characters that have appeared in shows and what their appearance in musicals has in common with present social attitudes of sexual orientation. Musicals such as *Hair* and *A Chorus Line*, which are both about young people sharing their goals, dreams, and identities with one another, demonstrate that gay characters are readily evident beginning in the politically liberated 1960s. In several productions of *Cabaret*, a musical based on a novella by gay author Christopher Isherwood, the principal male love interest has been portrayed as a heterosexual, a bisexual, and a mostly closeted homosexual. *La Cage Aux Folles* is possibly the first homosexual musical on Broadway; the play upon which it was based was eventually transformed into the mainstream film *The Birdcage*. It tells the story of two middle-aged lovers, one of whom owns a drag queen nightclub and the other of whom is the club's lead performer. In this musical, one of the major characters must justify his lifestyle and performs "I Am What I Am," a defiant song that has since become a gay anthem. In *Trousers*, the *March of the Falsettos*, and *Falsettoland*, three one-act musicals by William Finn explore the collision of familial values and sexual identity. In these three musicals, the protagonist discovers he is gay but still desires to keep his wife, son, and lover together as a loving family.

2. THE BROADWAY MUSICAL

Musical theatre is a uniquely American art style that fuses the European operetta, British music

hall, vaudeville, burlesque and racial minstrel shows traditions. Musicals provide entertainment for a largely middle-class audience that is undoubtedly commercial and possibly populist. Scenes, songs, and dances in early-20th-century musicals are loosely connected in a vaudeville-like manner: a funny scene is followed by a song and a novelty dance, neither of which has anything in common with the other elements. According to the majority of historians, this changes when Rodgers and Hammerstein incorporate these components for the first time in *Oklahoma!* (1943), in which the songs and dances serve as continuations of the scenes. The integrated musical thus inaugurates the so-called "Golden Age" of Broadway musicals. However, in *The Musical as Drama*, Scott McMillin questions this notion of the "integrated" musical, arguing that what Rodgers and Hammerstein created was a "extension" of the genre rather than the "revolution" that many have portrayed.

McMillin challenges readers to accept the incongruity of musical theatre in a novel manner. He argues that the distinction between acts, songs, and dances is what makes musicals unique, not their alleged fusion (2). According to McMillin, the musical form expresses two modes of time: "progressive" or "book time," which is the forward momentum of the story within the scenes, and "repetitive" or "lyric time," which is the extension of the plot's ideas and emotions through song and dance (6-9). McMillin contends that songs "alter the manner of characterization": "Characters who break into song are enlarged by entering the second order of time and demonstrating their command of repetitious, lyrical form" (7-8). Songs and dances are not only story extensions; they reveal individuals and relationships and highlight their significance through contrast.

"Golden Age" musicals dominate musical theatre scholarship not only as the (debatable) pinnacle of the form, but also as the benchmark against which all later musicals are evaluated. The conventions established during this era continue to underpin the musical form: a romantic leading couple and a comedic secondary couple (always heterosexual); the use of stereotypes; rhyming lyrics; the "I am" song and "I want" song;

ensemble numbers; and, typically, a wedding, as in classical comedy. Musicals exemplify U.S. culture 10 values such as self-assertion and optimism, but they also reflect conservative hegemonic notions around gender and sexuality. Some of these will be examined briefly, but they are all worth addressing since, collectively, they highlight the heterosexist foundation of musical theatre, which hinders the creation of queer tales. In Chapters Two and Three, McMillin's concept of lyric time will be utilized to demonstrate how *Fun Home* and *The Color Purple* alter the trajectory of lesbian representation on stage and reject the heteronormative ideology of musical theatre.

3. PRESENT-DAY CONCEPT OF LESBIAN AND GAY

The concept of being lesbian and gay in the modern period is not yet acceptable, despite its global spread. Even though the majority of nations have legalized homosexual and lesbian relationships, people's attitudes towards them are nonetheless offensive. Most nations consider homosexuality a crime and punish its perpetrators with fines, imprisonment, or even the death penalty. In Indian culture, homosexuality is taboo to both civil society and the government. For instance, section 377 of the Indian penal code states that having sexual relations with a person of the same gender is a punishable offence under the Indian constitution. Despite the fact that homosexuality is illegal under Indian law, there were around 2.5 million registered homosexuals in India in 2012.

