

BLACK MUSICAL THEATER

A

- [Abyssinia \(musical\)](#)



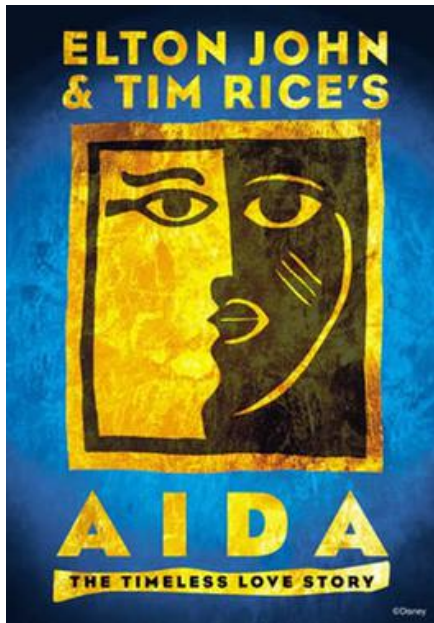
Abyssinia is a musical with music by **Ted Kociolek**, lyrics by **James Racheff**, and a book by both Racheff and Kociolek, based on the novel *Marked by Fire*, by **Joyce Carol Thomas**. *Abyssinia* was first produced in 1987 by Musical Theater Works at the CSC Repertory Theater. It was directed by **Tazewell Thompson**. The scenery consultant was Evelyn Sakash, the lighting consultant was Clarke W. Thornton, the costume consultant was Amanda Klein, musical supervision choral arrangements were by Daryl Waters, and the choreography consultant was Julie Arenal. The same year, the musical was produced by CSC Repertory Theater in New York, directed by Tazewell Thompson.^[1]

[The North Shore Music](#)

[Theatre](#) produced *Abyssinia* twice, once in 1995 and once in 2005.^{[2][3]} It also sponsored a reading in 1994 at the National Alliance for Musical Theatre's New Works Festival. The 2005 production ran at the Shubert Theater in [Boston, Massachusetts](#). It was directed by [Stafford Arima](#) and choreographed by Todd L. Underwood, with music direction by Michael O'Flaherty, lighting design by Kirk Bookman, and costumes by Pamela Scofield.^[4]

Abyssinia has also been presented three times by [Goodspeed Musicals](#), Connecticut, in 1987 and 1988 at the Norma Terris Theater and in 2005 at the [Goodspeed Opera House](#), directed by Stafford Arima and choreographed by Todd L. Underwood.^[5] [The Cleveland Play House](#) produced *Abyssinia* in the spring of 1991.

- [Aida \(musical\)](#)



Aida (also known as *Elton John and Tim Rice's Aida*) is a musical based on the opera of the same name written by [Antonio Ghislanzoni](#) with music by [Giuseppe Verdi](#). It has music by [Elton John](#), lyrics by [Tim Rice](#), and book by [Linda Woolverton](#), [Robert Falls](#), and [David Henry Hwang](#), and was originally produced by [Walt Disney Theatrical](#).

Aida premiered on [Broadway](#) on [March 23, 2000](#), running for 1,852 performances until [September 5, 2004](#). It was nominated for five [Tony Awards](#) and won four, including [Best Original Score](#). It was also named by *Time* as one of the top ten theatre productions of the

year.

The original Broadway cast recording won the [Grammy Award for Best Musical Show Album](#). A song from the show, "[Written in the Stars](#)", recorded by [Elton John](#) and [LeAnn Rimes](#), reached No. 2 in the *Billboard* US adult contemporary music chart.

The show is based on [Giuseppe Verdi](#)'s Italian-language opera of the same name, the libretto of which was written by [Antonio Ghislanzoni](#). The musical originated from a children's storybook version of Verdi's opera written by the soprano [Leontyne Price](#).^[1] The book featured illustrations by [Leo and Diane Dillon](#). In 1994 the book rights were acquired by the [Walt Disney Company](#) for a proposed animated feature

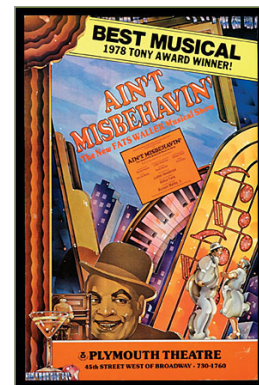


film. However, Elton John chose not to pursue another animated project after *The Lion King* so Disney executives suggested a Broadway adaptation instead. Despite his opinion that "opera people can be very elitist", John, along with Tim Rice, immediately signed on

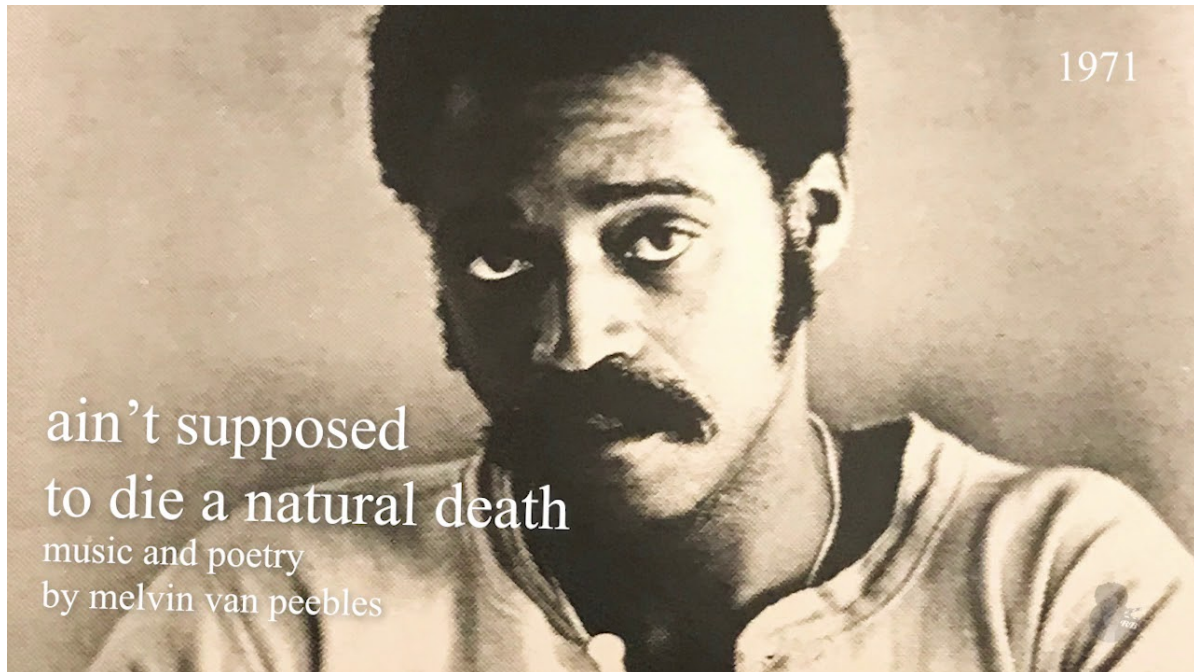


- [Ain't Misbehavin' \(musical\)](#) 1978
Ain't Misbehavin' is a musical **revue** with a book by **Murray Horwitz** and **Richard Maltby Jr.**, and music by various composers and lyricists as arranged and orchestrated by **Luther Henderson**. It is named after the song by **Fats Waller** (with **Harry Brooks** and **Andy Razaf**), "Ain't Misbehavin'".

The musical is a tribute to the **black musicians** of the 1920s and 1930s who were part of the **Harlem Renaissance**, an era of growing creativity, cultural awareness, and ethnic pride, and takes its title from the 1929 Waller song "Ain't Misbehavin'." It was a time when **Manhattan nightclubs** like the **Cotton Club** and the **Savoy Ballroom** were the playgrounds of **high society** and **Lenox Avenue** dives were filled with piano players banging out the new beat known as **swing**. Five performers present an evening of rowdy, raunchy, and humorous songs that encapsulate the various moods of the era and reflect Waller's view of life as a journey meant for pleasure and play.



- [Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death](#)

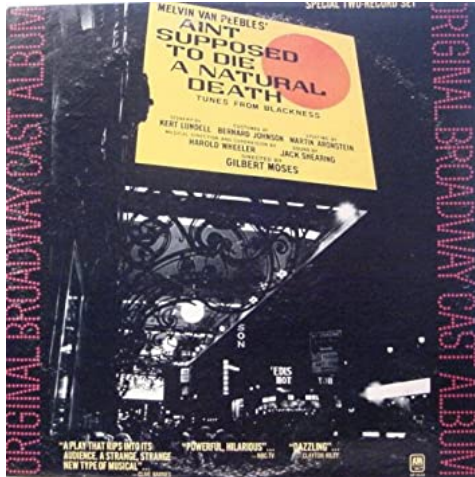


Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death (Tunes from Blackness) is a [musical](#) with a book, music, and lyrics by [Melvin Van Peebles](#). The musical contains some material also on three of Van Peebles' albums, [Brer Soul](#), [Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death](#) and [As Serious as a Heart-Attack](#),^[1] some of which were yet to come out.

The musical is a series of 19 politically outspoken, darkly comic, and sexually charged musical [monologues](#) that explore the negative aspects of [African-American](#) street life and the [ghetto](#) experience. Each character has a painful story to tell in [funk](#), soul, jazz and blues-inflected [songs](#). The innovative piece, presented in a confrontational, "in your face" style, is a precursor to choreopoem, [spoken word](#), and [rap music](#). It "contributed to the growing black presence on [Broadway](#)."^[2]

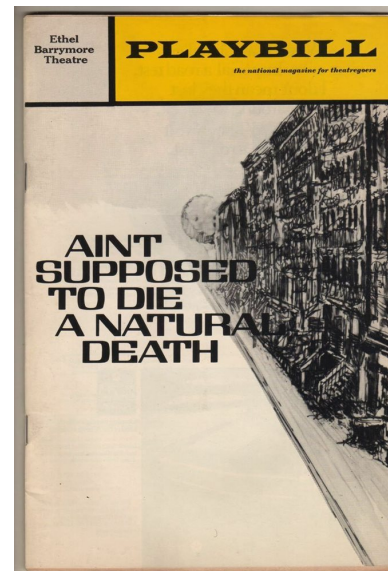
In 1970, Van Peebles decided to transform some of the albums he had recorded between 1968 and 1970 into a musical. According to Van Peebles, "The songs were mirroring the incidents that were happening in the streets."^[1] Van Peebles marketed the musical to black audiences in churches "all up and down the fucking East Coast. Ministers have congregations, and the congregations would come with busloads of people

In a poor Black neighborhood, nameless characters rail against a general malaise called "the Man." Each one begins his or her musical rant with the repetition of one or two signature phrases. They sing of their frustrations,



fears, regrets and pain. The drama stems from the characters' words about their daily lives. Act I follows a "normal" day in the ghetto, but Act II graphically depicts a particularly violent day, in which looting and several brutal killings occur. The characters include a blind beggar, a Malcolm X lieutenant, a pimp, prostitutes, a drag queen, a lesbian, looters, lovers, junkies, a wino, a bag lady, corrupt cops, a disgruntled postal worker, sweatshop workers, and a death row prisoner. The work begins with the "Star Spangled Banner" and ends with the accusatory

"Put a Curse on You."



- [Ain't Too Proud](#)

Ain't Too Proud: The Life and Times of The Temptations is a 2018 jukebox musical with music and lyrics by [The Temptations](#) and a book by [Dominique Morisseau](#). Based on the story of [The Temptations](#), the



musical had a series of regional productions and opened at [Broadway's Imperial Theatre](#) in March 2019.



- [Amen Corner \(musical\)](#)

Amen Corner is a musical with a book by [Philip Rose](#) and Peter Udell, lyrics by Udell, music by Garry Sherman, orchestration by Garry Sherman & Dunn Pearson and dance arrangements by Dunn Pearson & George

Butcher,^{[1][2]} based on the 1954 play of the same title by James Baldwin. The score consists of mostly gospel-inspired music.

Theater: 'Amen Corner,' Musical Set in Harlem

By FRANK RICH

BOOK musicals are a dying breed, so at least let it be said that "Amen Corner," the new show at the Nederlander, is mounting a noble campaign to rectify this trend. Have you been craving a musical in which the characters would rather talk incessantly than sing or dance? "Amen Corner" is the answer to your prayers.

Still, if conversation is a welcome antidote to the prevailing blare of our musical theater, it would be nice if the dialogue were spirited, if it took place in pleasant surroundings, and if maybe, just for novelty's sake, the characters moved about while chatting. In "Amen Corner," the talk is expository, the surroundings are shabby and the staging (by Philip Rose) is the most sedentary I've ever seen in a Broadway musical.

For much of this long evening, the actors, not infrequently dressed in bathrobes, just sit on a couch or in chairs, sipping coffee or staring into space while waiting for someone else to stop gabbing. Some members of the company even thumb through a magazine, as if they were killing time in a doctor's waiting room. The audience is left to contemplate the sink and refrigerator that are the most colorful furnishings in the cramped kitchen where most of "Amen Corner" is set.

That kitchen belongs to Margaret (Rhetta Hughes), the pastor of a Harlem storefront church. "Amen Corner" is about Margaret's travails upon discovering that her congregation is in revolt, that her teen-age son has lost the faith and that her long-absent jazz-trombonist husband has returned to die of consumption in her apartment. It's no wonder that the heroine takes a long trip to Philadelphia at the end of the second scene. Forced to submit to "Amen Corner," even W. C. Fields might rather be in Philadelphia.

The source for Peter Udell's and Mr. Rose's book is James Baldwin's play "The Amen Corner," written 30 years ago and seen on Broadway in 1965. Mr. Baldwin made a serious attempt to examine the double-edged role of religion in a ghetto community. The musical, which coarsens the

'Brothers' Closes

"Brothers," the play by George Sibbald, directed by and starring Carroll O'Connor, closed Wednesday evening after one performance and seven previews at the Music Box Theater. The cast included Frank Converse, Dennis Christopher, Pat McNamara and Gary Klar.

Storefront Travails

AMEN CORNER, music by Gery Sherman; lyrics by Peter Udell; book by Philip Rose and Mr. Udell; based on the play "The Amen Corner" by James Baldwin; directed by Mr. Rose; choreography by Al Perryman; scenery by Karl Elgsti; costumes by Felix E. Cochet; lighting by Shirley Prendergast; orchestrations by Garry Sherman and Dism Peerson; vocal arrangements by Mr. Sherman; dance arrangements by George Butcher; musical direction by Margaret Harris; assistant musical director, Joseph Joubert; production manager, Mortimer Halpern. Presented by Fruithomme Productions Ltd., Edward Mann, Judith Henry, Joel Goldstein and Gil Gerard. At the Nederlander Theater, 208 West 41st Street.
Margaret Alexander Rhetta Hughes
Sister Moore Jean Cheek
Odessa Ruth Brown
David Keith Lorenzo
Sister Boxer Helena-Joyce Wright
Brother Boxer Chuck Cooper
Luke Roper Robinson
Members of the Congregation Garry Sherman, Garry Freeman, Lewis Robinson, Renee Rose, Vanessa Shaw, Jeffrey W. Thompson.
Dancers
Loretta Abbott, Leslie Dockery and Renee Rose

characters into stereotypes, is something else. Margaret becomes a prig vaguely reminiscent of Sarah Brown, the mission doll of "Guys and Dolls," and the show is geared to that moment when she will finally retrieve her sexuality and kiss her husband again. Kiss the poor man she eventually does — at which point he dies.

Even in its musical interludes, "Amen Corner" would always rather sit down — or, in the husband's case, lie down — than rock the boat. The songs by Garry Sherman ("Purlie") and Mr. Udell ("Shenandah") are bland and frequently irrelevant to the story. Throw in the barebones orchestrations — mostly percussion — and it can be difficult to keep track of when the talking ends and the singing begins. The best clues come from the lighting scheme, which dims in a spastic flourish at each musical cue.

The gospel chants delivered by Margaret's thinly populated congregation actually have dance routines, sparked by three unidentified go-go girls who dash out of the wings any time anyone on stage threatens to shake a leg. If the dances are less than strenuous — they resemble potato-sack races at a church picnic — that's understandable. An early attempt at a kinetic number causes Karl Elgsti's tacky scenery to shake so badly that any further high-flying choreography in this show would constitute a safety hazard.

The company includes some forceful singers, but Miss Hughes is the only one who can act. At evening's end, she steps forward in her priestly robes and exhorts one and all repeatedly to "rise up and stand again." There's real passion in the actress's delivery, but by then, little short of a second coming could rouse the audience at "Amen Corner" from its heavenly rest.

After 12 previews, the Broadway production, directed by Rose and choreographed by Al Perryman, opened on November 10, 1983, at the Nederlander Theatre, where it ran for 28 performances. The cast included Rhetta Hughes as Margaret, Keith Lorenzo Amos as David, Roger Robinson as Luke, Ruth Brown as Odessa, Helena-Joyce Wright as Sister Boxer, Jean Cheek as Sister Moore, and Chuck Cooper as Brother Boxer. Hughes was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Actress in a Musical. The production received poor reviews.^[3]

The musical was produced in Philadelphia by the Philadelphia Drama Guild in 1986 and has been produced a number of times since.^[4]

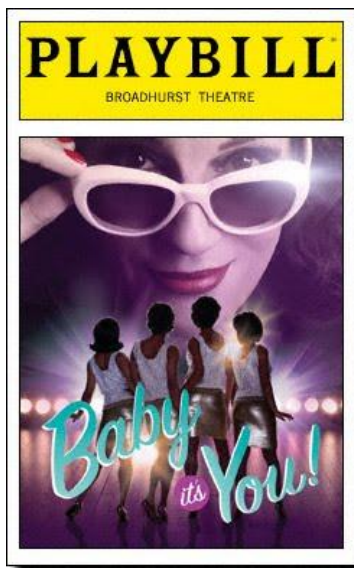
Margaret Alexander, the pastor of a storefront church in Harlem in the early 1960s loses some of her sheen of

righteousness in the eyes of her poor but devout, congregation, when her wayward jazz-trombonist husband Luke returns after many years, now ill. Luke had always been trouble, and Sister Margaret had tried to keep him out of the life of her son, David, who she wants to become pastor some day. Now David wants to see his father, and Luke claims to have changed.

Meanwhile, members of the church have seen David sneaking out to bars at night. Some argue that Margaret should step down as pastor.

Margaret struggles with her feelings for her husband, who says he still loves her, and her teenaged son, David, who has lost his faith and threatens to leave home. She finally reconciles with her dying husband, which purges her of her bitterness, and finds the strength to continue her religious mission.

- [Baby It's You!](#)



Baby It's You! is a jukebox musical written by [Floyd Mutrux](#) and Colin Escott, featuring pop and rock hits of the 1960s, with a special emphasis on songs by [the Shirelles](#) and other acts signed to [Scepter Records](#). The show "tells the story of [Florence Greenberg](#) and Scepter Records, the label Greenberg started when she signed the Shirelles."^[1] After several tryouts and premieres, the show debuted on [Broadway](#) in April 2011, directed by [Sheldon Epps](#).

[The Shirelles](#) were an American [girl group](#) in the early 1960s, and the first to have a number one single on the [Billboard Hot 100](#). The members of the quartet were [Shirley Owens](#) (the main lead singer), [Doris Coley](#), [Beverly Lee](#), and [Addie](#)

"[Micki](#)" [Harris](#).^[2]

[Florence Greenberg](#) (September 16, 1913 – November 2, 1995) originally created [Tiara Records](#). The first song recorded and released on the label was "I Met Him On a Sunday", by the Shirelles. Just as the record started

to break locally, Greenberg sold the company with the Shirelles' contract to [Decca Records](#) for US\$4000. With that money, she started a new label in 1959, called [Scepter Records](#), which became one of the leading record labels in the 60s.

[Florence Greenberg](#) is an average [New Jersey housewife](#). A talent show is held at her daughter's school, and a group of African-American girls are preparing to perform. Florence's daughter is surprised at their talent, quickly notifying her mother, and Florence decides to make the group [recording artists](#). To accommodate them, she founds [Scepter Records](#). After the success of [the Shirelles](#), the new name of the group, Florence and Scepter Records go on to "discover recording artists like [the Kingsmen](#), [the Isley Brothers](#) and [Dionne Warwick](#).

B

- [Bandanna Land](#)

Bandanna Land (also known as ***In Bandanna Land***) is a musical from 1908. A book written by [Jesse A. Shipp](#) with lyrics by Alex Rogers (*aka* Alec) Rogers (*né* Alexander Claude Rogers; 1876–1930),^[1]^[Note 1] and music composed primarily by [Will Marion Cook](#) was released in accompaniment. Created by and featuring African Americans, it was the third musical written by the team whose previous works included *In Dahomey* (1902) and *Abyssinia* (1906). It was the last show featuring the duo of [Bert Williams](#) and [George Walker](#), comedians who starred in these musicals. Walker became ill during the post-Broadway tour and died in 1911.

Skunkton Bowser, a performer who does one-night-stands with a [minstrel show](#), inherits \$25,000 as a bequest from his father's former owner.^[3] His educated friend, Bud Jenkins, appoints himself as guardian of Bowser and creates a park for African Americans called "Bandanna Land". Jenkins assists in selling the park to a railroad company that does not like the presence of the African Americans. Despite Jenkins, Bowser is determined to receive his fair share of the profits of the sale.



