



MUSICAL THEATRE Workshop

with Stephanie Graham

What is a Musical?

The musical, in all its various forms, is very much a living art form. Our goal is to see how the musical has developed over the last few centuries on stage and screen, to assess where it currently stands, and to finally make some educated guesses as to where it may be headed in years to come, especially after the pandemic. Let's start with a basic definition:

musical (noun): a stage, television or film production using popular-style songs - dialogue is optional - to either tell a story (book musicals) or showcase the talents of the writers and/or performers (revues).

Book musicals have gone by many names: **comic operas, operettas, opera bouffe, burlesque, burletta, extravaganza** and **musical comedy**.

Revues have their roots in **variety, vaudeville, music halls** and **minstrel shows**.

The best musicals have three essential qualities –

Brains – intelligence and style

Heart – genuine and believable emotion

Courage – the guts to do something creative and exciting.

(a cue to remember these qualities is *The Wizard of Oz*, a 1939 musical film production!)



One has to only look at the popularity of the **WICKED** production or **GREASE, RENT, LES MISERABLES** and many others to know that audiences of all ages attend and are entertained by these musical theatre productions. Of course, quality is no guarantee of commercial success. However, musicals with these qualities are more likely to stand the test of time.



I believe that a great musical is a great musical, no matter what its point of origin. Those created for the large or small screen are no less interesting than those written for the stage. So whether we are discussing *Astaire & Rogers or *Rodgers & Hammerstein, we are still considering the musical at its best.

Today, we have two categories of musical theatre: **Golden Age**, which would include productions prior to 1969 such as those starring Astaire & Rogers and written by Rodgers & Hammerstein (Oklahoma, Annie Get Your Gun, South Pacific, Carousel and others such as The Music Man and Guys & Dolls); and **Contemporary**, which began with the introduction of the mega-musicals that were created after 1969, such as Cats, Joseph & the Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, PHANTOM of the Opera, Les Miserables, Miss Saigon, Hair Spray, Wicked, Rent, and Spring Awakening.



However, the strength of some musical theatre performances vary, with emphasis shifting between the singing and the dancing. The musical screen production of **Dirty Dancing** has no singing but there is lots of **dancing**. Yet, other contemporary musical theatre productions like **The PHANTOM of the Opera** or **Les Miserables** emphasizes the singing with dance or movement minimal with the vocals.

There are **three types of musical performances**: those that focus on the **DANCING**; those that focus on the **SINGING**; and, those with equal demands of singing and dancing. That said, all musicals require the musical performances to tell the story and further the plotline so you're also **ACTING** and playing your role. Therefore, you can not make a musical into a drama or comedy production as the plotline is carried through the musical performances.

In **Stephanie Graham's workshop, "Come on Everybody"** from **All Shook Up**, you are playing teens and following the lead, Chad, who is getting the teens to follow him "dancing" in a town where no dancing is allowed. It is the 1950s and as a JukeBox musical, it is using the music of Elvis. Music changed in the 50s - more percussive - from the 1930s and 40s when teens would listen to the music of their parents. This new ENERGY is taking over their bodies and we see this in the choreography Steph has created to tell the story.

What is a CHOREOGRAPHER?

A **Choreographer** designs and directs the dance or stylized movement in **musical** productions, working closely with the director and **musical** director. A **choreographer** works with dancers to interpret the story in the lyrics and music and then develop ideas to transform them into the finished performance.

Musical theatre uses all types of **dance styles**: Jazz, Ballet, Tap, Hip Hop, Contemporary, Modern, World dance and many more.

Types of Musicals:

Musical	Book musicals	Comic Operas	Operettas
Burlesque	Burletta	Extravaganza	Musical Comedy
Variety	Vaudeville	Music Halls	Minstrel Shows
Opera Bouffe	Revues		



Musical Theatre Choreography



Click on the link below for the **10 Must Know Choreographic Moments in Musical Theatre**

[PreviewPreview4:1110 Must-Know Choreographic Moments Emblematic of ...YouTube · PlaybillNov 24, 2019](#)

Click on the link below for the **Top 10 Iconic Broadway Dance Numbers**

[PreviewPreview12:50Top 10 Iconic Broadway Dance NumbersYouTube · MsMojoApr 28, 2019](#)



FAMOUS Musical Theatre CHOREOGRAPHERS of All Time

1. **Jerome Robbins** (1918–1998) – an American choreographer, director, dancer, and theater producer who worked in classical ballet, on stage, film, and television. Best known for *The King and I*, *The Pajama Game*, *West Side Story*, *Gypsy*, and *Fiddler on the Roof*. Robbins was a five-time **Tony Award**-winner and received two **Academy Awards**.
2. **Michael Bennett** (1943–1987) – an American **musical theatre** director, writer, choreographer, and dancer. He won seven **Tony Awards** for his choreography and direction of **Broadway** shows and was nominated for an additional eleven. Known best for the musical *A Chorus Line*.
3. **Bob Fosse** (1927–1987) – an American **dancer, musical-theatre choreographer, actor, theatre director, and filmmaker**. He directed and choreographed musical works on stage and screen, including the stage musicals *The Pajama Game* (1954),

FAMOUS Musical Theatre CHOREOGRAPHERS of All Time

Bob Fosse continued... *Damn Yankees* (1955), *How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying* (1961), *Sweet Charity* (1966), *Pippin* (1972), and *Chicago* (1975). His films include *Sweet Charity*(1969), *Cabaret* (1972), *Lenny* (1975), and *All That Jazz* (1979)

4. **Tommy Tune** (1939-) – His first Broadway directing and choreography credits were for *The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas* in 1978. His direction of *Nine The Musical* in 1982, won the Tony for Best Musical and his first Tony.