This data is based solely on the self-declaration of homosexuals, which may be significantly higher than recorded figures because homosexuals face prejudice in every aspect of their lives and are regarded as immoral. All members of the gay and lesbian community must endure the biases and bizarre conduct of those whose beliefs and culture are strongly ingrained in society. Typical sentiments about gays are hostile and dismissive. Assaults on homosexuals, discrimination against lesbians and gay men by employers, personal rejection by family and neighbors, and disparaging jokes all illustrate the

prevalence of homophobia. 4 As a result of their lack of societal acknowledgment, members of the gay group experience a variety of injustices that influence numerous parts of their personalities. They are more likely to encounter intolerance, discrimination, harassment, ridicule, and threats of violence due to their gay orientation.

They endure frequent social marginalization in markets, schools, the job, and even among neighbors. They are not permitted to enjoy the same legal protections and rights as other citizens. On the work market, the majority of same-sex couples must conceal their orientation. Young lesbian and gay people are subjected to a great deal of pressure, which can result in social isolation, school dropout, mental illness, and sometimes homelessness if they lose social support, familial detachment, peer group taunting and disruption in their social network, harassment at school, etc.

LGB music As demonstrated in the previous section, the sexual orientation of artists is not a significant factor in the music our participants prefer; however, it does create a certain connection and appears to contribute to the establishment of a canon of 'LGB music' — that is, music perceived to be connected to LGB culture. To better comprehend the evaluation of such "LGB music," we posed the question to our participants. First, respondents were asked if they believed 'gay' or 'LGB' music existed. 7 About a quarter of the participants who provided their view on this topic believe that it does not exist, whilst nearly half believe that it exists, providing responses ranging from ecstatic to lukewarm. "Of course, most positively!" Julie (f, 20) says. Carine (female, 21) explains, "Well, you can definitely tell that LGBs [...] have their own musical genre." Her response reveals the LGB community's conception of particular music as integral to its identity. A striking number of responses are inconsistent, making negative assertions while implicitly recognizing the existence of LGB or gay music:

No, it does not exist in reality. But it is quite distinctive. When going out, it is common to hear "hard" house or techno... On the other side,

musicians like as Madonna, ABBA, and others are played. No, I would not call this authentic homosexual music. However, they do play it frequently. (Christian male, age 30)

Regardless of whether the participants believe in the existence of homosexual or LGB music, the majority of them immediately associate the term with particular genres, styles, and musicians. In actuality, the majority of participants corroborate widely held stereotypes about LGB music, despite the fact that some plainly fight them. Disco and pop music are the most often listed genres, as evidenced by statements such as "If it exists, I believe it to be commercial music" (Daniel, m, 24) and "[gay music is] everything flamboyant pop, and disco as well" (Hanna, f, 21). Kylie Minogue, Madonna, Beyoncé, disco, "party music," glitter and glamour, camp, kitsch, tacky, and commercial music are associated with both men and women. Several 'gay anthems' are cited, with *Its pouring men* by the Weather Girls/*Geri Halliwell, I will survive* by Gloria Gaynor, and *Dancing Queen* by ABBA being the most prominent. Bart (m, 40) stands out as an active music listener and outspoken admirer of numerous divas: I enjoy 1970s and '80s music, which I believe has something to do with my age. Moreover, I am a huge fan of ABBA and Tina Turner. [...] This year, I saw her perform twice [...] and my sister will attempt to acquire tickets for Whitney Houston. [...] We also attended a Natalia concert.

Interestingly, many participants appear to associate LGB music with the pop and dance genres previously identified as the most popular among gay men. This is what gays find cool, according to Steven (20, m): a gorgeous woman who puts on a nice show, wears amazing glittering fancy gowns, and has a jet set lifestyle. These features reflect one of the aforementioned camp characteristics, namely the intentional yet sympathetic parody of the conventionally feminine. Jennex (2013) offers a compelling case for the continued significance of camp sensibility, even among younger generations of homosexual men, and our interviewees appear to validate the veracity of this assertion in the Flemish context.