- [Bella: An American Tall Tale](#)

Bella: An American Tall Tale is a stage musical with book, music, and lyrics by [Kirsten Childs](#). The musical is set in the 1870s and tells a tale of the [American frontier](#) from a different perspective.

The musical originally premiered at [Dallas Theatre Center](#) on September 22, 2016 before its [Off-Broadway](#) premiere at [Playwrights](#)

[Horizons](#) on May 19, 2017. The Off-Broadway production was co-presented by Playwrights Horizons and Dallas Theatre Center.

Kirsten Childs noticed that [African Americans](#) were not present in history books during the 1870s in the Wild West. Childs wanted "to create a new myth celebrating the power and the beauty of the black female."^[3] When Childs was considering writing this musical, she realized she did not know much about African Americans during the 1870s. She went to the library to research the history of African Americans during this time period. She learned about the Buffalo Soldiers [Buffalo Soldier](#), who inspired the character of Aloysius T. Hunnicut.

Childs was inspired to write the character of Bella after seeing an African American woman as she was walking to her apartment. Childs recounts that the woman had the biggest butt she had ever seen, and every man in the vicinity of her was staring at her butt. She also wants African Americans, who were torn from their original homes and know little of their history, to feel a sense of pride of who they are. This want inspired the song "The Language of My Nose and Lips and Hair," sung by Bella's grandma, about the history of Black Americans in the United States. Childs also touches on how, after the [American Civil War](#), African Americans were allowed to be full citizens, but the [Ku Klux Klan](#) rose up to put an end to that.

The character of Nathaniel Beckworth, who is a train porter, is based on a real-life, African American train porter named [Nat Love](#). His last name "Beckworth" comes from [James Beckwourth](#), who was an explorer, rancher, and fur trader. [Tommie Haw](#) is another real-life character that

appears in *Bella*. Childs learned about his story while researching the [Mai Wah Society](#) in [Butte, Montana](#), which works to document the history of Asian-Americans in the [Rocky Mountains](#)

Synopsis

Bella takes place in the 1870s in the Old West. Bella, a "Big Booty Tupelo Girl," sets off to Kansas to meet her fiance, Aloysius T. Honeycutt, who is a Buffalo Soldier. Bella must make this journey under a false name in order to escape the law. Back home in [Tupelo, Mississippi](#), Bella is in trouble for beating up Bonny Jonny. Her Mama, Grandma, and Aunt Dinah encourage her to leave the state so that she is not arrested. When Bella boards the train headed for Kansas, she attracts the attention of the passengers because of her large bottom. While on the train journey, Bella has fantasies about a gaucho and a Chinese cowboy. A porter on the train, Nathaniel Beckworth, falls in love with Bella



- [Bernarda Alba \(musical\)](#)

Bernarda Alba is a one-act musical with music, lyrics and book by [Michael John LaChiusa](#), based on [Federico García Lorca's](#) 1936 play [The House of Bernarda Alba](#). *Bernarda Alba* tells the story of a controlling, newly widowed mother who is challenged by her five rebellious daughters. The musical opened [Off Broadway](#) at [Lincoln Center's Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater](#) in 2006, to mixed reviews

With direction and choreography by [Graciela Daniele](#), the all-female cast starred [Phylicia Rashad](#) and [Daphne Rubin-Vega](#). The production had a limited run from March 6 to April 9, 2006.^{[1][2]} The production

received [Lucille Lortel Awards](#) and [Outer Critics Circle Awards](#) Best Musical and choreography (Daniele) nominations. The lighting designer (Stephen Strawbridge) received nominations from Lortel, Henry Hewes Design Awards, and Outer Critics Circle. Daniele also received a Callaway Award nomination for choreography. A cast recording was released by [Ghostlight Records](#) in July 2006.

The UK premiere opened at the Union Theatre in London on August 23, 2011, produced by Triptic.^[3] The production was directed by [Katherine Hare](#) with musical direction by Leigh Thompson and choreography by Racky Plews. This production received a positive response from UK based critics. "SIMPLY ELECTRIC... a rather unique but unmissable piece of theatre." [ThePublicReviews.com](#)

- [Big River \(musical\)](#)

Big River: The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn is a musical with a book by [William Hauptman](#) and music and lyrics by [Roger Miller](#).

Based on [Mark Twain's](#) classic 1884 novel, *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, it features music in the [bluegrass](#) and [country](#) styles in keeping with the setting of the novel. The 1985 [Broadway](#) production ran for more than 1,000 performances and it remained one of the few very successful American musicals in the mid-1980s among the emerging successes coming from Great Britain. *Big River* won 7 [Tony Awards](#), including Best Musical.



- [Black and Blue \(musical\)](#)



Black and Blue is a musical revue celebrating the **black** culture of dance and music in **Paris** between **World War I** and **World War II**.

Based on an idea by Mel Howard and conceived by Hector Orezzaoli and Claudio Segovia, it consists of songs by artists such as **W. C. Handy**, **Louis Armstrong**, **Duke Ellington**, **Fats Waller**, **Eubie Blake**, and **Big Maybelle** and skits peppered with bits of bawdy humor

The revue was first presented at the Chatelet Theatre in **Paris** in 1985 which included **Sandra Reaves-Phillips**. The **Broadway production** opened on January 26, 1989 at the **Minskoff Theatre**^[1] and closed on January 20, 1991 after 829 performances and 32 previews. Directed by Orezzaoli and Segovia and choreographed by **Henry LeTang**, **Cholly Atkins**, **Frankie Manning**, and **Fayard Nicholas** the cast of forty-one singers, dancers, and musicians included **Ruth Brown**, **Linda Hopkins**, **Carrie Smith**, **Savion Glover**, **Claude Williams**, **Roland Hanna**, **Grady Tate**, **Jimmy Slyde**, **Bill Easley**, Jimmy "Preacher" Robins, Lon Chaney (the jazz tap dancer, not the actor) and **Bunny Briggs**. **Dianne Walker** was the show's curator and sustainer of the choreography and stage direction, as well as a featured dancer. In 1990, **LaVern Baker** made her Broadway debut replacing Ruth Brown for the last eight months of the run.^[2]

The score included "St. Louis Blues," "I Can't Give You Anything But Love," "In a Sentimental Mood," "Am I Blue?," "Stompin' at the Savoy," and the title tune.

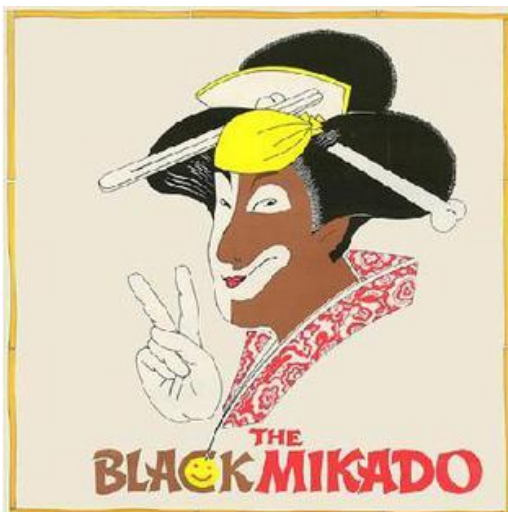
The [original cast recording](#) won a [Grammy Award](#).

Following the Broadway engagement, Howard took *Black and Blue* on two **European** tours, performing at such venues as The Chatelet Theater

in [Paris](#), The Thalia in [Hamburg](#), Theater des Westens in [Berlin](#), The Deutsches Theater in [Munich](#), and The Carre Theater in [Amsterdam](#).

A television production directed by [Robert Altman](#) aired on PBS' *Great Performances* in 1993. The *Variety* reviewer wrote: "Black and Blue' never looked as good on Broadway as it does in Robert Altman's keenly observed, briskly paced small-screen version of the rhythm and blues revue. This is a slightly reduced edition of Altman's February 1991 taping at the Minskoff Theater, sold as a pay-per-view in Japan.

- [The Black Mikado](#)



The Black Mikado is a [musical comedy](#), based on [Gilbert and Sullivan's](#) *The Mikado*, adapted by [Janos Bajtala](#), [George Larnyoh](#) and [Eddie Quansah](#) from [W. S. Gilbert's](#) original 1885 libretto and [Arthur Sullivan's](#) score. The show premiered on 24 April 1975 at the [Cambridge Theatre](#) in London, where it ran for 472 performances before going on a national tour. A 1976 production was mounted in [Soweto](#), South Africa, where it played at the Diepkloof Hall.^[1] After this, the musical was not revived.

The plot of *The Black Mikado* does not stray far from the Gilbert and Sullivan original, except that in the musical the action is set on a [Caribbean](#) island rather than in Japan. Sullivan's original score is rearranged into a mixture of rock, [reggae](#), blues and [calypso](#). The West End production was directed by [Braham Murray](#) with a nearly all black cast, the exception being veteran actor [Michael Denison's](#) Pooh-Bah,^[2] who was white and dressed in a white tropical suit and [pith helmet](#). Theatre writer [John Bush Jones](#) says that the white Pooh-Bah was portrayed "as a lone scheming westerner, 'condescending' to serve an emerging black nationalist country for his own grafting purposes."^[3] The rest of the cast were dressed in what were basically African and Caribbean costumes, "some of which were made to look pseudo-Japanese", and the sets were Japanese.^[4] Pooh-Bah is an uptight English colonial official who

is contrasted with the sexy, exuberant Caribbean islanders. The Three Little Maids from School arrive dressed in uniforms from their proper English school, including, elbow-length gloves and straw boaters. As they



sing of their freedom from the ladies seminary, they strip off their modest clothing until they are shown in their native dress.^[5]

The cast included [Patti Boulaye](#) (under the name Patricia Ebigwei) as Yum-Yum, [Floella Benjamin](#) as Pitti-Sing, [Michael Denison](#) as Pooh-Bah, [Norman Beaton](#) as Nanki-Poo, [Derek Griffiths](#) as Ko-Ko, Jenny McGusty as Peep-Bo, Vernon Nesbeth as Pish-Tush, Val Pringle as The Mikado and Anita Tucker as Katisha. Terry Lane wrote, "Norman Beaton was a very handsome young Nanki-Poo and Patricia Ebigwei was a heart-stoppingly beautiful Yum-Yum. The sexual tensions that are implicit in the plot were exploited to the full.... Patricia Ebigwei's version of 'The Sun Whose Rays' [is] the performance against which all others must now be judged ... a slow, erotic, languid ballad of vanity and sexual self-satisfaction that makes the conventional renditions seem prissy".^[5]

- [Black Nativity](#)

Black Nativity is a retelling of the classic **Nativity** story with an entirely



black cast. Traditional **Christmas carols** are sung in **gospel** style, with a few songs created specifically for the show. Originally written by **Langston Hughes**, the show was first performed **Off-Broadway** on December 11, 1961, and was one of the first plays written by an African American to be staged there. The show had a successful tour of Europe in 1962, one of its appearances being at the **Spoletto Festival of Two Worlds** in **Italy**.^[1] **Black Nativity** has been performed annually in Boston, Massachusetts at various locations, such as: the Elma Lewis School of Fine Arts, Boston Opera House, Tremont Temple, Roxbury Community College, Northeastern's Blackman Auditorium, and presently at Emerson College's Paramount Theater since 1969 & is considered the longest-running production of Langston Hughes' "Black Nativity." The original 160 singers were arranged

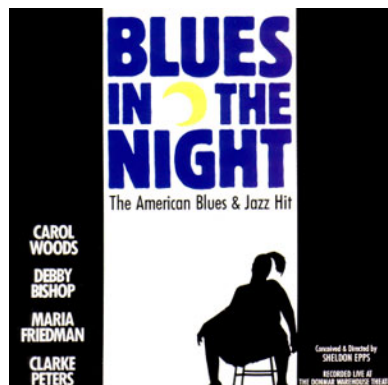
by age group and [vocal range](#), with an assortment of soloists, along with the [narrator](#), and [Mary](#) and [Joseph](#), who are both mute, as well as musicians & ASL interpreters.

The show began with the theater completely darkened. Barefoot singers clad only in white robes and carrying (electric) candles walked in, singing the classic hymn "[Go Tell It on the Mountain](#)". The birth of Jesus was one of the most dramatic aspects of the show. The stage, previously lit with orange and blue lights, was bathed in a deep red hue. Mary's contractions were echoed through the use of [African drums](#) and percussion. The [Three Wise Men](#) were often played by prominent members of the black community in the neighboring area, and had no singing parts. The show closed with the chorus singing a reprise of "Go Tell It on the Mountain" as they walked out in darkness. A final [soliloquy](#) by a young child ended the performance.

The original name for this play was *Wasn't It a Mighty Day?* [Alvin Ailey](#) was a part of the original Off-Broadway cast, but he and [Carmen de Lavallade](#) departed from the show prior to its opening, in a dispute over the title being changed to *Black Nativity*.^{[2][3][4]}

A performance of this musical also has taken place every Christmas season since 1998 in [Seattle](#), first at the Intiman Theater and currently at the Moore Theater. The theatrical director is Jackie Moscou, the music director is Patrinell Wright, and the choreography was designed by Donald Byrd.^[5] It is a smaller production with 30 or so choir members – most of whom are also members of The Total Experience Gospel C

- [Blues in the Night \(musical\)](#)



Blues in the Night is a 1980s [musical revue](#) conceived by [Sheldon Epps](#). It was produced by Mitchell Maxwell, Alan J. Schuster, Fred H. Krones and M Squared Entertainment, Inc., and Joshua Silver (Associate Producer).

Set in a rundown [Chicago](#) hotel in 1938, the dialogue-free show focuses on three women's relationships with the same [snake](#) of a man, their interweaving stories told through the [torch songs](#) and [blues](#) of [Bessie Smith](#), [Johnny Mercer](#), [Harold Arlen](#), [Vernon Duke](#), [Gordon Jenkins](#), and [Alberta Hunter](#), among others.

[Frank Rich](#) in his [New York Times](#) review of the 1982 revival, wrote: "The sad truth is that not even the plainest theatrical formulas are as easy as they look - and *Blues in the Night*, the new revue at the Rialto, is the not-so-living proof. The 25 blues numbers in this show...are often first-rate. The stars – Leslie Uggams, Jean Du Shon and Debbie Shapiro – are talented. The format – no dialogue, a minimum of dancing – is a model of economy. Yet *Blues in the Night* proves a bland evening that mainly serves to remind us just how much imagination went into its seemingly similar, far more fiery predecessors. Sheldon Epps, who "conceived" the revue and directed it, may well be responsible for what's gone wrong, but his basic notion isn't bad: *Blues* is set in a cheap hotel in 1938 Chicago (modestly designed by John Falabella) where the three stars occupy separate, shabby rooms. Yet the women remain anonymous throughout – they are called simply Woman No. 1 and so on in the Playbill – and, even when they sing together, they don't interac

- [Big Deal \(musical\)](#)

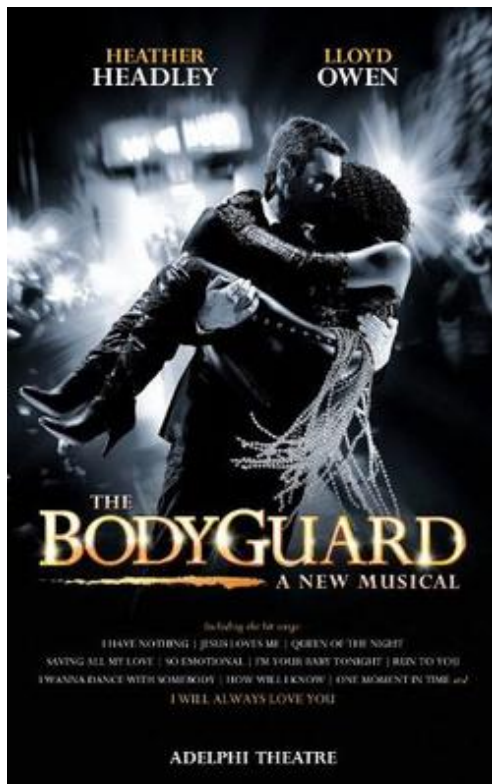


Big Deal is a [musical](#) with a book by [Bob Fosse](#) using songs from various composers such as [Ray Henderson](#), [Eubie Blake](#), and [Jerome Kern](#). It was based on the film [Big Deal on Madonna Street](#) by [Mario Monicelli](#). The musical received five [Tony Award](#) nominations, with Fosse winning for [Choreography](#). Fosse said that by using existing songs: "I can pick the perfect songs that will say the right things, and they're known. We'll have the greatest score in the world because they're all hit songs."^[1] Fosse said of the main character,

Charlie: "That's my part! A swaggering bumbler who thinks he's a ladies' man, and he's not."^[2]

Big Deal opened on [Broadway](#) at the [Broadway Theatre](#) on April 10, 1986 and closed on June 8, 1986 after 69 performances and six previews. Directed and choreographed by Fosse, with [Christopher Chadman](#) as assistant choreographer, the musical featured [Cleavant Derricks](#) as Charley, [Loretta Devine](#) as Lilly, [Wayne Cilento](#), [Cady Huffman](#), [Valarie Pettiford](#), and [Stephanie Pope](#).

- [The Bodyguard \(musical\)](#)



The Bodyguard is a 2012 stage musical with a book by [Alexander Dinelaris](#), based on the 1992 film *The Bodyguard*, with the score featuring songs recorded by [Whitney Houston](#) including "One Moment in Time", "I Wanna Dance with Somebody" and her cover version of [Dolly Parton](#)'s "I Will Always Love You".^[1] The show began previews at the [Adelphi Theatre](#) in [London's West End](#), on 6 November 2012, and officially opened on 5 December 2012.

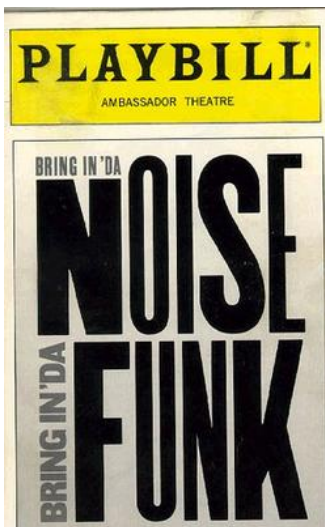
The musical is based on the 1992 film *The Bodyguard* which starred and featured songs by [Whitney Houston](#).^{[2][3]} The show was officially confirmed in February 2012 and following six years of development,

producers confirmed the show would play [London's Adelphi Theatre](#) from November 2012.^{[4][5][6][7]} The show is written by [Alexander Dinelaris](#), produced by [Michael Harrison](#) and [David Ian](#)^[8] directed by [Thea Sharrock](#), set and costumes are designed by [Tim Hatley](#), with lighting by [Mark Henderson](#), sound by [Richard Brooker](#), video projection by [Duncan](#)

McLean,^[9] choreography by Arthur Pita,^[10] musical arrangements, orchestrations and underscore by [Chris Egan](#).

The show's book by Alexander Dinelaris brings the story forward to present day^[11] and changes the focus of the story to bring the character of Rachel Marron to the forefront rather than the bodyguard.^[12] The script adapted from the original screenplay by [Lawrence Kasdan](#)^[13] also expands the role of Rachel Marron's sister Nicki.^[14] The stage musical like the original film features music by [Whitney Houston](#)^[15] which in addition to the original movie soundtrack^[16] adds the following additional Houston tracks: "So Emotional", "One Moment in Time", "Saving All My Love for You", "I'm Your Baby Tonight", "How Will I Know",^[17] "Oh Yes", "All the Man That I Need", "All at Once", and "I Wanna Dance with Somebody".^{[16][18]}

Following [Whitney Houston](#)'s death the show's star [Heather Headley](#) considered withdrawing from the role of Rachel Marron originated by Houston in the film.^[19] She later said "You don't want people to compare you to Whitney. I didn't want it before and especially not now after her passing. I want people to come in and say this is Heather's version - this is Heather playing Rachel Marron and singing Whitney songs. I am always trying to find a way to make them my own but still acknowledge and keep the integrity of her music."



- [Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk](#)

Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk is a musical that debuted [Off-Broadway](#) at the [New York Shakespeare Festival/Public Theater](#) in 1995 and moved to [Broadway](#) in 1996. The show was conceived and directed by [George C. Wolfe](#), and featured music by [Daryl Waters](#), [Zane Mark](#) and [Ann Duquesnay](#); lyrics by [Reg E. Gaines](#), [George C. Wolfe](#) and [Ann Duquesnay](#); and a book by [Reg E. Gaines](#). The choreography was by [Savion Glover](#).