5. **Agnes De Mille** (1905-1993) –Agnes de Mille enriched Broadway musicals by bringing classical dance to the production of *Oklahoma!* This is widely credited for starting de Mille’s fame as a choreographer for Broadway and the dance industry.

6. **Gene Kelly** (1912-1996) – known for his energetic and athletic dance style, he is credited with making ballet commercially acceptable to film audiences and his many innovations that transformed the Hollywood musical.

7. **Gower Champion** (1919-1980) – Champion’s longest-running show was *42nd Street* that won the Tony for Best Musical, and ran for 3,486 performances. Another Broadway blockbuster, *Hello, Dolly!* ran for 2844 performances – almost 7 years.

8. **Gillian Lynn** (1926-2018) – Born in England, as a choreographer and director, Lynne worked on many productions. She is best known for her work on **Andrew Lloyd Webber**'s musicals *Cats* (1981) and *The Phantom of the Opera* (1986).

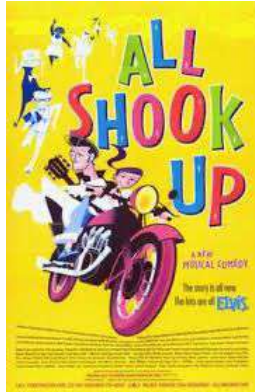
9. **Christopher Gattelli** – American performer, director and choreographer. **Broadway** work includes *High Society* (2007), *South Pacific* (2008), "Godspell," *Newsies* (2012), and the 2015 revival of *The King and I*.

10. **Susan Stroman** (1954-) – an American theatre and film director, choreographer and performer. She is a five-time **Tony Award** winner, four for **Best Choreography** and one as **Best Director of a Musical** for *The Producers*.

11. **Brian Macdonald** (1928-2014) – a Canadian choreographer and director. Best known for his choreographic work at the **Stratford Festival** for 17 years, reviving **Gilbert and Sullivan** operettas to critical acclaim. He directed *The Mikado* in 1982 which toured the world until it made its debut on **Broadway**.

Musical Theatre Dance Movements

- Step touch, step together step touch
- Step turn
- Lunge
- Extension/Flexion
- Open turn
- Kick ball change
- Pas de bouree
- Box Step/Jazz Square
- Inside turn
- Step Kick
- Fan Kick
- Lindy
- Jazz Walk
- Jete



Movements stressed in **Stephanie Graham's** Choreography:

- Knee drop ("Elvis")
- Twists
- Grapevine
- Pony
- Jive (hop, step ball change)
- Pivot
- Chasse
- Chainee Turns

FAMOUS Musical Theatre CHOREOGRAPHERS

1. Who are Fred Astaire (1899-1987) and Ginger Rogers (1911-1995)? What was their relationship to each other and how did they influence the musical theatre industry?
2. Who are Richard Rodgers (1902-1979) and Oscar Hammerstein II (1895-1960) and what was their relationship to each other and, how did they influence the musical theatre industry?
3. Choose five (5) of the following Canadians and explain their backgrounds and their influence on Musical Theatre in Canada: Brian Macdonald, David Earle, Allen Kaeja, Stacey Tookey, Alan Lund, Shawn Byfield, Onna White, Nico Arhambault, Donna Feore, and Sergio Trujillo.
4. Choose five (5) of the following Americans and explain their backgrounds and their influence on Musical Theatre on Broadway: Liza Minnelli, Ann Reinking, Jack Cole, George Faison, Bill T. Jones, Michael Kidd, Ben Vereen, Kathleen Marshall, Jerry Mitchell, Bob Avian, and Sergio Trujillo.



MUSICAL THEATRE Assignment:

1. **What is your favourite musical theatre production?** If you haven't watched one, choose one to view. Identify the choreographer. (*This maybe someone you wish to research for the Choreographer Assignment*) Describe the role of dance within the plot and the various styles of dance and other Elements of Dance you saw in the film/video?



2. **Choose a song from a musical theatre composition and choreograph it. Your teacher will choose the length required.** Choreographers are always creating new signature movements that blend a variety of styles, use a high level of athleticism, increasingly advanced tricks, and incorporate all the Elements of Dance: Time, Shape, Space, Energy and Relationship. So, **what will your signature move look like** as you continue to apply the Principles of Composition: Variety, Transitions, Sequencing, Climax/Resolution, Contrast, Development, Unity, Balance, Repetition, Formations, Levels, Tempo, Dynamics and Qualities of movement.

Choose Your Own Musical Theatre Choreographer

3. Choose one of the influential choreographers shared in an earlier google slide or ask for your teacher's suggestion.

Research the following:



1. Their birthplace and where they grew up.
2. When and where they started to dance.
3. Their dance experience, challenges and start professionally.
4. Their signature moves, preferred dance style and unique contributions to the artform of musical theatre.
5. Musicians, videos, concerts, television shows, and/or movies they have performed with or choreographed for.
6. Awards or other special accomplishments they have made in their career.
7. A photo of the choreographer.



ASSIGNMENT:

Compare two musicals, indicating your favourite musical scene in each production.

Explain WHY these are your **favourite scenes** in the productions.

Describe how these two musical performances **progress the plot** forward from the action/dialogue before this specific scene and how it connects with the action/dialogue after this scene.

Identify the **characteristics** of the performances chosen, any **signature moves**, and **WHY** you enjoyed it the most.

Identify the **dance styles** used by the choreographer in these scenes.

What **changes occurred in the relationships of the characters** performing in this musical performance?