Another lesbian participant attempts to define lesbian music: "I'd say it's a bit more tranquil, like... singer-songwriters. I cannot identify it" (Kristien, f, 21). As with the online survey, the propensity to appreciate strong and independent women who are predominantly engaged in the rock and singer-songwriter genres is evident in the interviews with female participants. The visible component of artists demonstrating strength appears to play a significant effect in lesbians' musical preferences: "[Lesbians love] the tougher type of lady." You wouldn't exactly describe her as feminine, similar to P!nk, would you? I believe beauty is really important [for lesbians]" (Carine, female, age 21) Later, she reiterates this, claiming that lesbians prefer "strong women." Despite not always being apparent to the participants, it appears that the music they enjoy provides them with role models and identifiers, especially in terms of gender norms. These divergent perspectives on what LGB music entails are consistent with the previously found gender inequalities in terms of preferred music genre.

These diverse female and male musical preferences are associated with the emergence of distinct yet overlapping lesbian and homosexual groups and cultures. In lesbian circles, the common knowledge and enjoyment of artists such as Beth Ditto, Sarah Bettens, P!nk, and Tegan and Sara makes individuals a member of the community, hence contributing to the formation of a distinct lesbian collective identity, as stated in the introduction. However, many female participants also love 'gay' camp, kitsch, and pop, with the majority of women indicating a link to pop music and divas, particularly while going out in the LGB scene — thus emphasizing the connection between this music and specific LGB-related locales and situations. While the majority of interviewees are aware of which music is (seen as) gay and/or lesbian, they fail to explain why this music is so popular among LGBs.

4. LGB AND MUSICAL THEATRE

In the past twenty-five years, musical theatre scholarship has changed from almost exclusively

historical surveys to a more analytical approach to the genre's subjects and implications. Approaching musicals through the prism of identity revitalized the field, with D. A. Miller, John Clum, and Stacy Wolf producing major studies on LGB and musical theatre. Instead of focusing on the chronology of productions or individual authors, these academics investigated the musical as a site of LGB spectatorship, paying special emphasis to the meanings established for LGB viewers.

The *Color Purple* and *Fun Home* are two outstanding instances of reimagining of the musical genre for lesbian women. Both musicals' film adaptations are currently in pre-production, creating the possibility for their influence to grow. Nonetheless, as thrilling as these musicals and their unclassifiable works are, they remain a bit of an outlier in the greater canon. In this conclusion, I will outline the factors contributing to the underrepresentation of lesbian women, discuss what has transpired since the *Fun Home* and *The Color Purple* revivals graced Broadway, and look ahead. Several factors combine to restrict gay and lesbian representations on stage.

For decades, musicians, audiences, and academics have struggled with the issue of defining music and delineating its basic features. Definitions of music are culturally and historically diverse and subject to logics of taste and value. Music, regarded in its most fundamental form as organised sound, is present in cultures all over the world and manifests itself in a variety of forms and genres, each of which has features that go well beyond what is audible. In fact, for a vast number of individuals and in the context of this study, music represents something considerably more than just sound objects. As suggested by sociologist Tia DeNora, "music can serve as a resource for utopian fantasies, alternative worlds, and institutions, and it can be used strategically to foretell new worlds" (p. 159). I shall return to the concept of queer world-making that DeNora's idea emphasizes. Music is a collection of interconnected behaviors and texts used as strategic resources in the construction and transmission of self-narratives and a sense of collective belonging.

As Nicholas Cook puts it so eloquently: in today's environment, choosing what music to listen to is a key element of deciding and expressing not only who you 'wish to be'... but who you are. Music is a pretty little word for something that takes on as many forms as cultural and subcultural identities. As with all little words, it carries with it a threat. When we say "music," it's easy to assume that there is something that corresponds to that term... However, when we speak of music, we are referring to a variety of activities and experiences... (p. 6, italics in the original)

Popular music in particular are complex systems of social practice and process that are frequently accompanied by lyrics, dance, fashion, video, and other media texts; consequently, popular music must necessarily incorporate all of these and recognize that it is not only sonic, but also visual, kinetic, and verbal modes of signification that make it such an appealing – and complex – social phenomenon. Popular music cannot be studied in isolation, either from other forms and practices of popular culture or from the structures and practices of daily life, according to Lawrence Grossberg (p. 27). In the context of this work, the concept of music extends beyond the sound object itself. I am particularly interested in how music operates as a strategic resource in the reflexive derivation and performance of queer identities – a practice and process that must be investigated in relation to both the spectacular and the mundane as a multi-textual site of meaning-making. Popular music and its related subcultural and scenic places have historically served as crucial modes of symbolic resistance against cultural hegemony.