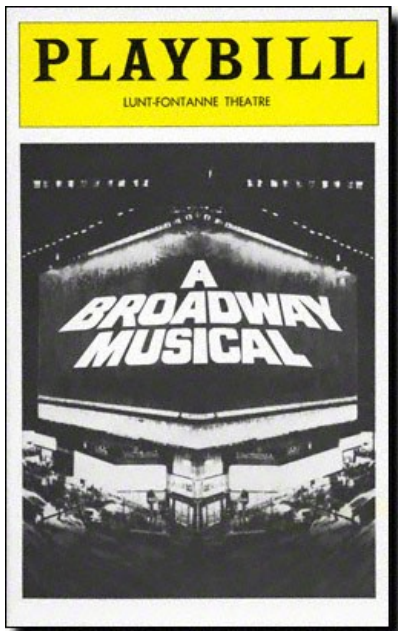
Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk premiered off-Broadway at the [Public Theater](#)'s Newman Theatre on November 3, 1995 and closed on January 28, 1996 after 85 performances. Directed

by [George C. Wolfe](#) with costumes by Karen Perry, set design by Ricardo Hernandez, lighting by [Jules Fisher](#) and [Peggy Eisenhauer](#), and Production Managed by Bonnie Metzgar. The cast included [Savion Glover](#), Duquesnay, Gaines, and [Dule Hill](#).^[1]

The musical moved to the [Ambassador Theatre](#) on Broadway, opening there on April 25, 1996. The show closed after 1135 performances on January 10, 1999. The opening night cast included [Jeffrey Wright](#), Glover, Duquesnay and Hill. Again directed by Wolfe, with sets and lighting by the off-Broadway team, costume design was by [Paul Tazewell](#) and Production Stage Managed by .^[2] Glover left the show but returned for 40 performances from December 8, 1998 through January 10, 1999

Bring in 'da Noise, Bring in 'da Funk is a musical revue telling the story, through tap, of black history from slavery to the present. The musical numbers are presented along with supertitles, projected images and videotapes and with continuing commentary.

Wolfe took the rap words of Reg E. Gaines and turned them into "tap/rap (tap dancing informed by hip-hop and funk rhythms)



- [A Broadway Musical](#)

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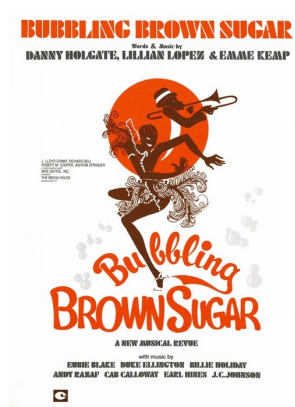
A Broadway Musical is a musical with a book by [William F. Brown](#), lyrics by [Lee Adams](#), and music by [Charles Strouse](#). The Broadway production closed after 14 previews and only one performance on December 21, 1978.

The plot about a sleazy white theatre producer's attempt to adapt an African-American writer's serious play as a commercial stage musical was inspired by Adams and Strouse's real-life experiences with their 1964 Broadway production of *Golden Boy*. The star of the musical-within-the-musical (*Sneakers*, about a basketball star) closely resembles *Golden Boy* star [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)

When the star opts to leave the show, the playwright – who from the

start had resisted turning his work into a musical – steps in and takes on the lead role in order to save the production.

- [Bubbling Brown Sugar](#)



- *Bubbling Brown Sugar* is a musical revue written by [Loften Mitchell](#) based on a concept by [Rosetta LeNoire](#) and featuring the music of numerous African-American artists who were popular during the [Harlem Renaissance](#), 1920–1940, including [Duke Ellington](#), [Eubie Blake](#), [Count Basie](#), [Cab Calloway](#) and [Fats Waller](#). Original music, including the title theme song "Bubbling Brown Sugar" was composed by pianist [Emme Kemp](#), a protégé of the legendary [Eubie Blake](#). It was nominated for the [Tony Award for Best Musical](#) and the [Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Musical](#).

[Robert M. Cooper](#) directed and produced the Broadway and tour productions.^[1]

The show was set in a [Harlem](#) nightclub of the 1920s-1940s. It originally played at the [Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew](#), opening February 15,



1975, and running for 12 performances. It opened on [Broadway](#) at the [ANTA Playhouse](#) on March 2, 1976, and closed on December 31, 1977, after 766 performances.

The show opens in the 1970s on the corner of 131st Street and 7th Avenue. The ensemble (composed of GENE, MARSHA, BILL, TONY, NORMA, LAURA, SKIP, RAY, and HELEN) greet IRENE PAIGE, who is out searching for her old partner, JOHN SAGE. Irene explains that when they were younger, she pursued a career doing "downtown shows" in lieu of helping Sage build up new theatre venues in Harlem. This caused them to separate, though they have remained close over the years. Irene has traveled to Paris, London, and Rome, but she declares that Harlem will forever be her true home.

Sage and CHECKERS CLARK enter with an old trunk they intend to donate to the Schomburg Collection for Black History and Culture. The trunk contains old costumes and props from a time when they performed

alongside Irene. A young couple (JIM and ELLA) enter, greeting Sage, Checker, and Irene. Jim complains about Ella dragging him around Harlem to examine the historical sights, including a landmark known as the Tree of Hope. Sage and Irene try to impart a history lesson regarding the Tree, though their bickering gets in the way.

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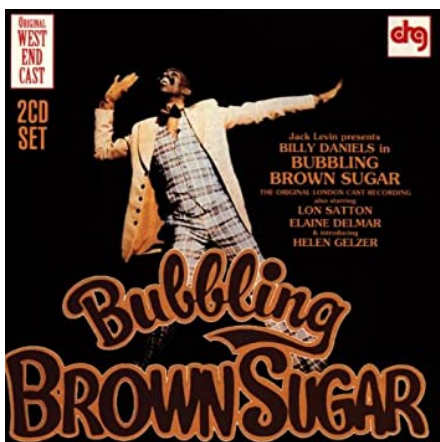
- [Cabin in the Sky \(musical\)](#)

Cabin in the Sky is a musical with music by [Vernon Duke](#), book by Lynn Root, and lyrics by [John Latouche](#). The musical opened on [Broadway](#) in 1940.^[1] The show is described as a "parable of Southern Negro Life with echoes of [Ferenc Molnár's](#) *Liliom* (which would be turned into the musical *Carousel*) and [Marc Connelly's](#) *The Green Pastures*."^[2]

Lynn Root wrote the libretto and brought it to [George Balanchine](#), "who was anxious to do it as his first assignment as director of an entire Broadway production."^[3] Balanchine took the script to [Vernon Duke](#) to compose the music. "On reading the script, my first impulse was to turn it down because as much as I admired the [Negro](#) race and its musical gifts, I didn't think

myself sufficiently attuned to Negro folklore."^[4] However, Duke ended up taking up the project but insisted on "a lyricist with some direct contact with Southern Negroes."^[3] Duke talked to [Ira Gershwin](#) and [E.Y. Harburg](#) but they both turned it down. (Gershwin was working on *Lady in the Dark* and Harburg thought the composer was "incapable of writing the kind of score the play required."^[3])

Duke ended up picking [John Latouche](#) as his lyricist and the two began work in [Virginia](#)



[Beach](#).^[5] The two wanted to absorb aspects of the local Black culture but "decided to stay away from pedantic authenticity and write our own kind of 'colored' songs."^[4]

The rehearsals for the show were rather interesting between the Russian trio (Duke, Balanchine and [Boris Aronson](#) - the designer) and the all-black cast. In his book *Passport to Paris*, Duke quotes George Ross' description from the *Telegram*: "Pit a threesome of turbulent Russians against a tempestuous cast of Negro players from Harlem and what have you got? Well, in this instance the result is a lingual ruckus approaching bedlam. At least half a dozen times at the rehearsal of *Cabin in the Sky*, [Ethel Waters](#), [Todd Duncan](#), [Rex Ingram](#), [J. Rosamond Johnson](#), [Katherine Dunham](#) and her dancers have paused in puzzlement while the argumentative trio of [Muscovites](#) disputed a difference of opinion in their native tongue. The Russian vowels and consonants fly as thick as borsht. After ten minutes of such alien harangue and retort, Miss Waters asks what it is all about. 'George, 'Duke generally interprets, 'just said the answer is yes!' and then rehearsals are resumed under the flag of truce until the next vocal flare-up."^[4]

Three days before the opening, Duke decided to replace the song "We'll Live All Over Again" after Waters expressed dissatisfaction with it. It was replaced with the showstopper "Taking a Chance on Love."^[5] The song was originally "Foolin' Around with Love" which he wrote with [Ted Fetter](#). Latouche retitled it and wrote the reprises.^[3]

[J. Rosamond Johnson](#), besides taking a small role, trained the singing chorus. [Katherine Dunham](#) led her dancers through their slithering paces, assisted in the choreography by George Balanchine.^[6]



- [Can I Get a Witness? The Gospel of James Baldwin](#)

Creating Can I Get a Witness? The Gospel of James Baldwin is a 2016 musical theatrical tribute to writer [James Baldwin](#) created by musician [Meshell Ndegeocello](#), it debuted in December 2016 at the Harlem Stage in Harlem, New York

The Gospel of James Baldwin, is an adaptable site-specific, community specific, multidisciplinary ritual tool kit for justice in the new millennium. Inspired by James Baldwin's seminal treaty on justice in America *The Fire Next Time*, "From my point of view, no label, no slogan, no party, no skin color, and indeed no religion is more important than the human being."

Theatrically structured around rituals of worship and empowerment from African-American church services to sacred practices the world over, the work features testimonies and original musical compositions that

challenge its participants to engage in an urgent and critical investigation of race, religion, sexual orientation, America and the status quo, celebrating Baldwin's ideas and legacy through music and visual imagery.



- [Carmen Jones](#)

Carmen Jones is a 1943 Broadway musical with music by Georges Bizet (orchestrated for Broadway by [Robert Russell Bennett](#)) and lyrics and

book by [Oscar Hammerstein II](#) which was performed at [The Broadway Theatre](#). Conceptually, it is Bizet's opera *Carmen* updated to a World War II-era African-American setting. Bizet's opera was, in turn, based on the 1846 novella by [Prosper Mérimée](#). The Broadway musical was produced by [Billy Rose](#), using an all-black cast, and directed by [Hassard Short](#). [Robert Shaw](#) prepared the choral portions of the show.^[1]

The original Broadway production starred [Muriel Smith](#) (alternating with [Muriel Rahn](#)) in the title role. The original Broadway cast members were nearly all new to the stage; Kennedy and Muir write that on the first day of rehearsal only one member had ever been on a stage before.^[2]



The 1954 film was adapted by Hammerstein and Harry Kleiner. It was directed by [Otto Preminger](#) and starred [Dorothy Dandridge](#) and [Harry Belafonte](#).^[3]

The musical has also been revived in London, running for a season in 1991 at [London's Old Vic](#) and most recently in London's [Royal Festival Hall](#) in the [Southbank Centre](#) in 2007.^[4]

In 2018, it was revived off-Broadway at the [Classic Stage Company](#) under the direction of [John Doyle](#) and [Anika Noni Rose](#) in the title role

Parachute maker Carmen Jones makes a play for a "fly boy" Air Force man, Joe, who is in love with sweet Cindy Lou and about to marry her on a day pass when Carmen gets into a fight with another woman.

Joe's pass is cancelled in order for him to drive her to the next town to be handed over to the non-military police. Instead, Carmen charms him and escapes, and he is put in the stockade for not delivering her to the authorities.

While Carmen waits for Joe to be released from military prison, she hangs around Billy Pastor's jive cafe where she encounters boxer Husky Miller, who is instantly besotted with Carmen, calling her "heatwave".

Carmen is initially uninterested. But her friends Frankie and Mert know that their invitation from Husky's manager to see him fight in Chicago depends on Carmen's being there, too.

[Muriel Rahn](#) (age 32) in the title role in the 1943 original Broadway production of *Carmen Jones*.

Joe, having been released from the stockade, turns up at the cafe the same evening. At first, his prospects seem to be looking up, as his connections have put Joe back on track for aviator school. Carmen lays down a guilt trip, however, protesting that a long-distance relationship, with Joe 400 miles (640 km) away at school, just isn't what she had in mind. He immediately gets into a fight with his sergeant, who is making a move on Carmen, as well as laying down some heavy shade on Joe. Starting the fight alone would have been enough to put Joe back in military prison for years, but the fight goes badly, and the sergeant ends up apparently dead.

Carmen makes Joe hide the body, since desertion sounds better than a lengthy sentence.

The train ticket to Chicago originally given to Carmen offers them a way of avoiding the MPs. After a few days hiding out in a seedy hotel with no money and no future with Joe, Carmen pays a visit to her two friends, now covered in diamonds and furs, at Husky's training camp. She is only looking for a loan, but they try to draw her to give up Joe and "go with the money" by staying with Husky.



Later, at Husky's apartment, Frankie reads Carmen's "cards", and reveals the Nine of Spades - the card of Death. In the belief that her days are numbered, Carmen gives in to Husky's advances, abandoning Joe for the luxurious life Husky can offer her.

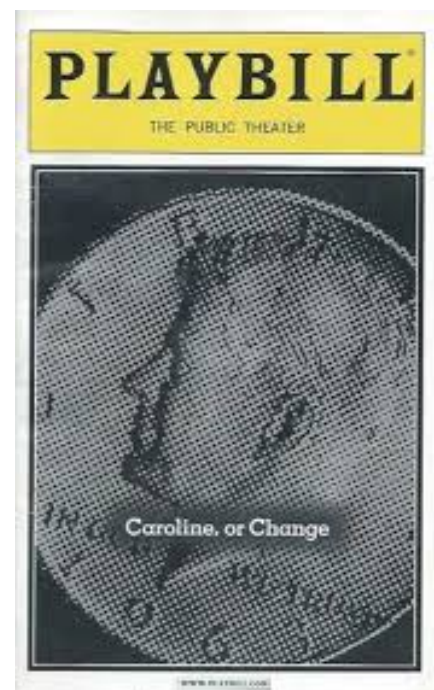
Cindy Lou comes to look for Joe, but he is still in love with Carmen and spurns Cindy Lou. The night of Husky's title fight, Joe turns up to try to convince Carmen to come back to him, but when she rejects him, he kills her, thus making the card's prophecy a reality.

- [Caroline, or Change](#)

Caroline, or Change is a through-composed musical with book and lyrics by [Tony Kushner](#) and score by [Jeanine Tesori](#) that combines [spirituals](#), blues, [Motown](#), classical music, and Jewish [klezmer](#) and folk music.

The show ran both [Off-Broadway](#) and on [Broadway](#) as well as in London.

The musical was first workshopped in May 1992 at [New York's Off-Broadway Public Theater](#). Director [George C. Wolfe](#) continued to



workshop the musical at the Public Theater, where it opened on November 30, 2003 and closed on February 1, 2004.^{[1][2]}

It transferred to **Broadway** at the **Eugene O'Neill Theatre** on May 2, 2004 and closed on August 29, 2004 after 136 performances and 22 previews. The musical starred **Tonya Pinkins** in the title role, **Anika Noni Rose** as



Emmie Thibodeaux, **Harrison Chad** as Noah Gellman, **Veanne Cox** as Rose Stopnick Gellman and **Chandra Wilson** as Dotty Moffett (all both off- and on-Broadway). The choreographer was Hope Clarke; scenic design by Riccardo Hernandez; costume design by **Paul Tazewell**; and lighting design by **Jules Fisher** and **Peggy Eisenhauer**. Despite its relatively short run, it was critically acclaimed^[3] and nominated for six **Tony Awards**, including Best Musical.

Opening in October 2006, a London production at the **National Theatre** on the Lyttelton stage, also directed by Wolfe, ran in repertory with Marianne Elliot's production of *Thérèse Raquin* to January 2007. The production did not transfer to the **West End** but did win the **Olivier Award** for Best New Musical. The opening night cast in London starred Tonya Pinkins as Caroline. Other cast members included **Pippa Bennett-Warner** as Emmie



Thibodeaux, Anna Francolini as Rose Stopnick Gellman, Hilton McRae as Mr. Stopnick, Perry Millward, Jonny Weldon and Greg Bernstein alternating as Noah and Clive Rowe as the dryer/bus.[4]

- [Catch My Soul \(musical\)](#)

Catch My Soul is a rock musical produced by Jack Good, loosely adapted from Shakespeare's *Othello*.^[1] The character of Iago had originally been played by Jerry Lee Lewis^[2] in the US production which had closed in 1968.^[3] The UK production of the show was a

showcase for the talents of Lance LeGault, P. P. Arnold, P.J. Proby and an introduction to the rock musician Robert Tench and the band Gass.^[4]

The first UK stage performance was at the University Theatre Manchester by the *69 Theatre Company* with Angharad Rees as Desdemona. The London stage version opened at The Roundhouse in 1969 and moved to the Prince of Wales Theatre in the West End in 1970.^[5] The show also toured larger UK cities and closed in January 1972.^[6] The original UK cast recorded *Catch My Soul* (1971), with music as interpreted by Gass, the show's backing band at that time.^[7] A film, *Catch My Soul*, was released in 1974 with a different cast.

Jack Good's *Catch My Soul* is based on William Shakespeare's play *Othello*. Good's musical contained many of the elements of Shakespeare's original work and largely mirrored its source. The subsequent film version directed by Patrick McGoohan changed the structure, setting and songs to an extent that make it a substantially

different work. In the synopsis for allmovie.com Sandra Brennon states that in the film story:

"Othello is a wandering evangelist who happens onto Iago's remote commune. There he marries the lovely Desdemona much to the chagrin of Iago, who also loves her. The conniving commune leader then manages to quietly pressure Othello until murder and tragedy ensue."

THE NEW YORK TIMES, SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 18, 1983

Stage: Musical Set in New Orleans

By MEL GUSSOW

"Basin Street," the new musical at the Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theater, reduces the rich Storyville environment and history to theatrical clichés. The show borrows stereotypes from other musicals and romantic fiction, beginning with "The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas." In this case, a 1917 version of Moral Majority is trying to close the brothels of New Orleans, and this is the background for a tale of star-crossed lovers.

What the authors, Michael Hulett and G. William Oakley, repeatedly forget is that Storyville is, first of all, the story of music, of the birth of jazz as an indigenous American popular art form. The strength of "Basin

Street" is in its score, a vibrant array of blues, barrelhouse, spirituals and ragtime tunes, written by the jazz trombonist and composer Turk Murphy and played by an onstage combo. The lyrics, one step below the music, are by Mr. Hulett. The co-author, Mr. Oakley, is responsible for the evening's fragmented staging.

As sung by Charles H. Patterson, Tamara Tunie and Sandra Reaves-Phillips, the score evokes the earthy atmosphere of a city that turns funerals into jazz parades, but the music is all too frequently interrupted by the trite book.

Mr. Patterson and Miss Tunie are the central romantic couple, a "piano man" in a bordello and a Creole

singer who is propositioned every time that she sings a song. Within the confines of their contradictory roles, Mr. Patterson demonstrates his engaging personality and Miss Tunie reveals a residual glamour. Cast as the hero's pious mother, Miss Reaves-Phillips, last seen as Bessie Smith in Melvin Van Peebles's musical "Champeen," is given too little opportunity to use her powerful singing voice.

There are other isolated attributes, including sparks of choreography by Michael Gorman, but most of the show is either underdeveloped (the motif of a symbolic, scene-changing "umbrella man") or overdone. Except for its musical beat, "Basin Street" is self-defeating.

The Cast

BASIN STREET, book by Michael Hulett and G. William Oakley; music by Turk Murphy; lyrics by Michael Hulett; directed by Mr. Oakley; musical conductor, Thom Bridwell; choreography, Michael Gorman; musical supervision, Danny Holgate; choral arrangements, Carl Mautsby; orchestrations, Mr. Murphy and Mr. Holgate; set, Robert Edmonds; lights, Jeremy Johnson; costumes, Judy Dearling; sound, Brian Pinney; production stage manager, Alan R. Traynor; Presented by the Henry Street Settlement's New Federal Theater, Woodie King Jr., producer, Al Harry DeJur Henry Street Settlement Playhouse, 466 G and Street.

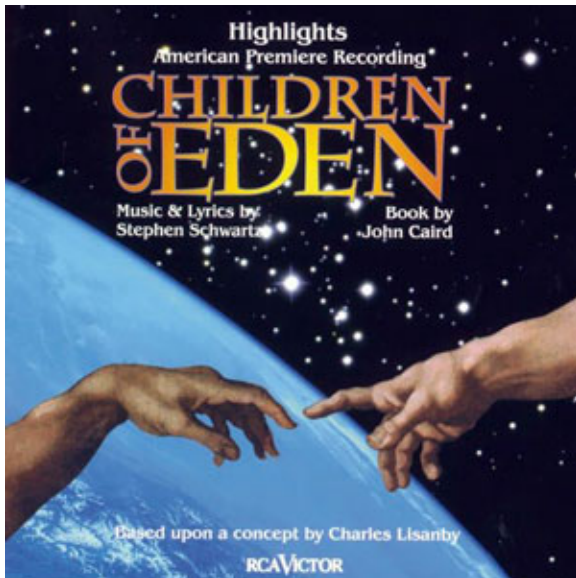
Umbrella Man Jeff Bates
Spartan Kids
Gloria Jones, Keith Williams and Kevin DeVoe
Tom Anderson Lee Flynn
Chauncey Charles H. Patterson
Billy Struve Danny Rounds
Reporter Erik Geler
Aberdeen Shaun Jones
Joe Oliver Clebert Ford
Yvette Tamara Tunie
Creese Michael Potter
Leander James Young
Rev. Haggood Lawrence Vincent
Harmony Sandra Reaves-Phillips
Adele Aizana Ryer
Lulu White Pat Yankee

- [Champeen](#)

Champeen was a 1983 musical by [Melvin Van Peebles](#). It looked at the careers of [Bessie Smith](#) and [Joe Louis](#), and had a cast of 18.^[1] It won 7 awards at the 11th Audelco Recognition Awards for Black theater, including best actress, best choreography, and best director.^[2] Although it covered Bessie Smith's life, it was not a biographical play.^[3] The *New York Times* reviewed it positively, although it was stated that Miss Reaves-Phillips was not given enough singing time

- [Children of Eden](#)

Children of Eden is a 1991 two-act musical with music and lyrics by [Stephen Schwartz](#) and a book by [John Caird](#). The musical is based on the [Book of Genesis](#), with Act I telling the story of [Adam and Eve](#), [Cain](#), and [Abel](#), while Act II deals with [Noah](#) and the Flood. Though commercially



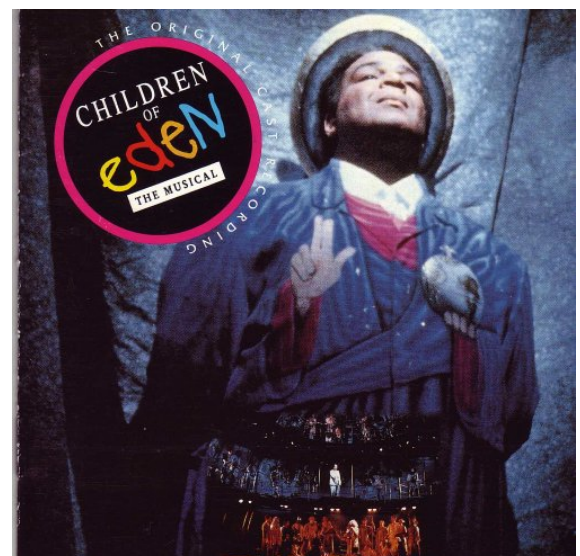
the musical has had very little success, it is popular in community and regional theatres worldwide, due to its ability to accommodate a large or small cast, religious subject, and its universal themes of family and love. The show's publisher, [Music Theater International](#), reports that *Children of Eden* is one of its top 20 most frequently licensed properties.

Children of Eden was originally written in 1986 as *Family Tree* for a production by [Youth Sing Praise](#), a religious-

oriented high school theatre camp performed at the [National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows](#) in [Belleville, Illinois](#).^[2] Stephen Schwartz adapted the script and music of *Family Tree* into a full-length musical, giving it the title it uses today.

The original cast production of *Children of Eden* was developed as a [Royal Shakespeare Company](#) (RSC) workshop,^[1] directed by [John Caird](#), and starring [Ken Page](#) as Father, [Richard Lloyd-King](#) as Snake, [Martin Smith](#) as Adam, [Shezwae Powell](#) as Eve, [Adrian Beaumont](#) as Cain, [Kevin Colson](#) as Noah, [Earlene Bentley](#) as Mama Noah, [Frances Ruffelle](#) as Yonah, [Anthony Barclay](#) as Japheth, [Craig Pinder](#) as Shem, [Ray Shell](#) as Ham, [Hiromi Itoh](#) as Aysha and [Ruthie Henshall](#) as Aphra. After the RSC's budget was cut, it opened at the [Prince Edward Theatre](#) in London's [West End](#) on January 8, 1991. The show closed on April 6, 1991 to poor reviews and after the [Persian Gulf War](#) put a damper on tourism worldwide.^[1]

The show's poor reviews and quick closing meant that any hope of a Broadway transfer was abandoned. The original London cast album was released on LP and CD, but quickly went out of print. The CD release was marred by manufacturing



defects that caused most of the discs to "bronze", becoming unplayable. Consequently, a playable copy of the disc is highly prized by musical theatre collectors. Schwartz believes the show has not played on Broadway because of the expense required to produce it in an Actor's Equity house, due to the cast of characters.^[2]

The rarest recording of the show is concept recording released after changes were made following the 1991 London production. The tracks feature Stephen Schwartz himself playing the piano. The recording was made before the Papermill Playhouse production in an effort to review the rewrites and revisions. The album was made available only for a limited time on Stephen Schwartz's website via RealAudio streaming. This recording is considered to be the rarest version of the show that exists. There are only a handful of copies of this recording in existence.

Throughout the 1990s, the show received numerous productions at both the amateur and professional levels; it was also reworked and edited, with songs and scenes being added and cut. In 1997, a major production was mounted at the [Paper Mill Playhouse](#) in [Millburn, New Jersey](#), featuring [Stephanie Mills](#). A [cast recording](#) of this production was produced by Schwartz himself. This revised version, commonly known as the "American version" or "Paper Mill version", is substantially what is currently licensed for production in the United States. The New York City premiere of the piece was as the inaugural [World AIDS Day Concert](#) presented by [Jamie McGonnigal](#) and [Kate Shindle](#) for [The York Theatre Company](#). The concert featured [Julia Murney](#), [Norm Lewis](#), [Darius de Haas](#), and [Jai Rodriguez](#) and raised funds for [The National AIDS Fund](#).

- [A Chorus Line](#)

A Chorus Line is a [musical](#) with music by [Marvin Hamlisch](#), lyrics by [Edward Kleban](#), and a book by [James Kirkwood Jr.](#) and [Nicholas Dante](#).

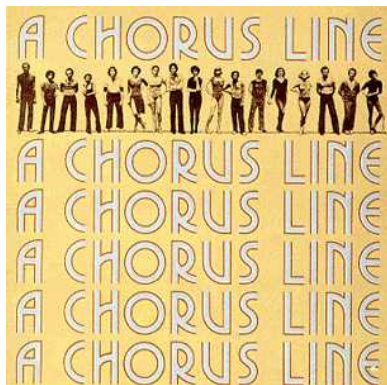
Set on the bare stage of a Broadway theater, the musical is centered around seventeen [Broadway dancers auditioning](#) for spots on a [chorus line](#). *A Chorus Line* provides a glimpse into the personalities of the

performers and the choreographer, as they describe the events that have shaped their lives and their decisions to become dancers.

Following several workshops and an [Off-Broadway](#) production, *A Chorus Line* opened at the [Shubert Theatre](#) on Broadway July 25, 1975, directed by [Michael Bennett](#) and co-choreographed by Bennett and [Bob Avian](#). An unprecedented box office and critical hit, the musical received twelve [Tony Award](#) nominations and won nine, in addition to the 1976 [Pulitzer Prize for Drama](#).

The original Broadway production ran for 6,137 performances, becoming the [longest-running production in Broadway history](#) until surpassed by *Cats* in 1997, and the longest-running Broadway musical originally produced in the US, until surpassed in 2011 by the revival of *Chicago*. It remains the [seventh longest-running Broadway show](#) ever. *A Chorus Line's* success has spawned many successful productions worldwide. It began a lengthy run in the [West End](#) in 1976 and was revived on Broadway in 2006, and in the West End in 2013.

The show opens in the middle of an audition for an upcoming Broadway production. The formidable director Zach and his assistant choreographer



Larry put the dancers through their paces. Every dancer is desperate for work ("I Hope I Get It"). After the next round of cuts, 17 dancers remain. Zach tells them he is looking for a strong dancing chorus of four boys and four girls. He wants to learn more about them, and asks the dancers to introduce themselves. With reluctance, the dancers reveal their pasts. The stories generally progress chronologically from early life experiences through adulthood to the end of a career.

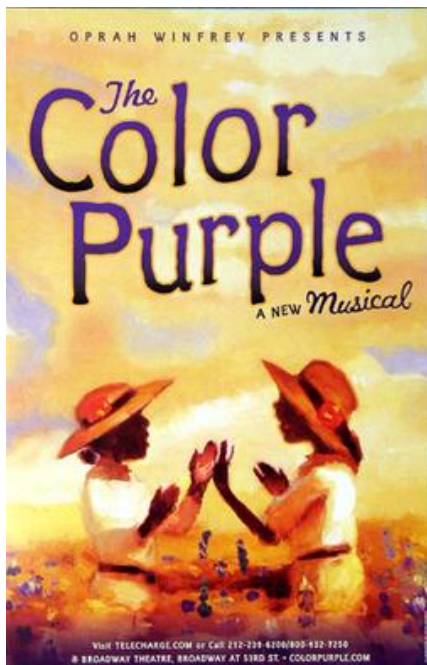
The first candidate, Mike, explains that he is the youngest of 12 children. He recalls his first experience with dance, watching his sister's dance class when he was a pre-schooler ("I Can Do That"). Mike took her place one day when she refused to go to class—and he stayed. Bobby tries to hide the unhappiness of his childhood by making jokes. As he speaks, the other dancers have misgivings about this strange audition process and debate

what they should reveal to Zach ("And..."), but since they all need the job, the session continues.

The musical was formed from several taped workshop sessions with Broadway dancers, known as "gypsies," including eight who eventually appeared in the original cast. The sessions were originally hosted by dancers Michon Peacock and Tony Stevens. The first taped session occurred at the Nickolaus Exercise Center January 26, 1974. They hoped that they would form a professional dance company to make workshops for Broadway dancers.

Michael Bennett was invited to join the group primarily as an observer, but quickly took control of the proceedings. Although Bennett's involvement has been challenged, there has been no question about Kirkwood and Dante's authorship. In later years, Bennett's claim that *A Chorus Line* had been his brainchild resulted in not only hard feelings but a number of lawsuits as well.^[2] During the workshop sessions, random characters would be chosen at the end for the chorus jobs based on their performance quality, resulting in genuine surprise among the cast. However, several costumers protested this ending, mainly due to the stress of having to change random actors in time for the finale. This resulted in the ending being cut in exchange for the same set of characters winning the slots.^[3] Marvin Hamlisch, who wrote *A Chorus Line*'s score, recalled how during the first previews, audiences seemed put off by something in the

story. This problem was solved when actress [Marsha Mason](#) told Bennett that Cassie ([Donna McKechnie](#) in the original production) should win the part in the end because she did everything right. Bennett changed it so that Cassie would always win the part.



- [The Color Purple \(musical\)](#)

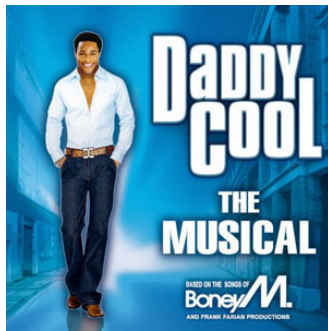
•
The Color Purple is a musical with a book by [Marsha Norman](#) and music



and lyrics by [Brenda Russell](#), [Allee Willis](#), and [Stephen Bray](#). Based on the 1982 novel of the same name by [Alice Walker](#) and its 1985 film adaptation, the show follows the journey of [Celie](#), an [African-American](#) woman in the [American South](#) from the early to mid-20th century.

The original [Broadway](#) production ran from 2005 to 2008, earning eleven [Tony Award](#) nominations in 2006. An enthusiastically acclaimed Broadway revival opened in late 2015 and ran through early 2017, winning two 2016 [Tony Awards](#)—including [Best Revival of a Musical](#).

The musical opened on [Broadway](#) at [The Broadway Theatre](#) on December 1, 2005. It was directed by [Gary Griffin](#), produced by [Scott Sanders](#), [Quincy Jones](#) and [Oprah Winfrey](#), with choreography by [Donald Byrd](#) and musical direction by [Linda Twine](#). The musical closed on February 24, 2008, after 30 previews and 910 regular performances. The Broadway production recouped its \$11 million investment within its first year on Broadway, and had grossed over \$103 million by the time it closed.^[9]



The original Broadway production starred [LaChanze](#) as [Celie](#), [Brandon Victor Dixon](#) as [Harpo](#), [Felicia P. Fields](#) as [Sofia](#), [Renée Elise Goldsberry](#) as [Nettie](#), [Kingsley Leggs](#) as [Mister](#), [Krisha Marcano](#) as [Squeak](#), and [Elisabeth Withers-Mendes](#) as [Shug Avery](#).

D

- [Daddy Cool \(musical\)](#)

Daddy Cool is a musical based upon the works of [Boney M](#) and other [Frank Farian](#) produced artists. It premiered in the West End in 2006, followed by UK and international tours. It is currently (2017) touring Germany with excellent reviews and sold-out theatres.

The musical tells the story of Sunny, a young man who lives for his music. Caught up in local rivalry between [East](#) and [West London](#) crews, he meets and falls in love with Rose, daughter of the East End's notorious club owner Ma Baker. Echoing *Romeo and Juliet*, the lovers' relationship fuels the



hostility between the two gangs, leaving their families face to face with past secrets and forcing them to confront their future.

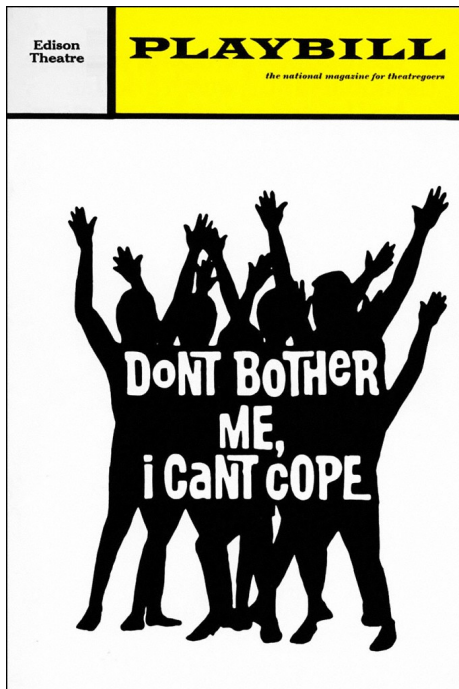
The production was originally due to open on 16 May 2006, following previews from 26 April, however this date was later put back until 2 May 2006, keeping the premiere the same, but allowing more creative time. On 13 March 2006, the producers [Frank Farian](#) and [Robert Mackintosh](#) (brother of Sir [Cameron Mackintosh](#))



announced that the show had been delayed indefinitely, with the earliest opening in September 2006.

- [Dessa Rose \(musical\)](#)

Dessa Rose is a musical based on the book by [Sherley Anne Williams](#) with book and lyrics by [Lynn Ahrens](#) and music by [Stephen Flaherty](#). It tells the story of a young black woman and a young white woman and their journey to acceptance in 1847 in the ante-bellum South, as they tell their story to their grandchildren.



- [Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope](#)

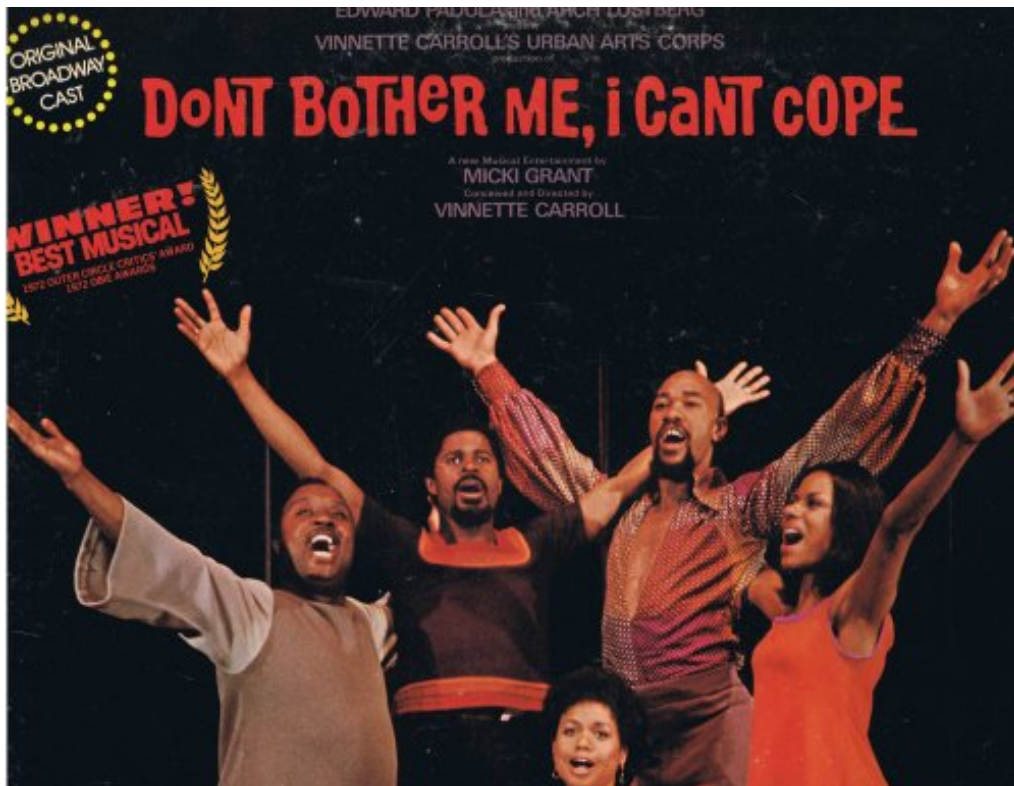
Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope is a musical revue first staged in 1971 with music, lyrics and book by [Micki Grant](#).^[1] It was originally produced by [Edward Padula](#).

The all-singing, all-dancing show focuses on the [African-American](#) experience with songs on such topics

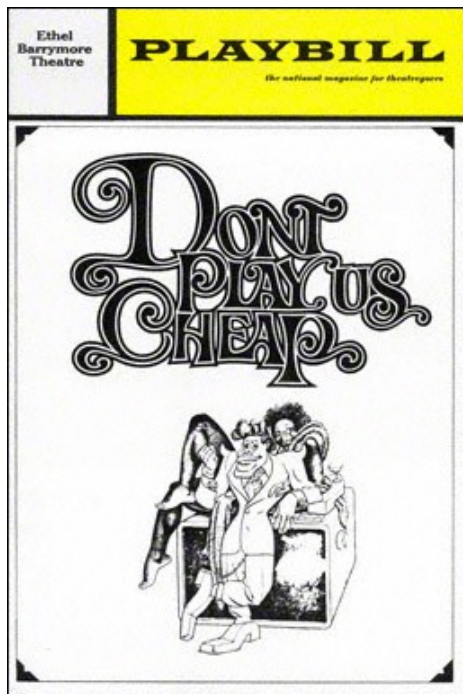
as [tenements](#), [slumlords](#), [ghetto life](#), [student protests](#), [black power](#), and [feminism](#). The music is a mixture of [gospel](#), [jazz](#), [funk](#), [soul](#), [calypso](#), and [soft rock](#).

The show had its first staging at [Ford's Theatre](#) in [Washington, D.C.](#) from September 15 - October 10, 1971,^[2] with subsequent stagings at the [Locust](#) and [Walnut Street Theatres](#) in [Philadelphia](#).

The restaged [Broadway](#) production, directed by [Vinnette Carroll](#) and choreographed by [George Faison](#), opened to acclaim on April 19, 1972, at



the [Playhouse Theatre](#), where it ran for two months before transferring to the [Edison](#). It had a total run of 1065 performances. In his [The New York Times](#) review of the opening night, [Clive Barnes](#) described it as "a mixture of a block party and a revival meeting" and wrote: "It is the unexpected that is the most delightful. Last night at the Playhouse Theater a new musical came clapping, stomping and stamping in. It is fresh, fun and black. ...Black heroes such as [Flip Wilson](#) and [Godfrey Cambridge](#), and even [Bella Abzug](#) and [Ralph Nader](#) are mentioned and the show makes wry mockery of the changing times and celebrates the rise of black aspiration and achievements. ...the show is full of talent working together with a cohesion rarely encountered outside the dance world."^[3] [Time Magazine](#) theatre critic T. E. Kalem also praised the show, writing: "...all heaven breaks loose on stage. This is the kind of show at which you want to blow kisses."^[4]



- [Don't Play Us Cheap](#)

- *Don't Play Us Cheap* is a 1972 [musical](#) written, produced, and directed by [Melvin Van Peebles](#), about an imp and a devil who take human form and try to break up a [Harlem house party](#). A film version was produced in 1973.

Trinity and Brother Dave are a pair of devil-bats looking for a party to break up. They come across a party in Harlem. Although Trinity is eager, Dave warns him not to touch it. "When black folks throw a party, they don't play!" Trinity joins the party, already in progress, thrown by Miss Maybell in honor of her niece Earnestine's birthday.

Trinity first tries to break the [records](#) ("you can't have a party without music"), but finds that they are unbreakable. He drinks an entire bottle of liquor, thinking he has depleted their supply of alcohol, but finds out that all of the guests have brought their own bottles, and when he tries to eat all of the sandwiches, another plate is brought in.

Trinity finds himself unwilling to continue being mean after he insults Earnestine, making her cry. Trinity apologizes to her, and tells her that he has fallen for her. Three more guests show up, Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, and their college-educated son Harold. Earnestine ignores Trinity for Harold. Trinity becomes jealous.

Brother Dave arrives in human form, eager to break up the party, but Trinity is unwilling to. Mr. Johnson tells Harold not to get involved with Earnestine, because her family is too "common," and he can't risk the big future he has

ahead of him. Earnestine approaches both Harold and Trinity to dance, but they are pulled back by Mr. Johnson and Dave.

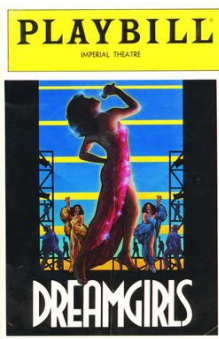
Dave persuades Trinity to try to break up the party before midnight, when they will both be turned into the thing that they pretend to be: human beings. As time runs short, Dave and Trinity find themselves at the dinner table with the rest of the guests. Dave insults Mrs. Johnson, prompting her to leave with her husband and son. The rest of the guests tell Dave that they're glad that they left.

After the dinner, Trinity stands up and announces that he and Earnestine are getting engaged, an announcement which infuriates Dave. Dave makes one last attempt to break up the party by trying to make a move on Miss Maybell. When Dave finds that she is all too willing, he turns himself into a cockroach and tries to sneak out the door before being smashed by Miss May

At the time Melvin Van Peebles came up with the story for *Don't Play Us Cheap*, he was living in [Paris](#), but had gotten a summer job in [New York City](#) making a documentary. Along with the job, Van Peebles was given an apartment in a posh neighborhood on the lower east side of [Manhattan](#).