As a common site of defiance, the meanings and forms of popular music frequently arise as a polemic against conventional ideals of morality or in opposition to artistic commodification and 'mainstream' sensibility. Popular music remains a contentious arena in which numerous and frequently contradictory meanings circulate, and to study it is to gain insight into how people form their identities, enact their political and social beliefs, and live their lives at certain times and locations. Understanding both the music of queer subjects and how queers have coalesced around specific music can reveal a great deal about

sexual autonomy, advocacy, and the aesthetic strategies of queer resistance and survival.

5. THE ROLE OF MUSIC IN LESBIAN AND GAY CULTURES

Music has always played a significant role in the formation and development of lesbian and homosexual cultures in the West. These "collectivities of lesbian and homosexual life organised around erotic identity" began to emerge at the close of the 19th century in a number of major American and European cities. Subcultural gathering places have given birth to lesbian and gay bars over time. With the emergence of the lesbian and homosexual movement in the 1960s, this "scene" expanded dramatically and frequently differentiated based on sex, resulting in distinct lesbian and gay cultures. One of the few historians who have written about LGB culture in Belgium reaches the same result. On multiple levels, music contributed to the evolution of lesbian and gay cultures. Both a powerful and expressive everyday medium and part of a sophisticated system of subcultural meanings, it not only provided means to meet other lesbians and gays, whether on the streets, in public or private meeting places, but also contributed to the development of a sense of belonging to a community and the formation of lesbian and gay identities.

Several researchers in the developing lesbian and gay or queer area of musicology and popular music studies have written about the polysemous character of music and the possibilities of reading it from a variety of perspectives, including lesbian and gay. These readings reveal the existence and significance of shared codes connected with lesbians and gays, which is an essential element when discussing "lesbian and gay cultures." In these lesbian and gay reading processes, multiple factors might be considered. For instance, the sexual orientation of the artist can lend gay or lesbian connotations to music for audiences with such knowledge.

In such processes of "decoding" lesbian and gay culture, subcultural and frequently gender-related

codes play a major role. In this regard, camp is exemplary as a collection of "effeminate" subcultural rules shared primarily by gay males. Camp is a mindset associated with gay culture and defined by a preference for style for the sake of flair and "failing taste."

According to a study, camp signifies a dedication to the marginal, or "the traditionally feminine, which camp mimics in a presentation of stylized effeminacy" (p. 69). Several 'gay icons', such as Judy Garland (prior to LGBT liberation in the late 1960s) and, more recently, Lady Gaga, are linked to camp. Some of them, predominantly women, are also referred to as divas: spectacularly powerful personae with performance flair. In a musical context, camp can be characterized not just by the artist and their stage presence, but also through the lyrics and musical execution. A study found that three auditory characteristics contribute to musical camp: exaggeration, flamboyance, and playfulness. Lesbian culture is more likely to be identified with women's music than with camp taste and diva worship, which are primarily associated with homosexual culture. This genre originated in the 1960s and was originally characterized as "music by women, for women, and about women that is financially controlled by women" (p. 242).

Women's music encompasses a variety of genres and styles; however 'alternative' genres such as punk, folk, and rock have historically been more common than others. Again, gender codes come into play, since some of these genres have been viewed as 'masculine,' particularly in comparison to their 'opposite,' meaning commercial and mainstream popular music (p. 52)

According to Biddle & Jarman-Ivens (1-20), the gendering of this music involves both musical (e.g., the sound) and non-musical (e.g., the performance) categories. The gay and lesbian movement set the ground for the expansion and visibility of gay and lesbian "scenes." Beginning in the 1960s, more bars, clubs, discos, and other gathering places for gay men and women were established, where older shared codes took on new significance. Dyer argues that disco's musical and ideological qualities are linked to

homosexual culture, despite its capitalist origins. "It is a 'contrary' use of what the dominant culture gives, it is significant in the formation of gay identity, and it has subversive as well as reactionary consequences" (p. 410).