On a very hot day, Van Peebles was lounging out in front of the apartment, and an old black lady came down the street and told Van Peebles that she wanted some water and to use the bathroom. The woman thanked Van Peebles, and a few days later, Van Peebles received a telephone call from her inviting him to a party she was throwing for her niece.

When he returned to [France](#), he thought of what would happen if these wonderful, kind, open people were invaded by imps bent on destroying their party. The story became the basis for a novel, *Harlem Party*, and later a French-language musical play, which Van Peebles later translated into English, and made as a film in 1973



- [Dreamgirls](#)

Dreamgirls is a [Broadway musical](#), with music by [Henry Krieger](#) and lyrics and book by [Tom Eyrn](#). Based on the show

business aspirations and successes of R&B acts such as The



Supremes, The Shirelles, James Brown, Jackie Wilson, and others,^[1] the musical follows the story of a young female singing trio from Chicago, Illinois called "The Dreams", who become music superstars.

Staged with a mostly African-American cast and originally starring Jennifer Holliday, Sheryl Lee Ralph, Loretta Devine, Ben Harney, Cleavant Derricks, Vondie Curtis-Hall, and Obba Babatundé, the musical opened on



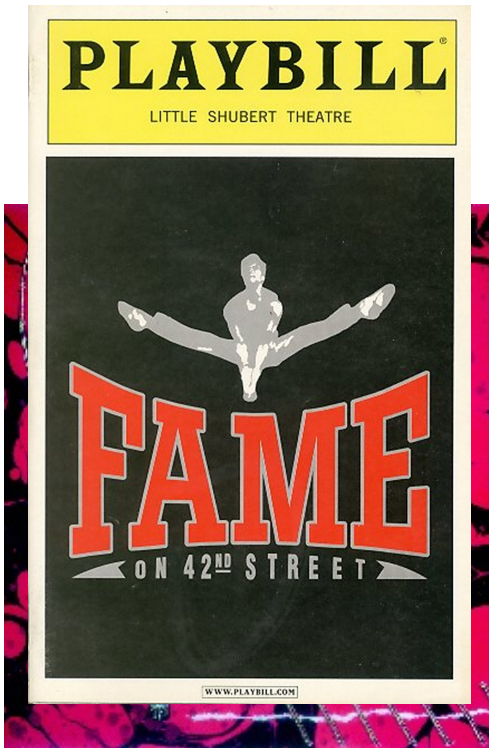
December 20, 1981, at the [Imperial Theatre](#) on Broadway. The musical was then nominated for 13 Tony Awards, including the [Tony Award for Best Musical](#), and won six. It was later adapted into a motion picture from [DreamWorks](#) and [Paramount Pictures](#) in 2006. The film starred [Jamie Foxx](#), [Beyoncé](#), [Eddie Murphy](#), [Jennifer Hudson](#), [Danny Glover](#), [Anika Noni Rose](#), and [Keith Robinson](#).

E

- [Elegies for Angels, Punks and Raging Queens](#)

Elegies For Angels, Punks and Raging Queens is a [song cycle](#) with music by [Janet Hood](#) and lyrics and additional text by [Bill Russell](#). The work features songs and monologues inspired by the [NAMES Project AIDS Memorial Quilt](#) and [Edgar Lee Masters' Spoon River Anthology](#). Each of the monologues is written from the perspective of characters who've died from AIDS and the songs represent the feelings of friends and family members dealing with the loss.

The piece was developed in the late 1980s and was originally titled "The Quilt." It was produced first at the Ohio Theatre in Soho in NYC in 1989, where the new title was adopted, and then again [Off-off-Broadway](#) in Manhattan's [East Village](#) in February 1990. In 1992, it was produced by Giacomo Capizzano at the [King's Head Theatre](#) in [London](#), where it played for several months. In June 1993, the production was transferred by Mr Capizzano to the [Criterion Theatre](#) in London's [West End](#), where it played until July of the same year.^[1] The London cast included [Miquel Brown](#), [Kim Criswell](#), [Kwame Kwei-Armah](#), [James Dreyfus](#), [Simon Fanshawe](#) and legendary drag queen [Regina Fong](#).



F

- [Fame \(musical\)](#)

Fame is a stage musical based on the 1980 musical film of the same name. It has been staged under two titles; The first, *Fame – The Musical* conceived and developed by [David De Silva](#), is a musical with a book by [José Fernandez](#), music by [Steve Margoshes](#) and lyrics by [Jacques Levy](#). The musical premiered in 1988 in [Miami, Florida](#). The second was as *Fame on 42nd Street*, where it was performed [Off-Broadway](#) at the Little Shubert Theatre on 42nd Street from 2003 to 2004.^{[2][3]}

De Silva had produced the 1980 film about students at [New York City's High School of Performing Arts](#). The critically and commercially successful film was followed by a [six-season television series](#),^[4] and the musical. The musical is significantly rewritten from the previous adaptations, with an almost entirely new score. The film is referred to several times in the script and in two songs.^[5] It tells the story of several students who attend the school, among them fame-obsessed Carmen,



ambitious actress Serena, wisecracking comedian/bad boy Joe, quiet violinist Schlomo, "talented but dyslexic" dancer Tyrone, determined actor Nick, overweight dancer Mabel, and a serious dancer, Iris, from a poor family.^[5] The popularity of the film has led to the creation of "FAME" Schools in Liverpool (Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts).^{[6][7]} Since its first production, *Fame – The Musical* has had hundreds of professional and amateur productions in every major language

The First is a musical with a book by critic [Joel Siegel](#). The music was composed by Robert Brush, and [Martin Charnin](#) wrote the lyrics. The show is based on the life of [Brooklyn Dodgers](#) second baseman [Jackie Robinson](#), the first African-American to play major league baseball in the 20th century.



The musical premiered on [Broadway](#) at the [Martin Beck Theatre](#) on November 17, 1981 and closed on December 12, 1981 after 37 performances and 33 previews. Charnin has said that despite "stellar reviews," the musical failed to secure one: that of [Frank Rich](#) of *The New York Times*, "which

at the time meant everything."^[1] Directed by Charnin and choreographed by Alan Johnson, the original cast included [David Alan Grier](#) as Jackie Robinson, and [Lonette McKee](#) as his wife Rachel.

- [Fela!](#)

Fela! is a musical with a book by [Bill T. Jones](#) and Jim Lewis, based on music and lyrics by the late Nigerian singer [Fela Kuti](#), with additional music by Aaron Johnson and [Jordan McLean](#) and additional lyrics by Jim Lewis. It is based on events in the life of groundbreaking [Nigerian](#) composer and activist Fela Anikulapo Kuti. It portrays Kuti in the days when he was the target of 1,000 government soldiers assigned to end his public performances at the legendary [Lagos](#) nightclub The Shrine.



The musical ran [Off-Broadway](#) for one month in 2008. It premiered on [Broadway](#) at the [Eugene O'Neill Theatre](#) on November 23, 2009, and ran until January 2011. The Off-Broadway production won the [Lucille Lortel Awards](#) for Best Musical, Outstanding Choreographer for Bill T. Jones, and Outstanding Costume Design for Marina Draghici. The Broadway production received eleven [2010 Tony Award](#) nominations and won [Best Choreography](#), [Best Costume Design in a Musical](#), and [Best Sound Design of a Musical](#).^[1] [Alex Gibney](#)'s 2014 documentary film *Finding Fela* followed aspects of the Broadway musical, and drew heavily on interviews with Jones.

Fela! opened at the Off-Broadway [37 Arts Theatre B](#) on September 4,



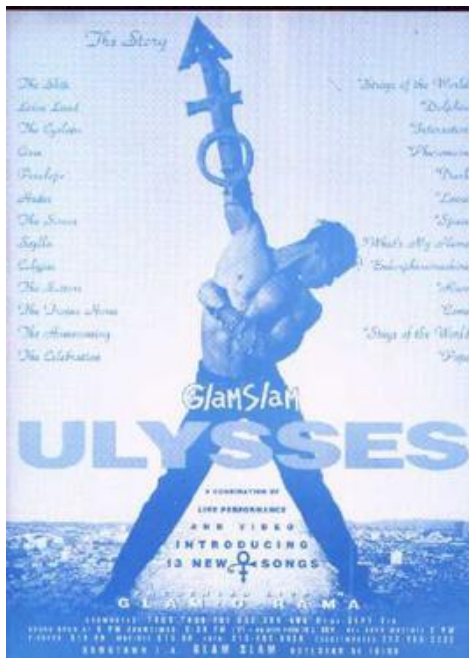
2008, and closed on October 5, 2008. It was conceived by Bill T. Jones, Steve Hendel and Jim Lewis, directed and choreographed by Jones. The production was designed by Marina Draghici (scenery and costumes) Robert Wierzel (lighting) [Peter Nigrini](#) (projection) and Robert Kaplowitz (sound). The cast featured [Sahr Ngaujah](#) as Fela and Abena Koomson as [Funmilayo](#), Fela's mother

- [Five Guys Named Moe](#)

-

Five Guys Named Moe is a musical with a book by [Clarke Peters](#) and lyrics and music by [Louis Jordan](#) and others. The musical is based on an earlier musical short of the same name by Louis Jordan from 1943.^[1] It had its UK debut at the [Cottesloe Theatre](#) at the [National Theatre](#)^{[2][3]} followed by a short run at the [Theatre Royal Stratford East](#), before moving to the [West End](#) for over four years in, and finally premiering on [Broadway](#) in 1992. It

was revived in 2010 at [Edinburgh Festival](#), starring Peters himself, and returned later in 2010 to the theatre in which it originally premiered. The musical won the [Laurence Olivier Award](#) for Best Entertainment. Nomax, whose girlfriend has left him and who is without money, finds Big Moe, Four-Eyed Moe, Eat Moe, No Moe, and Little Moe emerging from his 1930s-style radio to comfort him. They sing the hit songs of [songwriter](#) and [saxophonist](#) Louis Jordan, whose new slant on jazz paved the way for [rock and roll](#) in the 1950s.



G

- [Glam Slam Ulysses](#)

Glam Slam Ulysses was a 1993 musical production by [Prince](#), loosely based on Homer's *Odyssey*, featuring a combination of live performances and video, with thirteen previously unreleased songs.^[1]

Each song represented an element from

Homer's *Odyssey* (Ulysses is the [Latin](#) name for the protagonist, [Odysseus](#)). The musical received a limited performance at Prince's [Glam Slam nightclub](#), with a few shows being performed in late August to early September 1993.^[2] [Carmen Electra](#), who was relatively unknown at the time, was a featured dancer in the performance, as was Frank



Williams. [Jamie King](#) provided the choreography.

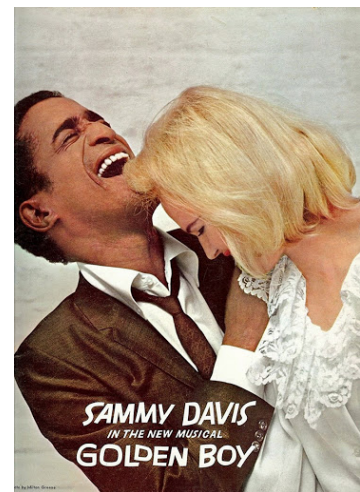
When Prince first announced to change his name to [an unpronounceable symbol](#) on June 7, 1993, he also stated that he would no longer be releasing new albums; instead he was to focus on alternative performances, films, etc., while his [record company, Warner Bros. Records](#), would be able to release albums from Prince's vault of unreleased material to fulfill his contract. The first of these alternative performances would be *Glam Slam Ulysses*.



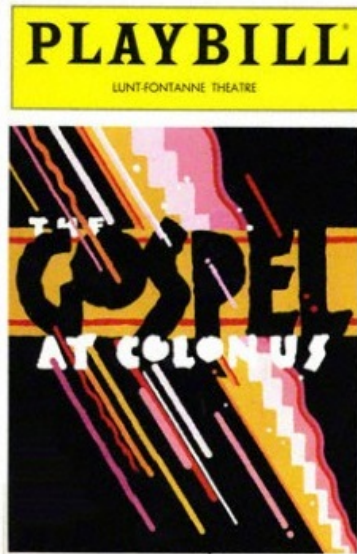
- Golden Boy (musical) **Golden Boy** is a 1964 musical with a book by Clifford Odets and William Gibson, lyrics by Lee Adams, and music by Charles Strouse.

Based on the 1937 play of the same name by Odets, it focuses on Joe Wellington, a young man from [Harlem](#) who, despite his family's objections, turns to [prizefighting](#) as a means of escaping his [ghetto](#) roots and finding fame and fortune. He crosses paths with [Mephistopheles](#)-like promoter Eddie Satin and eventually betrays his manager Tom Moody when he becomes romantically involved with Moody's girlfriend Lorna Moon.

Producer [Hillard Elkins](#) planned the project specifically for [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#) and lured Odets out of semi-retirement to write the book. The original play centered on [Italian American](#) Joe Bonaparte, the son of poverty-stricken [immigrants](#) with a disapproving brother who works as a labor organizer.^[1] Elkins envisioned an updated version that would reflect the struggles of an ambitious young [African American](#) at the onset of the [Civil Rights Movement](#) and include socially relevant references to the changing times.



In Odets' original book, Joe was a sensitive would-be [surgeon](#) fighting in order to pay his way through college, but careful to protect his hands from serious damage so he could achieve his goal of saving the lives of blacks ignored by white doctors.^[1] In an ironic twist, the hands he hoped would heal kill a man in the ring.



- [The Gospel at Colonus](#)

The Gospel at Colonus is an [African-American](#) musical version of [Sophocles's](#) tragedy, *Oedipus at Colonus*. The show was created in 1983 by the experimental-theatre director [Lee Breuer](#), one of the founders of the seminal American avant-garde theatre company [Mabou Mines](#), and composer [Bob Telson](#). The musical was a finalist for the [Pulitzer Prize for Drama](#). The show had a brief run on Broadway in 1988.

The Gospel at Colonus premiered at the [Brooklyn Academy of Music's](#) Next Wave Festival in November to December 1983.^[1]

The following year it received a production at the [Arena Stage](#) in Washington D.C. running from Nov 23, 1984 – Dec 30, 1984.^[2]

The musical ran at the American Music Theater Festival, Philadelphia, in September 1985.^{[3][4]}

A production at the Alliance Theatre, Atlanta Ga, in 1987 included Morgan Freeman and the Blind Boys of Alabama.^{[5][6][7]}

The Gospel at Colonus opened on [Broadway](#) at the [Lunt-Fontanne Theatre](#) on March 11, 1988 in previews, officially on March 14, 1988, and closed on May 15, 1988 after 61 performances and 15 previews. Directed by Lee Breuer, the cast featured [Morgan Freeman](#) (Messenger), Sam Butler, Jr. (The Singer), Clarence Fountain and the [Five Blind Boys of Alabama](#) (Oedipus) and the Institutional Radio Choir of Brooklyn. Breuer was nominated for the 1988 [Tony Award](#) for his book.^[8]

The musical was a finalist for the 1985 Pulitzer Prize for Drama.^[9] The musical won the 1984 Obie Award as Best Musical.^[10]

Breuer and Telson handed the storytelling duties to a black Pentecostal preacher and the choir of his church, who in turn enacted the story of Oedipus's torment and redemption as a modern parable. They

STAGE VIEW/Mel Gussow

A Gospel Show Marches to a Different Beat

UNIFYING CLASSIC GREEK tragedy and American gospel music, "The Gospel at Colonus" was the revelation of the 1983 Next Wave Festival at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. This improbable blending of apparent opposites was the invention of Lee Breuer (as author, co-lyricist and director) and Bob Telson (as composer). After a national and world tour and a television presentation on PBS's Great Performances, the lavish concert musical has arrived on Broadway, where it is something of an anomaly. It is a gospel show whose emotional sweep enhances its intellectual premise. Beginning with "Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope" in 1972, there has been an abundance — one might suggest, a surfeit — of gospel musicals, one or two almost every year, four already this season. Many of them such as "The River," have the thinnest thread of a story line. Though the shows have had an evident audience appeal, there has also been redundancy, right down to the long sermonizing titles that are so typical of the genre. "The Gospel at Colonus" is the first gospel show with a truly innovative idea at its core. That idea is also controversial. A pagan Greek text is used as a subject for Christian spiritual worship. Morgan Freeman, playing a preacher (and, later, Oedipus), announces to his Pentecostal congregation that its text for the evening is the Book of Oedipus.

As the tale is enacted in song and sermon, and as we watch the demonstrative congregation, we see the universal applicability of the story. The redemption of Oedipus after his tragedy, his death and ascension, can seem as biblical as the Book of Job. Many writers have attempted to reinterpret and to update Greek tragedy, but few have had the boldness of Mr. Breuer and Mr. Telson. They have done so by being faithful to the original (as translated by Dudley Fitts and Robert Fitzgerald), in spoken words and in lyrics. When Carolyn Johnson-White sings "Lift Him Up," the soaring message is directly inspired by Sophocles, as it also is in other songs.

In common with other performance pieces by Mr. Breuer, a founding member of Mabou Mines, the show began as a small workshop and grew larger — although none of Mr. Breuer's other work has been as huge as this, with a cast of more than 60, including several complete massed choirs on stage. When I saw it in its first production at the Brooklyn Academy, I wondered if the show might not be even more effective if it were fully staged with detailed scenes and scenery rather than concertized. By now, having seen it on television and on Broadway, one is more aware that the presentational nature of the performance is inseparable from the musical itself.

The performers, most of them nonprofessional actors, are not portraying their characters. They are presenting them to us as a kind of offering, as they would in a church service or pageant. In almost all cases, the actors-as-celebrants remain gospellersingers; there is no attempt at transforming themselves into Sophoclean figures. To do so would have shattered the illusion that we are, in fact, in a tabernacle. It is intended as no disparagement to point out the Suncay school aspect of "The Gospel at Colonus" — and it is



Clarence Fountain and the Five Blind Boys of Alabama alternately play Oedipus in "The Gospel at Colonus," by Lee Breuer and Bob Telson, at the Lunt-Fontanne

In 'Colonus,' the actors remain church singers; no one tries to turn them into Sophoclean figures.

one of many reasons that it should have an all-family appeal. Led by Mr. Freeman's towering performance, the show is a kind of dramatized sermon and participatory experience. As the worshippers testify, they find within themselves aspects of Greek character, and vice versa. The approach allows for a greater exercise of the imagination on the part of theatergoers as well as those on and behind the stage.

This is nowhere as evident as in the con-

cept of Oedipus himself, played alternately by Mr. Freeman and Clarence Fountain and the Five Blind Boys of Alabama. The effect of the multiple Oedipus is to deepen our perspective on the character and the use of blind singers further personalizes the drama. Though blind, the six surrogates for Oedipus walk up and down stairs as if led by some inner sense of equilibrium. When they stand around a white piano and, with a rush of music, descend and disappear within the stage — and then rise again in tribute to Oedipus — it is a coup de théâtre.

While welcoming the show to Broadway, one must recognize a difference from the original production. Though most of the actors and singers are identical, "The Gospel at Colonus" has lost — or at least temporarily misplaced — some of its initial excitement. At the Brooklyn Academy, the performance was so highly charged as to be airborne. With a surge of musical vitality, "The Gospel" seemed to levitate along with the seraphim

Allison Yerxa's striking heavenly cyclorama. The company seemed surprised by the audience enthusiasm.

On Broadway, there is a measure of self-consciousness among the actors and singers, some of whom seem to be posing rather than delivering a spontaneous performance. Furthermore, some of the lyrics have become unintelligible. As director, Mr. Breuer needs to restore a certain freshness and unforced exuberance to the company. If the performers do not passionately believe what they are doing, neither will theatergoers.

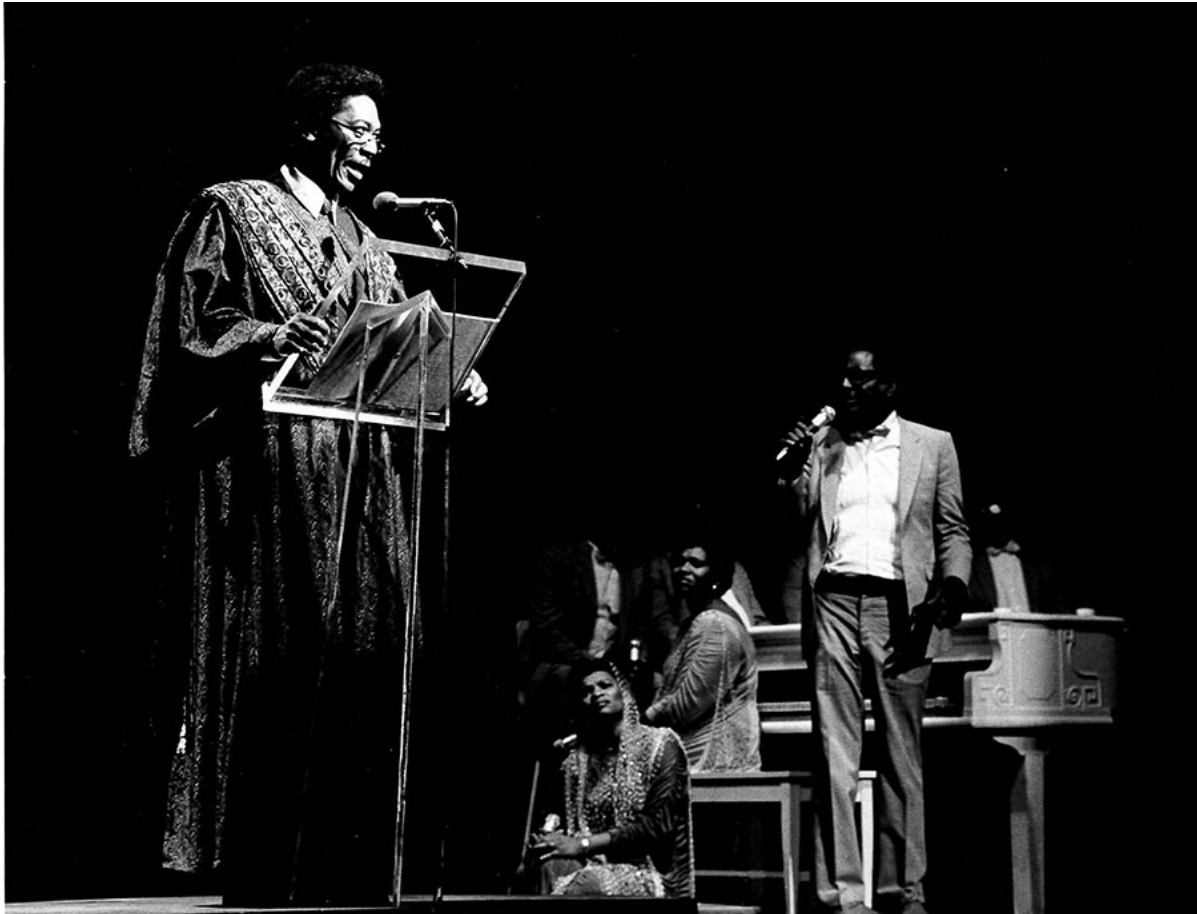
"The Gospel at Colonus" is generally regarded as Mr. Breuer's entry into the mainstream, after several decades of functioning on the outer limits of the experimental theater. The truth is that "The Gospel" is, itself, experimental — and, as such, it is a challenge to Broadway and to Broadway audiences. For all the jubilation that flows from the

stage, the concept is cerebral. One can listen to Mr. Telson's songs simply as gospel, but they are also variously shaded commentaries on their Greek source.

At the same time, the show can be related to Mr. Breuer's earlier avant-garde work, such as "The Saint and the Football Player," his epic 1978 amalgam of sport and art, which used football as the "text" for a theater-dance piece, and was performed on location in an athletic field house. The director has often been regarded as a hermetic artist because of his chamber experiments with the work of Samuel Beckett and his "Animation" series of theatrical abstractions. But he has always had populist inclinations. For example, there was "Sister Suzie Cinema," the mini doo-wop musical he created with Mr. Telson, which took jukebox harmonies of the 1950's aloft on a simulated airplane wing. For the collaborative team, "The Gospel at Colonus" approaches apotheosis. □

employed the unusual device of casting The Blind Boys of Alabama to collectively portray Oedipus as well as the Institutional Radio Choir in Brooklyn and Chancel Choir of the Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Other casting innovations in the performance include multiple actors in single roles, such as when The Messenger is called upon to assume the role of Oedipus in tandem with the singer cast when the role calls for stage motion that would be difficult for the blind singer to negotiate alone, the

multiplicity of Oedipus's daughters and one son when the children of Oedipus appear collectively (with Jevetta Steele as Ismene, her sister Jearlyn Steele doubling for actress Isabell O'Connor as Antigone, and brothers J.D. and Fred Steele standing in as Polynices and Eteocles, with actor Kevin Davis doubling as Polynices), and, indeed, with different



portions of the cast, singly and in groups, assuming the duties of the traditional Greek chorus.

The New York Times's Mel Gussow has expressed the view that the result was the translation of the Greek myth into a Christian parable. In his review of the BAM production, Gussow noted: "It is surprising how organically "Oedipus" can fit within the framework of a gospel musical... the evening has the shape of a church service."^[1]

While the traditions of Greek theater as religious ritual are unfamiliar to modern audiences, *Gospel at Colonus* reaffirms those possibilities by its

use of call-and-response and ecstatic, sung re-enactment of a culturally important story.

In 1985 PBS televised the original Brooklyn Academy of Music production, as presented by the American Music Theater Festival at the Annenberg Center in Philadelphia, as part of the Great Performances series. The performers included Morgan Freeman as The Messenger, Carl Lumbly as Theseus, Jevetta Steele as Ismene, and Robert Earl Jones as Creon. In the 1985 incarnation, The Soul Stirrers (credited collectively) and the Institutional Radio Choir assume roles as citizens of Colonus.^[3] In 1995 WHYY/Philadelphia aired a one hour special, The Peoples Gospel at Colonus, highlighting Director Danny Fruchter's thought that Greek Theatre and the African American Church reflect ideas about community essential to both cultures. This community involvement, in fact the chorus making the story, was central to his 1995 production at the People's Light and Theatre Co. during the 3rd Annual FreeFest, in which all tickets were free and most performers were part of the same town of nearby Coatesville, PA.



The first-act song "How Shall I See You Through My Tears?" was used as the opening number of the 2003 film, *Camp*.

- [Grind \(musical\)](#)
-

Grind is a musical with a book by Fay Kanin, music by Larry Grossman, and lyrics by Ellen Fitzhugh. *Grind* is a portrait of a largely African-American burlesque house in Chicago in the Thirties.

Reviews of the production were mixed at best. In his *The New York Times* review, Frank Rich wrote: "...the show has become a desperate barrage of arbitrary musical numbers, portentous staging



devices, extravagant costumes..., confused plot twists and sociological bromides..."^[1]

Grind eventually closed after a run of slightly more than two months, losing its entire \$4.75 million investment. It was one of a string of six Broadway flops directed by [Hal Prince](#) in the 1980s, and Prince and three other members of the creative team were suspended by the Dramatists Guild for signing a "substandard contract."^[2]



In a Broadway season described by theater historian [Ken Mandelbaum](#) as "dismal" for new musicals,^[3] *Grind* was nominated for seven [Tony Awards](#), including Best Musical; it eventually won two, for Best Featured Actress in a Musical ([Leilani Jones](#)) and Best Costume Design (Florence Klotz).

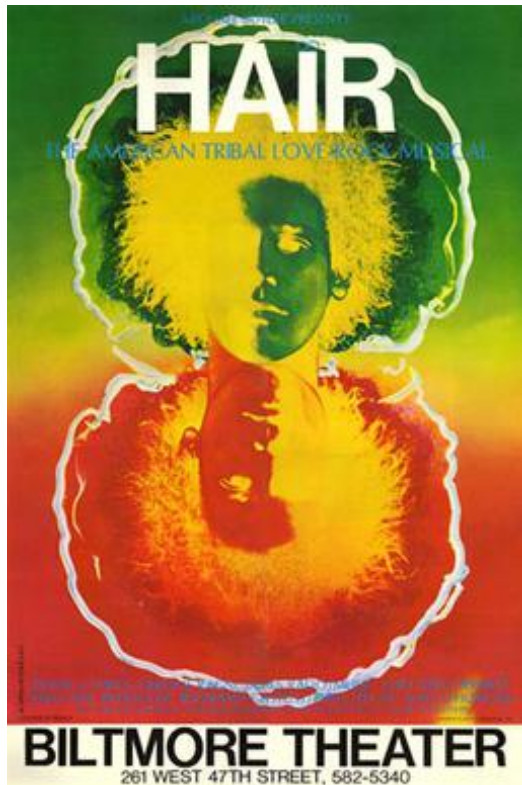
The singers, dancers, comedians, and strippers who make up the ensemble of Harry Earle's Burlesque take the stage and welcome the audience ("This Must

Be the Place"). The year is 1933 and the city is Chicago. We are introduced to the white characters: HARRY EARLE, the owner of the venue; his wife, ROMAINE, who is a stripper; and the lead white comedians, SOLLY and GUS. We are also introduced to the black characters: LEROY, the lead black comedian; SATIN, who is also a stripper; and MAYBELLE, the wardrobe lady for the black performers.

H

- [Hair \(musical\)](#)

Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical is a rock musical with a book and lyrics by Gerome Ragni and James Rado and music by Galt MacDermot. The work reflects the creators' observations of



the hippie counterculture and sexual revolution of the late 1960s, and several of its songs became anthems of the anti-Vietnam War peace movement. The musical's profanity, its depiction of the use of illegal drugs, its treatment of sexuality, its irreverence for the American flag, and its nude scene caused much comment and controversy.^[1] The musical broke new ground in musical theatre by defining the genre of "rock musical", using a racially integrated cast, and inviting the audience onstage for a "Be-In" finale.^[2]

Hair tells the story of the "tribe", a group of politically active, long-haired hippies of the "Age of Aquarius" living a bohemian life in New York City and fighting against conscription into the Vietnam War. Claude, his good friend

Berger, their roommate Sheila and their friends struggle to balance their young lives, loves, and the sexual revolution with their rebellion against the war and their conservative parents and society. Ultimately, Claude must decide whether to resist the draft as his friends have done, or to succumb to the pressures of his parents (and conservative America) to serve in Vietnam, compromising his pacifist principles and risking his life.

After an off-Broadway debut on October 17, 1967, at Joseph Papp's Public Theater and a subsequent run at the Cheetah nightclub from December 1967 through January 1968, the show opened on Broadway in April 1968 and ran for 1,750 performances. Simultaneous productions in cities across



the United States and Europe followed shortly thereafter, including a successful London production that ran for 1,997 performances. Since then, numerous productions have been staged around the world, spawning dozens of recordings of the musical, including the 3 million-selling [original Broadway cast recording](#). Some of the songs from its score became [Top 10](#) hits, and a [feature film adaptation](#) was released in 1979. A Broadway revival opened in 2009, earning strong reviews and winning the [Tony Award](#) and [Drama Desk Award](#) for Best Revival of a Musical. In 2008, *Time* wrote, "Today *Hair* seems, if anything, more daring than ever.

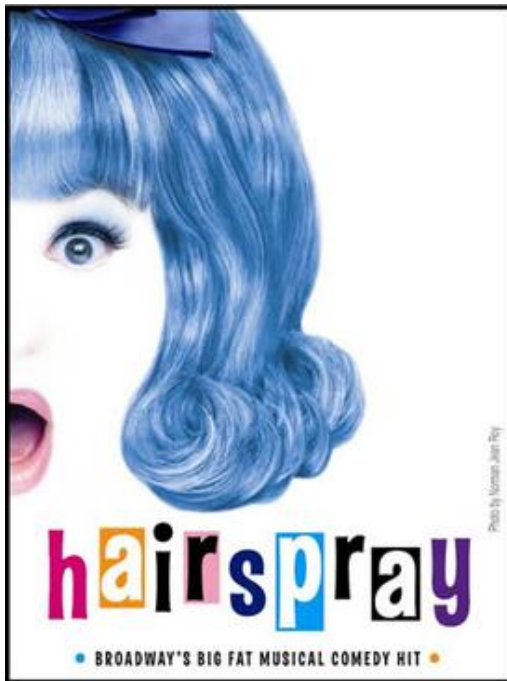
- [Hairspray \(musical\)](#)

Hairspray is an American musical with music by [Marc Shaiman](#), lyrics by [Scott Wittman](#) and Shaiman and a book by [Mark O'Donnell](#) and [Thomas Meehan](#), based on [John Waters's 1988 film of the same name](#). The songs include 1960s-style dance music and "downtown" [rhythm and blues](#). In 1962 [Baltimore, Maryland](#), plump teenager Tracy Turnblad's dream is to dance on *The Corny Collins Show*, a local TV dance program based on the real-life [Buddy Deane Show](#).^[1] When Tracy wins a role on the show, she becomes a celebrity overnight, leading to social change as Tracy campaigns for the show's integration.

The musical opened in Seattle in 2002 and moved to Broadway later that year. In 2003 *Hairspray* won eight **Tony Awards**, including one for **Best Musical**, out of 13 nominations. It ran for **2,642 performances**, and closed on January 4, 2009.^[2] *Hairspray* has also had national tours, a West End production, and numerous foreign productions and was adapted as a **2007 musical film**. The London production was nominated for a record-setting eleven **Laurence Olivier Awards**, winning four, including **Best New Musical**.

According to interviews included as an extra feature on the 2007 film's DVD release, theatre producer **Margo Lion** first conceived of *Hairspray* as a stage musical in 1998 after seeing the original film on television. "I was home looking at a lot of movies, and one of those movies was *Hairspray*."

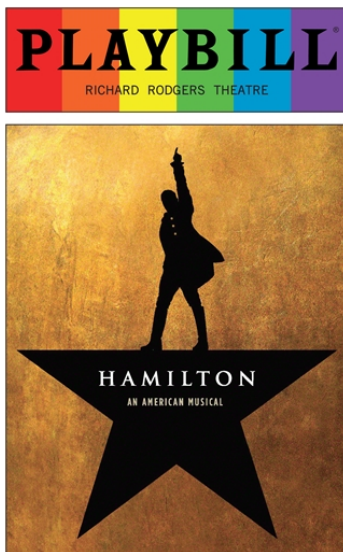
She contacted John Waters, who gave her his blessing, then acquired the rights from **New Line Cinema**. Lion contacted Marc Shaiman, who expressed interest in the project only if his partner Scott Wittman could participate, and Lion agreed. The two enlisted the help of actress and singer **Annie Golden** to produce a demo recording containing three songs, one of which, "Good Morning Baltimore," eventually became the show's opening number. Based on their initial work, Lion felt confident that she had hired the right team



- [Hamilton \(musical\)](#)

Hamilton is a musical with music, lyrics, and book by [Lin-Manuel Miranda](#) that tells the story of American [Founding Father Alexander Hamilton](#). Inspired by the 2004 biography *Alexander Hamilton* by historian [Ron Chernow](#), the show's music draws heavily from [hip hop](#), as well as [R&B](#), [pop](#), [soul](#), and [traditional-style show tunes](#); the show also casts [non-white](#) actors as the Founding Fathers and other historical figures.^{[1][2][3]} Through this use of modern storytelling methods, *Hamilton* has been described as being about "America then, as told by America now."^[4]

From its first opening, *Hamilton* received critical acclaim.^[5] The show premiered at the [Public Theater, Off-Broadway](#) on February 17, 2015, where its engagement was sold out;^[6] it won eight Drama Desk Awards, including [Outstanding Musical](#). It then transferred to the [Richard Rodgers Theatre](#) on Broadway, opening on August 6, 2015, where it received uniformly positive reviews and strikingly high box office sales.^[7] At the [2016 Tony Awards](#), *Hamilton* received a record-setting 16 nominations,





eventually winning 11 awards, including [Best Musical](#). It received the 2016 [Pulitzer Prize for Drama](#).

The [Chicago](#) production of *Hamilton* began preview performances at the [CIBC Theatre](#) in September 2016 and officially opened the following month.^[8] The [West End](#) production of *Hamilton* opened at the [Victoria Palace Theatre](#) in [London](#) in December 2017, winning seven [Olivier Awards](#) in 2018, including [Best New Musical](#).^[9] The first U.S. national tour of the show began performances in March 2017.^[10] A second U.S. tour opened in February 2018.^[11] *Hamilton's* third U.S. tour began January 11, 2019, with a three-week engagement in [Puerto Rico](#) featuring Miranda in the lead role.

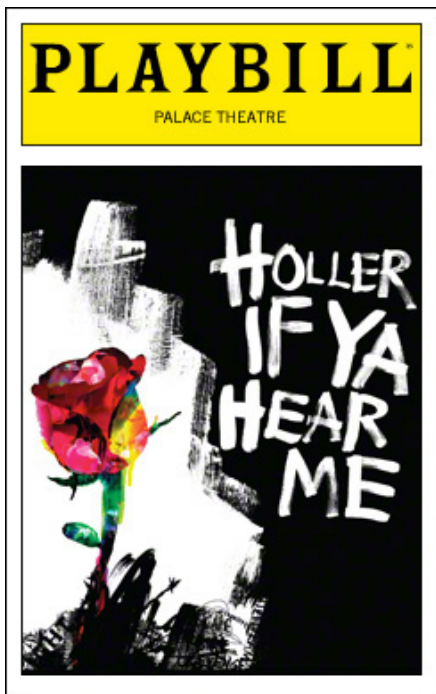
The musical details Hamilton's life in two acts, along with how various historical characters influenced his life such as [Gilbert du Motier, Marquis de Lafayette](#), [Aaron Burr](#), [John Laurens](#), [Hercules Mulligan](#), [Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton](#), [Angelica Schuyler](#), [Peggy Schuyler](#), [Philip Hamilton](#), and former presidents [George Washington](#), [James Madison](#), and [Thomas Jefferson](#).

- [Holler If Ya Hear Me \(musical\)](#)

The musical had a 5-week workshop in summer of 2013.^[1]

The musical began previews on [Broadway](#) at the [Palace Theatre](#) on June 2, 2014, and officially opened on June 19, 2014. The musical closed on

July 20, 2014, after 17 previews and 38 performances. Directed by [Kenny Leon](#), the musical staging and choreography was by [Wayne Cilento](#).^{[2][3]}



One of the producers, Eric L. Gold, "blamed the show's closing on 'the financial burdens of Broadway'...'I was unable to sustain this production longer in order to give it time to bloom on Broadway.' Mr. Gold also recently told Variety that he made a 'rookie mistake' by underestimating the amount of capital necessary to keep the \$8 million show running." The show had mixed reviews.^[4]

A cast album of this musical was recorded but never released.

In 2017, Director [Kenny Leon](#) launched the first regional production in Atlanta. The script was revisited with a new cast. The [production](#) premiered on September 15, 2017.

- [Hadestown](#)

Hadestown is a [musical](#) with music, lyrics and book by [Anaïs Mitchell](#). It tells a version of the ancient Greek myth of [Orpheus and Eurydice](#), where [Orpheus](#) goes to the [underworld](#) to rescue his fiancée [Eurydice](#).

The original version of the musical premiered in the town of [Barre, Vermont](#) in 2006. There was also a production in [Vergennes](#) in the same year and a tour between [Vermont](#) and [Massachusetts](#) in 2007. Then Mitchell, unsure about the future of the musical, turned it into a [concept album](#), released in 2010.^[1]

In 2012, Mitchell met director [Rachel Chavkin](#), and the two started to



rework the stage production, with additional songs and dialogue. The new version of the musical, developed for the stage and directed by Chavkin, premiered [Off-Broadway](#) at [New York Theatre Workshop](#) on May 6, 2016 and ran through July 31. Following productions in [Edmonton](#) and [London](#), the show premiered in previews on [Broadway](#) in March 2019.

The Broadway production opened to critical acclaim and received numerous awards and nominations. At the [73rd Tony Awards](#), *Hadestown* received a total of 14 nominations (the most for the

evening) and won eight of them, including [Best Musical](#) and [Best Original Score](#).

Characters^[edit]

[Hermes](#), Greek god of boundaries, roads, travelers, commerce, thieves, athletes, shepherds, and [Psychopomps](#), is the divine messenger. Throughout the musical, he plays the role of narrator. He is completely honest and smooth-spoken. Though he claims not to do things "because he is kind", he is shown to care for Orpheus by taking him in as his aide and shows kindness to Eurydice.

[Orpheus](#) is a legendary musician, poet, lover of Eurydice, and [prophet](#) in [ancient Greek religion](#). The main [protagonist](#), he is a dreamer and always see how things could be. He sees the best in people. He is awkward and clumsy but ultimately determined.

[Eurydice](#) is the lover of Orpheus. She is more experienced in life than Orpheus. She has been alone her whole life and has learned to fight for herself, which has made her reluctant to trust people. The Fates follow her through most of the musical, planting seeds of doubt and encouraging her to leave to Hadestown.

[Persephone](#) is goddess of Spring and wife of Hades. She is free spirited and fun loving. She is an alcoholic and is frequently shown to be drunk at many points of the musical. Though she still loves him, her relationship with Hades has broken down over the years and the pair constantly bicker. With her arrival to our world she brings spring, summer, and good times.



[Hades](#) is god of the underworld and husband of Persephone. He is the primary [antagonist](#). He is the ruler of Hadestown. He is cold and uncaring. However, he has become even more cold and hardened ever since his relationship with Persephone has become distant.

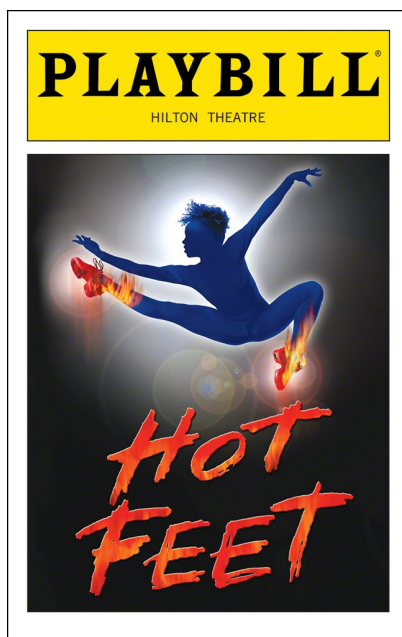
He sees the workers of Hadestown as "his children", and believes that through totalitarian control of their lives he has set them free.