Despite the fact that dance music has evolved significantly since then, it remains a significant genre for homosexual audiences today. For instance, both Amico and Buckland's ethnographic research suggest that dance music can be one of the necessary ingredients for the formation of a masculine "queer world." LGB culture has become more prevalent in mainstream media and music during the 1990s. Consequently, many of the subcultural codes outlined previously, such as camp in the context of the Eurovision Song Contest, have achieved global awareness. Scholars have continued to investigate the relationship between certain music and LGB culture. For instance, research on contemporary musicians such as Madonna, Lady Gaga, and klang demonstrates the significance of certain artists in lesbian and gay culture, as well as in the identity formation and self-acceptance of LGBs, not least because they openly and deliberately explore their sexuality, advocate for LGBT rights, and incorporate diverse forms of femininity and masculinity into their work and performance. While the preceding description demonstrates that much has been written about the significance of music in lesbian and gay culture, the vast majority of this research has focused on Anglo-Saxon cultures; therefore, our focus on Flanders, where the authors live and work, provides a fresh perspective. Although Flanders (and Belgium in general) is one of the international leaders in terms of LGBT rights and law, little is known about its vibrant LGBT culture.

In addition, a great deal of Anglo-Saxon writing concentrates on the social consumption and appreciation of music in lesbian and homosexual cultures, whether in bars or discos or at lesbian and gay movement-sponsored events. Exceptions include Valentine's study on the consumption of music by lesbian artist klang by lesbian fans and Lemish and Singleton's study on the Eurovision Song Contest's significance for LGBT fans. Recently, a number of experts have investigated

Lady Gaga's influence on gay and lesbian communities and individuals. While these authors began with a particular performer or event, there is essentially no research examining the relationship between broader musical preferences and sexual orientation. Consequently, the second objective of this paper is to experimentally investigate the individual musical preferences of LGBs and the distinctive LGB connotations associated with this music. In this analysis, we follow the example of comparable (popular) music research that relates musical tastes to other social categories such as class, age, and gender.

6. GAYS AND LESBIANS IN BROADWAY MUSICALS

Many gays and lesbians persons have a special fondness for Broadway musicals, which is no surprise. "Keep it gay!" shouts the flamboyant director in *The Producers*, and musical theatre has



6.2 The Boys in the Band

The Boys in the Band, which premiered in 1968, empowered gay men to perceive themselves as nuanced people rather than dangerous or comic clichés. LGBT men were coming out of the closets, witnessing the play, and refusing to stay



6.3 Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia On National Themes

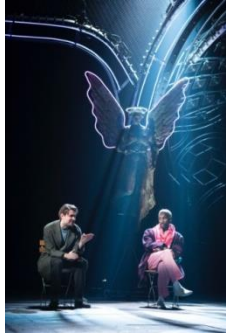
long attracted non-gay writers, actors, and audiences. However, it has only been in the last fifty years or so that tuners have publicly put openly gay characters onstage, with some of the best Broadway productions of all time as a result. Here the list of best musicals with strong gay themes, based on quality, historical significance, and LG+ content. We've condensed the list, which means some excellent shows didn't make the cut. However, there's a lot to be proud of here.

6.1 Fun Home (2013)

Fun Home, the first Broadway musical with a lesbian protagonist, is based on Alison Bechdel's graphic novel and life. Alison and her family must confront her father's secret identity as a gay man as she struggles to comprehend her own sexuality. This Tony Award-winning show started a discussion on what happens to people when they realize who they are, and what happens to us when we hide who we are.

quiet any longer, barely one year before the Stonewall riots and the gay civil rights movement. The act was recently performed in London, and it appears to be as relevant as ever.

Angels in America, Tony Kushner's renowned play, is divided into two parts: Millennium Approaches and Perestroika. Prior Walter tackles the reality of the AIDS crisis with his partner, closest friend, and angelic visitors in the 1980s



New York AIDS epidemic. This play opened audiences' eyes to the genuine experience, anxiety, and optimism of the LGBT community at the time, with a plot that tackled the views of AIDS and those who suffer from it.

6.4 The Color Purple (2005)

The Color Purple, based on Alice Walker's novel, made its Broadway debut in 2005 and presented the narrative of a young African-American girl's tough journey to adulthood. Celie finds solace



and love in Shug after a series of traumatic relationships and rape, highlighting the rarely-seen friendship between two women of colour on stage.

6.5 La Cage aux Folles (1983)

Jean-Michel, who was raised by two fathers who operate a drag bar, brings his fiancée home to meet them, as well as her ultra-conservative parents. The perfect culture clash in Harvey Fierstein's La Cage aux Folles is confronting



judgemental, disapproving parents with an in-your-face drag world, which delivers the laughs as well as a profound message of acceptance, love, and living out loud.