The Fates are three spirits that act as the driving force of many key decisions other characters make in the show by influencing and manipulating their thoughts. Hermes, in the opening number, describes them as "three old women who dressed the same" and says that "they're always singing in the back of your mind".

- [Hot Feet](#)

Hot Feet is a jukebox musical featuring the music of [Earth, Wind & Fire](#), a book by Heru Ptah and was conceived, directed, and choreographed by [Maurice Hines](#). The musical opened

on [Broadway](#) at the [Foxwoods Theatre](#) (then the [Hilton Theatre](#)) on April 30, 2006 and closed on July 23, 2006.



Hot Feet is about a beautiful young dancer whose dream is to dance on Broadway. When she puts on a pair of magical red shoes, they begin to take control of her fate. This story is a modern retelling of "[The Red Shoes](#)", an 1845 fairy tale by [Hans Christian Andersen](#).

Hot Feet premiered in Washington, D.C. at the [National Theatre](#) on March 6, 2006 and closed on April 9. Directed and choreographed by [Maurice Hines](#), the cast featured [Allen Hidalgo](#), [Ann Duquesnay](#), [Keith David](#), [Michael Balderrama](#), [Samantha Pollino](#), [Vivian Nixon](#), and [Wynonna Smith](#). The show received mostly

negative reviews from critics. The original production was two hours and forty-five minutes in length

- [In Transit \(musical\)](#)

In Transit is a musical with book, music and lyrics by Kristen Anderson-Lopez, James-Allen Ford, Russ Kaplan and Sara Wordsworth. The musical, performed entirely a cappella, ran Off-Broadway in 2010, and on Broadway in 2016.

The musical relates the interrelated stories of New Yorkers who travel the city streets and subway. The characters include "an aspiring actress, a Wall



Street honcho, a street performer, a cab driver..."^[1]

Kristen Anderson-Lopez said: "The show is a love letter to New York and the people who make up New York." She noted that the show has evolved — for example, the Off-Broadway version had 7 voices, and the Broadway production has 11.^[2] Sara Wordsworth said "that *In Transit*'s 'subway and a cappella' are more than just location and style, respectively; they work as

metaphors for life's painful odysseys and the often unrecognized figures who support us along the way

Boxman begins the show by pointing out the amount of time spent in transit by New Yorkers ("A Math Question") and the cast laments how the MTA gets in their way of getting places ("Deep Beneath the City/Not There Yet"). Jane, a struggling actress, wishes that she could be successful and stop temping to make a living which she resolves to do by getting the part she is auditioning for ("Do What I Do"). Steven and Trent go to visit Trent's mother in Texas and are deeply uncomfortable at her homophobic views ("Four Days Home"). On his way to a job interview, Nate discovers that his MetroCard is out of money and begs Althea to let him go through ("Broke"). Althea refuses, but Boxman gives him a ride. Ali attempts to contact her ex, Dave, through any means possible on a Saturday night ("Saturday Night Obsession"). Nate meets up with friends from his old job and one offers to be his wingman to help him get a date with Jane who is there with her coworkers ("Wingman"). They go to get a drink after and exchange numbers. They both reflect on the date and Jane attempts to call Nate, however, discovers that his number doesn't work ("But Ya Know"). The characters reflect on how they still have not achieved their goals ("Not There Yet Reprise"). The sounds of different workers in the city overwhelm Jane as she tries to hear a call from her agent ("Keep it Goin'"). Jane tells them all to be quiet and finds out that she has been cast in a Broadway show. Later, as Jane has just quit her temping job, she gets a call that she is no longer cast and the role has been offered to Pippa Middleton. She asks her boss if she will take her back and her boss gives Jane some much-needed advice: to give up on her dreams and get a normal job, helping that idea along by offering Jane a much better position at the office ("A Little Friendly Advice"). Trent's mom visits New York and Trent attempts to come out to her, but quickly discovers that she doesn't want to know because of her faith ("Choosing Not To Know"). After running the New York City Marathon, Ali runs into Dave and his new girlfriend Cathy on her way home. She reflects on her relationship with Dave, realizing that pining over him has left her stagnant and she needs to move on from him ("The Moving Song"). After Trent's mother leaves the city, Steven tells Trent that he loves him anyway and chooses him and they decide to get married that day, and Ali runs into her brother Nate and tells him that she will be moving home to finish her degree, however Nate convinces her to move in with him and finish her degree in New York ("We Are Home"). Jane reflects on living in

the moment ("Getting There"). Ali finishes her degree, Nate and Jane are married with a baby, Steven and Trent get married and Trent's mother is in attendance, and Althea is running for mayor of New York. ("Final James and the Giant Peach (musical))

- [It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues](#)

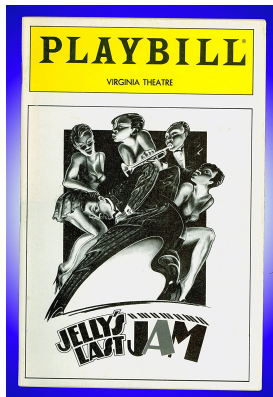
It Ain't Nothin' But the Blues is a [musical](#) revue written by Charles Bevel, [Lita Gaithers](#), Randal Myler, [Ron Taylor](#), and Dan Wheetman. It was originally produced at The [Denver Center for the Performing Arts](#) and later presented by the [Crossroads Theatre](#), in association with [San Diego Repertory Theatre](#) and [Alabama Shakespeare Festival](#) in New York City.



The revue traces the history of "blues" music with more than three dozen songs. Ron Taylor acted as singing narrator. It was directed by [Randal Myler](#) with movement by [Donald McKayle](#).

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- [Jelly's Last Jam](#)

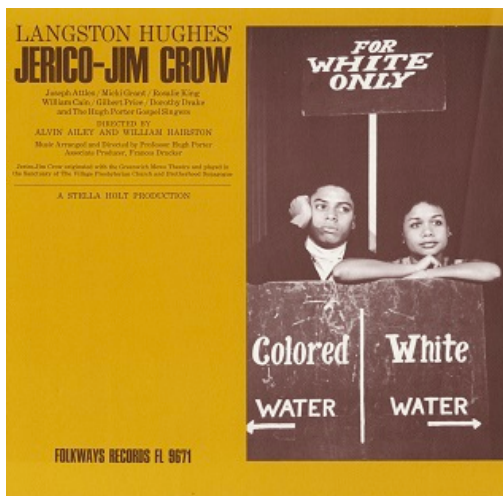
Jelly's Last Jam is a musical with a book by [George C. Wolfe](#), lyrics by [Susan Birkenhead](#), and music by [Jelly Roll Morton](#) and [Luther Henderson](#). Based on the life and career of [Ferdinand Joseph LaMothe](#), known as Jelly Roll Morton and generally regarded as one of the primary driving forces behind the introduction of [jazz](#) to the [American](#) public in the early 20th century, it also serves as a social commentary on the [African-American](#) experience during the era. LaMothe was born into a [Louisiana Creole](#) family that was established and free before the Civil War.



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- [Jerico-Jim Crow](#)

Jerico-Jim Crow is a 1964 musical, with a book written by **Langston Hughes** and **William Hairston**. It was a pioneering work in the **urban contemporary gospel musical** style, based on the themes of the **Civil Rights**

Movement in the United States. According to Hughes scholar and biographer **Arnold Rampersad**, Hughes "virtually pioneered" the black gospel musical, first with ***Black Nativity*** (1961) and then with ***Jericho-Jim Crow***.^[1]



Jerico-Jim Crow premiered on Sunday, January 5, 1964, at the Sanctuary Theatre, **New York City**. It was co-directed by **Alvin Ailey** and **William Hairston** and conducted by **Hugh Porter**, with **Marion**

Joseph Franklin, Jr as associate musical director and musical accompanist, the musical was favorably reviewed in ***The New York Times*** by **Richard F. Shepard**, who said: "This rousing production is an unabashedly sentimental and tuneful history of the Negro struggle up from slavery."^[2]

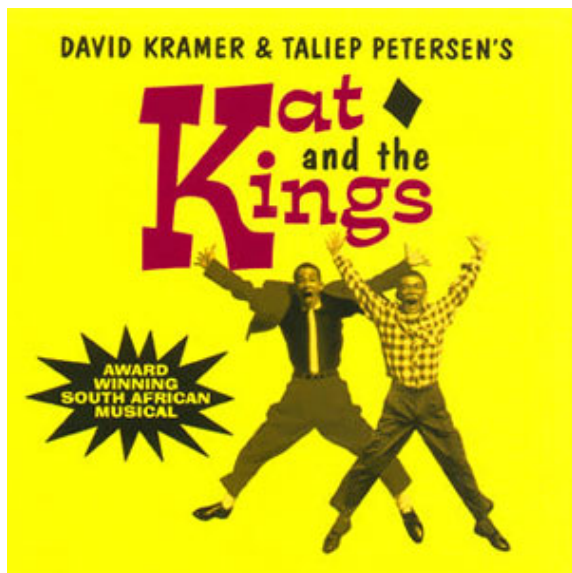
A cast recording was released in 1964 by **Folkways Records**.^[3]

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- [Kat and the Kings](#)

Kat and the Kings is a musical with a book and lyrics by [David Kramer](#) and music by [Taliep Petersen](#).

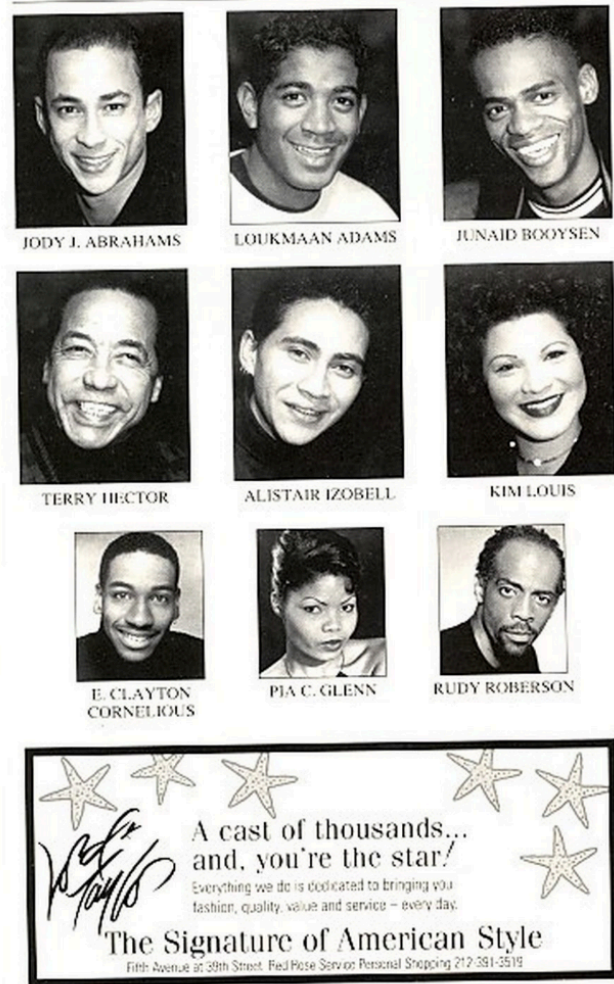
Set in late-1950s [South Africa](#), it focuses on teenager [Kat Diamond](#), who believes he's the best singer and dancer in [District Six](#), a multi-racial slum in [Cape Town](#). With his friends [Ballie](#), [Magoo](#), [Bingo](#), and [Lucy](#), he forms the a cappella group the [Cavalla Kings](#), and the quintet - emulating the American [doo wop](#) and [rock and roll](#) they adore - becomes a sensation,



graduating from street corners to "whites only" [nightclubs](#) (where the dictates of [apartheid](#) force them to use the rear entrance) and a recording contract.

The show was inspired by the memories of [Salie Daniels](#), the real-life [Kat](#) who appeared as the narrator in the original production. After touring [South Africa](#), the show was invited to the [Tricycle Theatre](#) in [Kilburn](#) in [November 1997](#), and returned to that venue prior to its opening in the [West End](#).^[2] Directed by [Kramer](#)

and [choreographed](#) by [Loukmaan Adams](#) and [Jody Abrahams](#), it opened on [March 23, 1998](#) at the [Vaudeville Theatre](#), where it ran for slightly more than four months. In addition to [Daniels](#), the cast included [Abrahams](#) as the



young Kat, Adams as Bingo, Junaid Booyesen as Ballie, Alistair Izobel as Magoo, and Mandisa Bardill as Lucy.

Kat and the Kings won the [Laurence Olivier Award](#) for Best New Musical and, in an unusual move, the entire cast was named Best Actor in a Musical. The show also was nominated for Best Theatre Choreography.^[3] An [original cast album](#) was recorded live during the June 6, 1998 performance and released by First Night Records.^[4]

After fifteen previews, the [Broadway](#) production opened on August 19, 1999 at the [Cort Theatre](#), where it ran for 157 performances. Terry Hector and Kim Louis replaced Daniels as the elder Kat and Mandisa Bardill as Lucy, respectively, but the remainder of the cast and the director and choreographers were from the [London](#) production. It was nominated

for [Drama Desk Awards](#) for Outstanding Featured Actor in a Musical (Alistair Izobell), Outstanding Choreography, and Outstanding Orchestrations.

- [Kinky Boots \(musical\)](#)

Kinky Boots is a [Broadway musical](#) with music and lyrics by [Cyndi Lauper](#) and book by [Harvey Fierstein](#).



Based on the 2005 British film *Kinky Boots*, written by [Geoff Deane](#) and [Tim Firth](#) and mostly inspired by true events, the musical tells the story of Charlie Price. Having inherited a shoe factory from his father, Charlie forms an unlikely partnership with cabaret

performer and [drag queen](#) Lola to produce a line of [high-heeled boots](#) and save the business. In the process, Charlie and Lola discover that they are not so different after all.

Following the show's conception in 2006, the creative team was assembled by 2010. The original production of *Kinky Boots* premiered at the [Bank of America Theatre](#) in [Chicago](#) in October 2012, with both direction and choreography by [Jerry Mitchell](#), and starring [Stark Sands](#) and [Billy Porter](#) as Charlie and Lola, respectively. It made its Broadway debut at the [Al Hirschfeld Theatre](#) on April 4, 2013, following previews that began on March 3, 2013. The musical began a US tour in 2014. The musical then ended on April 7, 2019.

Having initially been less well received by theatre critics and at the box office than another 2013 Broadway production, *Matilda the Musical*, *Kinky Boots* entered the 2013 awards season as an underdog. However, less than a month after opening, *Kinky Boots* surpassed this rival with audiences in weekly box office gross and later enjoyed a post-Tony boost in advance sales. The production earned a season-high 13 nominations



and 6 Tony wins, including [Best Musical](#), [Best Actor](#) for [Billy Porter](#) and [Best Score](#) for Lauper in her first outing as a Broadway songwriter, making her the first woman to win alone in that category. The musical's cast album premiered at number one on the [Billboard Cast Albums Chart](#) and number fifty-one on the [Billboard 200](#) chart. Making its [West End](#) debut in 2015, in 2016, it won three [Laurence Olivier Awards](#), including [Best New Musical](#).

Kinky Boots is based on the [2005 British film](#) of the same name,^[1] which was in turn inspired by a 1999 episode of the [BBC2](#) documentary television series *[Trouble at the Top](#)*. It followed the true story of Steve Pateman, who was struggling to save his family-run shoe factory from closure and decided to produce fetish footwear for men, under the brand name "Divine Footwear".^{[2][3]} Daryl Roth, a [Tony Award](#)-winning producer,^[4] saw the film at the 2006 [Sundance Film Festival](#) and fell in love with its "heart and soul". She felt that its themes resonated and thought that the story had potential as source material for a musical. Independently, Hal Luftig saw the film in London and agreed "that its heart and humanity (and bigger-than-life leading 'lady') would translate well to musical theatre."^[5] Within a year, Roth

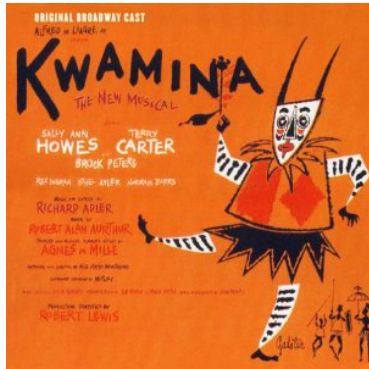
secured the rights to adapt the film to the stage and partnered with Luftig, a Tony and [Olivier Award](#)-winning producer.^{[6][7]}

By mid-2008, Roth and Luftig were in discussions with a potential director, [Jerry Mitchell](#), but they still had not found writers.^[8] When Roth sent Mitchell the DVD of the film, he was enthusiastic about it.^[9] Roth and Luftig hired Mitchell to direct and [Harvey Fierstein](#) to write the book.^{[6][10]} Mitchell knew that Fierstein and [Cyndi Lauper](#) were friends, and he thought they would make a good team to create the musical.^[9] Fierstein agreed and eventually approached Lauper to write the songs^[3] because he "saw in the adaptation an opportunity to work with someone with a big musical range, 'somebody who could write club music,' ... along with show tunes."^[11] Lauper joined the creative team in June 2010.^[12] Lauper's last project before *Kinky Boots* had been the album *Memphis Blues*, while Fierstein was working on *Newsies* when he began *Kinky Boots*.^[11] The work marked Lauper's debut as a musical theatre songwriter,^[10] although she had some theatrical experience, having performed on Broadway in the 2006 [Roundabout Theatre Company](#) production of *The Threepenny Opera*.^[13] Among Fierstein's prior experiences were works about drag queens: *La Cage aux Folles* and *Torch Song Trilogy*.^[14] Lauper has said that she identifies with drag queens.^[15]

Lauper wrote the songs for the show.

Fierstein and Lauper had both gained previous critical acclaim and honors in their respective fields. Fierstein had won four Tonys: acting and writing awards for *Torch Song Trilogy*, an acting Tony for *Hairspray*, and one for writing the book of *La Cage*; Lauper is a chart-topping singer-songwriter and actress who had won [Grammy](#), [Emmy](#) and many other awards for her songs and performances.^{[16][17][18]} Fierstein noted a change in focus between the film "about the saving of a factory" and the musical, which include "drag queens singing as they pass along the assembly line."^{[3][9]} He said the main difference is that the musical is, "at its core, about two young men who come from seemingly opposite worlds who figure out that they have a lot in common, beginning with the need to stand up to their dads."^[9] Lauper's inspirations ranged from the musicals *South Pacific* and *West Side Story* to [Aaron Copland's](#) *Appalachian Spring* and pop singer [Lana Del Rey](#).^[11] In a broadcast interview with Patrick Healy of *The New York Times*, Lauper and Fierstein said that, in adapting the film, they stressed themes of

community and the universality of the father-son bond as vehicles to explore the issues of tolerance and self-acceptance



Kwamina

Kwamina is a musical with the libretto by **Robert Alan Aurthur** and music and lyrics by **Richard Adler**.

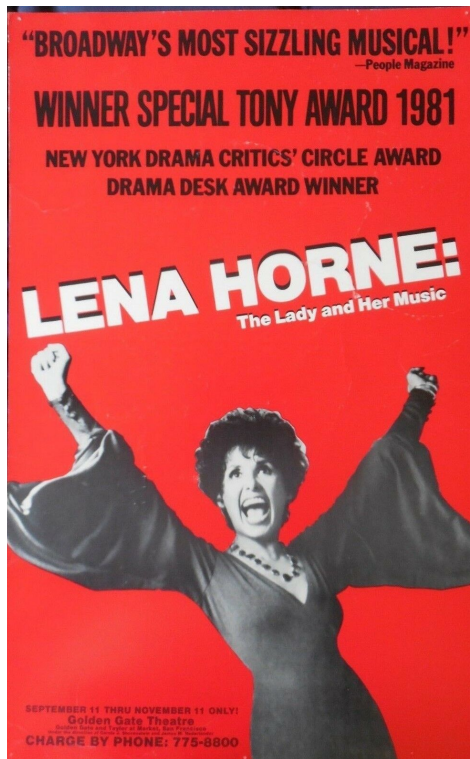
The son of an African tribal chief returns home after attending medical school in London and finds his modern methods conflict with his village's



traditions. He also butts heads with the village's white female doctor, but he ultimately falls in love with her.

The original cast album was recorded for Capitol Records on Monday, November 20, 1961 following the Saturday close two days earlier. A cast album had already been planned based on hopes that the show would be a hit, but Capitol Records, despite the extremely short run of the show, went ahead and made and released the album, and it has since reached a cult status. It has recently been made available for online download on iTunes and Amazon

L



Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music was a 1981 [Broadway musical](#) revue written for and starring American singer and actress [Lena Horne](#). The musical was produced by Michael Frazier and Fred Walker, and the cast album was produced by [Quincy Jones](#). The show opened on May 12, 1981, and after 333 performances, closed on June 30, 1982, Horne's 65th birthday. Horne toured with the show in the U.S. and Canada and performed in London and Stockholm in 1984.