6.6 Kinky Boots (2012)

Kinky Boots is based on a true story about Charlie, who inherits his family's shoe firm. When the company is in trouble, Charlie enlists the services of drag queen Lola to help him turn things around. Lola's quest for acceptance, which she faced derision from certain factory workers,



is similar to what many in the queer, drag, and trans community have gone through. Update: Lola is considered straight by the creators, despite the fact that many people presume she is a gay male — Lola's sexuality is never explicitly stated in the show.

6.7 Avenue Q (2003)

It was Avenue Q that led the way when musical comedy made a comeback on Broadway in this century with puppets a la Sesame Street to depict an outer borough community coping with life lessons like hookups, racism, and Internet pornography in the 21st century. Avenue Q's version on Sesame Street's resident odd pair,



Ernie and Bert, is highlighted by the characters Nicky and Rod, created by book writer Jeff Whitty and co-composer Jeff Marx, who are joined by future double-EGOT winner Robert Lopez. In a story that is both amusing and heartwarming, the secretly gay Rod falls head over heels for the straight Nicky.

6.8 Hedwig and the Angry Inch (1998)

In Hedwig and the Angry Inch by John Cameron Mitchell, the gender queer rock sensation Hedwig discovers acceptance for who she is. With The Angry Inch, Hedwig utilizes her post-surgical scar as the name of her band, which she formed

after botching a transition surgery. The show depicts the difficulties transgender people encountered before society and health care professionals began to embrace their existence.



6.9 Rent (1996)

Reimagining Puccini opera *La Bohème* into a passionate rock-pop tableau of creative artists in the East Village, Jonathan Larson's *Rent* developed a distinctly distinctive dramatis personis: There are at least half of the eight key characters who have HIV, and a majority of them are cast as non-white. It was a family of friends

that came together in the show *Rent* to overcome AIDS, drug addiction, poverty, homelessness, sexuality and gender identity. For many viewers, the show was a window into the New York of the late 1980s/early 1990s and a representation of their own lived experiences as persons who are either bisexual or gay.



6.10 A Strange Loop (2019)

Playwrights Horizons' Off Broadway production of Michael R. Jackson's shatteringly honest metamusical about queer Black identity received the 2020 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. As Usher, Jackson's alter persona, battles to define himself in the swirl of sex, race, family, body shaming, religion, and entertainment, Jackson's wide-ranging intravaganza takes a deep dive, often

barely coming up for breath, into the whirlpool of ambition and frustration. *A Strange Loop* may not have gotten the quick Broadway transfer it deserved because of the 2020 theatre shutdown, but maybe the Great White Way will soon have room for this demanding and exciting tour de force.



6.11 Falsettos (1992)

One of William Finn and James Lapine's intimate, stubborn, devastating 1992 musicals has the uniqueness and impact of the resurrected production in 2016 about a middle-class Jewish father who leaves his wife and son in the early 1980s in favour of a male lover. One-act March of the Falsettos, presented in 1981, explores toxic masculinity; the second half, Falsettoland, was created in 1990, and deals with HIV's more

tangible toxicity. "Sparky, heartbreaking and wonderfully romantic, with frequent enough variations of melody and phrasing to resist the maudlin," says Finn. "It's a tremendously touching collection of songs." Falsettos depicts a wounded but healing depiction of communal sorrow and purpose as the show's fragmented blended family pulls together in the face of bereavement.



6.12 Cabaret (1966)

Because of its ever-changing connection to LGBT content, Cabaret has earned a special spot on this list. When Joe Masteroff wrote the book and John Kander and Fred Ebb wrote the legendary score for the original 1966 version of

this depiction of German life in the early 1930s, they removed the homosexuality from Christopher Isherwood's 1939 novella Goodbye to Berlin.



7. CONCLUSION

The term "Broadway theatre," which is now synonymous with musicals and theatrical success, refers to performances in any of Manhattan's nearly 40 commercial theatres with 500 or more seats. The study concludes as it is important to recall that this description focuses just on the gender of the participants, but other aspects and variances (in terms of age, class, race, etc.) are crucial to comprehending lesbian and gay musical preferences. Further research is required to disentangle the junction of many individual and collective uses and meanings of music, as well as differences within and blurred lines between the gender categories described here as relatively homogenous. As I consider the future of Broadway musicals, it becomes evident that new voices are required. In addition, the genre's potential will grow with each new musical that rejects the traditional philosophy of musical theatre. In this paper we have discussed the list 12 Broadway music for gay and lesbians.

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