Lena Horne (born June 30, 1917– May 9, 2010),^[1] is an American singer and actress. Horne joined the chorus of the [Cotton Club](#) at the age of sixteen and became a band singer and nightclub performer before

moving to Hollywood where she had small parts in numerous movies, and much more substantial parts in the films *Cabin in the Sky* and *Stormy Weather* (1943). Due to the [red scare](#) and her progressive political views, she was blacklisted and unable to get work in Hollywood. She returned to her roots as a nightclub performer. In the 1960s she participated in the [March on Washington](#) and performed in nightclubs and television. She announced her retirement in March 1980 and performed a two-month farewell tour of the United States.^[2] Director Arthur Faria discarded the multi character script called *Lena's World* and conceived for her a one-woman show which became *Lena Horne: The Lady and Her Music*- Throughout the show Horne sang and danced to [Tin Pan Alley](#) songs, [jazz standards](#), music from films in which she had appeared, and songs written for her. The show sought to portray Horne's life from her beginning in show business to the present. During the show she spoke of the racism that she had encountered, describing how Hollywood producers told her she opened her mouth too big when she sang and devised a makeup for her,

Light Egyptian, which was applied to white actresses such as [Ava Gardner](#) and [Hedy Lamarr](#), who took roles that Horne could have possibly played.

Horne performed her signature song, "[Stormy Weather](#)", twice in the show, the first time more subdued than the second.^[3] She was accompanied by dancers and backup singers. Costumes were designed by [Giorgio di Sant'Angelo](#).



- [The Lion King \(musical\)](#)

- *The Lion King* is a musical based on the 1994 Walt Disney Animation Studios' animated feature film of the same name with music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice, and book by Roger Allers and Irene Mecchi, along with additional music and lyrics by Lebo M, Mark Mancina, Jay Rifkin, Julie Taymor, and Hans Zimmer.^[1] Directed by Taymor, the musical features actors in animal costumes as well as giant, hollow puppets. The show is produced by Disney Theatrical Productions. The musical debuted on July 8, 1997 in Minneapolis, Minnesota at the Orpheum

Theatre and was successful before premiering on Broadway at the New Amsterdam Theatre on October 15, 1997 in previews, with the official opening on November 13, 1997. On June 13, 2006, the Broadway production moved to the Minskoff Theatre to make way for the musical version of *Mary Poppins*, where it is still running after more than 9,000 performances.^{[3][4]} It is Broadway's [third longest-running show](#) in history, and has grossed more than \$1 billion, making it the highest grossing Broadway production of all time.^{[5][6]} Over 100 million people worldwide have seen the musical and it has earned



numerous awards and honors, including six Tony Awards, one for Best Musical and Best Direction of a Musical, making director Julie Taymor the first woman to earn such an honor.^[7]

The show opened in the West End's [Lyceum Theatre](#) on October 19, 1999, and is still running after more than 7,500 performances. The cast of the West End production were invited to perform at the [Royal Variety](#)

[Performance](#) in 1999 and 2008, in the presence of senior members of the [British Royal Family](#)



- [A Little Princess \(Lippa musical\)](#)

A Little Princess, The Musical is a musical with music by [Andrew](#)

[Lippa](#)^[1] and book and lyrics by [Brian Crawley](#), based on the 1905 children's novel of the same name by [Frances Hodgson Burnett](#). Produced by [TheatreWorks](#), the musical premiered at



the [Mountain View Center for the Performing Arts](#) in [Mountain View, California](#), on August 28, 2004, following previews from August 25.^{[2][3]} This production was directed by [Susan Schulman](#)^[4] with a cast that starred [MacKenzie Mauzy](#) as Sara Crewe and [Will Chase](#) as Captain

Crewe.^[3] Although *A Little Princess* was labeled as "Broadway-bound",^[3] the musical has not, as of July 2016, been produced on Broadway.

In September 2005, *A Little Princess* was featured in National Alliance for Musical Theatre's 17th Annual *Festival of New Musicals*, held off-Broadway at Dodger Stages in New York City.^[5]

A cast recording featuring Sierra Boggess as Sara, Julia Murney, Chase and Remy Zaken was released in 2010 by Ghostlight Records.^{[6][7]}

A new version of the musical was performed in a concert in October 2011



by the Texas State University, San Marcos, Texas, musical theatre department, and was conducted by Lippa.^[8]

On the 28th May 2018 the musical received its premiere in London at Southbank Centre. The one night only production was the first to have a child ensemble playing its array of schoolgirls. Amanda Abbington played Miss Minchin and Danny Mac as Captain Crewe.

The performing rights to the musical are available from Musical Theatre International.



- [Look to the Lilies](#)

- ***Look to the Lilies*** was a short-lived Broadway musical with a book by [Leonard Spigelgass](#), lyrics by [Sammy Cahn](#), and music by [Jule Styne](#).

Based on both the [novel](#) and film versions of *Lilies of the Field*, it tells the story of a group of [German](#) nuns, headed by a determined, dauntless Mother Superior, who manage to get an [African American](#) itinerant handyman/jack-of-all-trades named Homer Smith to build a [chapel](#) for the [New Mexico](#) community in which they live, despite not having money to pay him. Styne composed his score with [Ethel Merman](#) in mind, but director [Joshua Logan](#) cast [Shirley Booth](#) instead. [Sammy Davis, Jr.](#)'s salary demands put him out of the running, and the role of Homer went to [Al Freeman, Jr.](#), whom Logan later described as "difficult" and "antagonistic

M



- [Mama, I Want to Sing! \(musical\)](#)

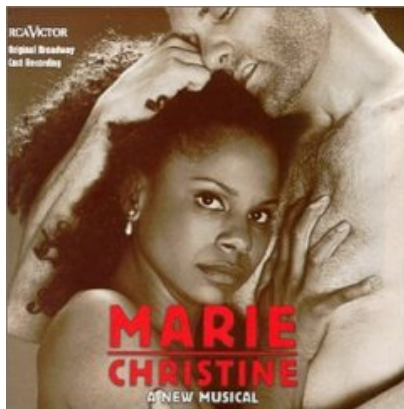
As a tribute to many of the African-American stars' rise to fame in the 1960 and 1970s, [Vy Higginsen](#) based her musical on the life of her sister Doris Troy. Troy's 1963 hit "[Just One Look](#)" launched her to international fame and a successful career in [London](#), although her roots were in her church choir. This is not unlike the rise of other R&B and jazz singers such as [Aretha Franklin](#), [Patti LaBelle](#) and [Donna Summer](#). Vy Higginsen and Ken Wydro, her husband, conceived the play in

January 1979 and subsequently wrote the book and lyrics. The musical, however, was rejected by every major producer in New York. The lack of interest was largely due to the doubtfulness that a large enough audience would be attracted to a gospel-based production. The couple persisted without a producer, and invested their life-savings to hire out the 632-seat [Heckscher Theatre](#) in [East Harlem](#), which had previously been closed for 15 years. Vy envisioned her audience as being "senior citizens, church groups, school children, and hard-working black mothers and fathers who had spiritual values and loved soul-stirring music."

Mama, I Want to Sing! opened on March 23, 1983, on a very tight budget; however, word of mouth throughout the black community spread the news about the work. Audiences flocked to see the musical, which "presented the passion, spontaneity and emotional uplift of the black church experience along with a universal message for anyone with a dream." Currently, *Mama, I Want to Sing!* has played 2,500 performances in New York and another 1,000 performances throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan. It has been performed in front of thousands of people, and is the longest running black off-Broadway musical in American history. On January 7, 1985, [Time](#) magazine named *Mama, I Want to Sing!* one of the ten "Best of '84" theater performances. On January 20, 1986, the show

hit its 1000th performance milestone. On February 1–6, 1994, *Mama, I Want to Sing!* played to 40,000 at the Paramount Theater at Madison Square Garden. In 2003–04, *Mama, I Want to Sing!* celebrated its 20th anniversary at the Williams Institute C.M.E. Baptist Church in Harlem, formerly the Lafayette Theater. 2011 saw the release of the long-awaited premiere of the [film adaptation of the musical](#) by [20th Century Fox](#)

- [Marie Christine](#)



Marie Christine is a [musical](#) with music, lyrics, and book by [Michael John LaChiusa](#). It opened on [Broadway](#) in 1999. Set in 1890s [New Orleans](#) and then 5 years later in Chicago; the story is loosely based on the [Greek](#) play *Medea*, and uses elements of [voodoo](#) rituals and practices. The title character was based in part on the historical figure of [Marie Laveau](#) – specifically, her daughter, who took the same name – and the myths surrounding them.

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- [Me and Bessie](#)

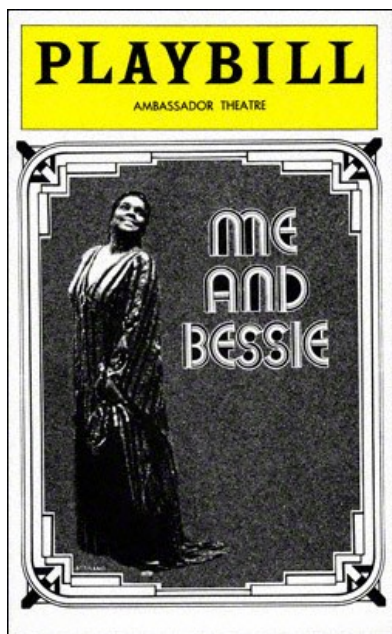


Me and Bessie is a musical revue about the life and career of blues singer Bessie Smith. The basically one-woman show, conceived and written by Will Holt and Linda Hopkins and performed by Hopkins, features songs by Lil Green, Clarence Williams, Henry Creamer, Andy Razaf, and Jimmy Cox, among others.

It originally was presented at Ford's Theatre in Washington, D.C. from November 1–17, 1974,^[1] then produced by the Center Theatre Group and staged

by Robert Greenwald at the Mark Taper Forum from April 4 through May 3, 1975.^[2]

The Broadway production was directed by Greenwald, with special dance sequences choreographed by Lester Wilson for two characters, identified only as Man and Woman (Lester Wilson and Gerri Dean). Howlett Smith and Lenny Hambro were co-Musical Directors.^[3] Donald Harris was responsible for scenic design.



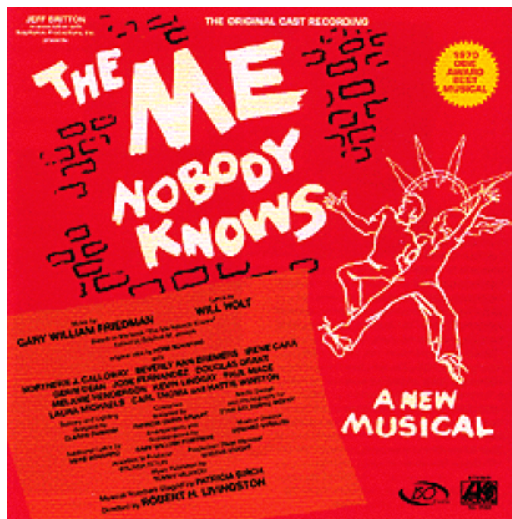
Following two previews, it opened at the Ambassador Theatre on October 22, 1975. It transferred to the Edison Theatre on December 3, 1975 and remained there until December 5, 1976, running for a total of 453 performances. Between September 24 and its closing, it ran in repertory with *Oh! Calcutta!*

In and Around Town, a weekly critical guide for entertainment in New York, included a capsule review for *Me and Bessie* that read, "The raw fervor of Linda Hopkins's blues singing is all that

matters here, and it's enough. Unfortunately, the show is also burdened with a silly script by Will Holt, which consists mostly of having Miss Hopkins disavow the fact that she's Bessie Smith with all the fervor of a Kennedy disavowing politics." [4] However, in 2011, Backstage magazine remembered Hopkin's performance as Smith: "It's been 36 years since I saw her in it at the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles, but she's stayed with me as the definitive Bessie Smith, and of course the cast album plays even more powerfully than Smith's original." [5]

Linda Hopkins was nominated for the [Drama Desk Award for Unique Theatrical Experience](#) but lost to [The Norman Conquests](#). [6] The production held the record for the longest-running one-woman show in Broadway history until [Golda's Balcony](#), starring [Tovah Feldshuh](#), surpassed it by forty performances. [7]

The Me Nobody Knows



The Me Nobody Knows is a musical with music by Gary William Friedman and lyrics by Will Holt. It debuted off-Broadway in 1970 and then transferred to Broadway, making it one of the earliest rock musicals to play on Broadway, and the first Broadway hit to give voice to the sentiments of inner-city American youth. It received the [Obie Award](#) and the [Drama Desk Award](#) for best New Musical, and Five [Tony Award](#) nominations, including

Best Musical.

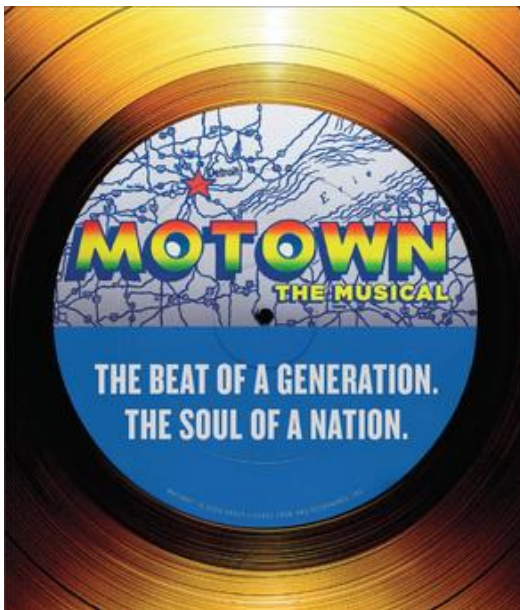
There is no plot, but the theme is children in low-income neighborhoods of [New York City](#), who are "complex, introspective characters. Each 'I' is an authentic voice saying attention must be paid." The children are self-assertive in the face of difficult lives. [1] Various stories are told through song by the cast of 8 black and 4 white children. One story is about a 13-year-old boy taking [heroin](#) for the first time. Another involves a child shocked to hear



a white boy order "milk and a n.....". Another boy watches as a drunk black man is taken away in an ambulance after an accident.^[2] In the musical number "If I Had a Million Dollars", the ghetto children ponder what they would do with the money and express "tightwad selfishness to outrageous spending sprees

- [Motown: The Musical](#)

Motown: The Musical is a jukebox musical that premiered on Broadway in April 2013. The musical is based on Berry Gordy's autobiography *To Be Loved: The Music, the Magic, the Memories of Motown* (1994),^[1] and on the history of his founding and running of the Motown record label, and his personal and professional relationships with Motown artists such as Diana Ross, Smokey Robinson, Marvin Gaye, and Michael Jackson. The



production's music and lyrics are taken from selections from the Motown catalog.^[2] It received four nominations at the 67th Tony Awards.

In 1983, at the Pasadena Civic Auditorium, recording stars are gathered to celebrate Motown Records' 25th anniversary. In a flashback, the young Berry Gordy watches the neighbors dancing in Detroit. In 1957, the adult Berry forms his own record label, and begins to make lifelong friends with recording artists/singers such as Marvin Gaye and Smokey



Robinson. Berry discovers the Supremes and Diana Ross, among many others.

The recording stars sing their popular numbers, including: Diana Ross ("I Hear a Symphony", "You're Nobody till Somebody Loves You", and "You're All I Need to Get By"), Stevie Wonder, The Supremes ("Buttered Popcorn", "Where Did Our Love Go"), The Miracles ("Shop Around"), The

Marvelettes ("Please Mr. Postman"), Mary Wells ("Bye Bye Baby"/"Two Lovers Medley"), The Temptations, Martha and the Vandellas ("Dancing in the Street"), The Contours ("Do You Love Me"), and The Jackson 5.[[]

N

- [The Night That Made America Famous](#)



The Night That Made America Famous is a 1975 musical revue featuring the songs of Harry Chapin. The music consists of a combination of songs written for the musical and songs from Chapin's previous albums, the latter including "What Made America Famous?", a song about a plumber who rescues a group of hippies from a fire, which includes the lyric that gave the musical its title.

Chapin appeared in the musical, alongside a cast that included a young Lynne Thigpen. Chapin's brothers Tom and Stephen, in addition to being featured performers, were also in the pit. The production was directed by Gene Frankel. It opened at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre in New York on February 26, 1975, after fourteen previews, and closed on April 5, 1975 after 47 performances



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O



- [One Love: The Bob Marley Musical](#)

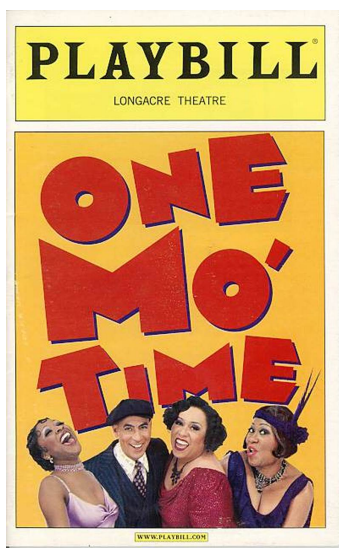
One Love: The Bob Marley Musical previously titled ***Marley*** is a [stage musical](#) based on the life and music of [Bob Marley](#), written by [Kwame Kwei-Armah](#).

Center Stage, Baltimore (2015)^[edit]

The musical received its world premiere under the original name of *Marley* at [Center Stage](#) in [Baltimore, Maryland](#), and ran from May 13 to June 14 2015 with previews from May 8. It was directed by Center Stage artistic director and playwright [Kwame Kwei-Armah](#), choreographed by [Germaul Barnes](#), scenic design by [Neil Patel](#), costume design by ESOSA, lighting design by [Michelle Habeck](#) and sound design by [Shane Rettig](#).^[1] The cast included [Mitchell Brunings](#) as Bob Marley, [Saycon Sengbloh](#) as Rita Marley, [Michael Luwoye](#) as Peter Tosh, [Howard W. Overshown](#) as Michael Manley, [David Heron](#) as Tony Welsh, [John- Andrew Morrison](#) as Claudie Massop, [Damian Thompson](#) as Bunny Wailer and [Michaela Waters](#) as Cindy Breakspere.

- [One Mo' Time \(musical\)](#)

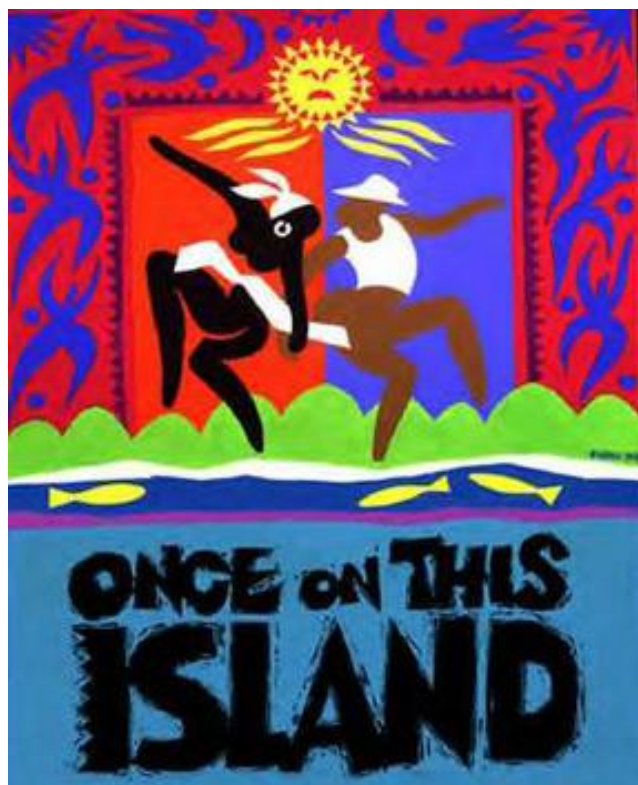
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One Mo' Time is a musical revue conceived by [Vernel Bagneris](#). It is an evening of 1920s African-American vaudeville, set in the Lyric Theatre in New Orleans in 1926.



The Lyric Theatre was on the black vaudeville circuit known as the [Theatre Owners Booking Association \(T.O.B.A.\)](#).

The Off-Broadway production opened in New York at the [Village Gate Theatre](#) in October 1979.^[1] On the [23rd Annual Grammy Awards](#) in 1980 the recording of the show was nominated for the [Best Original Cast Show Album](#).^[2]

The 1981 [West End](#) production, at the [Cambridge Theatre](#), was nominated for the [Olivier Award for Best New Musical](#). The musical was revived for a short Broadway season at the [Longacre Theatre](#) in 200



- [Once on This Island](#)

Once on This Island is a one-act musical with a book and lyrics by Lynn Ahrens and music by Stephen Flaherty. Based on the 1985 novel *My Love, My Love; or, The Peasant Girl* by Rosa Guy, it is set in the [French Antilles](#) archipelago in the [Caribbean Sea](#). It concerns a peasant girl on a tropical island, who uses the power of love to bring people together of different social classes.

The original [Broadway](#) production ran from 1990 to 1991, and the [West End](#) production opened in 1994, where it won the 1995 [Laurence Olivier Award for Best New Musical](#).

The musical was revived on Broadway in a production that opened on December 3, 2017 at the [Circle in the Square Theatre](#).

Once on This Island was originally staged at Off-Broadway's [Playwrights Horizons](#), running from May 6, 1990 through May 27, 1990. The Broadway production opened on October 18, 1990 at the [Booth Theatre](#) and closed on December 1, 1991, after 469 performances and 19 previews. With direction and choreography by [Graciela Daniele](#), the musical featured [LaChanze](#) as Ti Moune, Jerry Dixon as Daniel, Andrea Frierson as Erzulie, Sheila Gibbs as Mama Euralie, Kecia Lewis as Asaka, Gerry McIntyre as Armand, Milton Craig Nealy as Agwe, Eric Riley as Papa Ge, Ellis E. Williams as Tonton Julian and Afi McClendon as Little Ti Moune. In 2002, the original Broadway cast was reunited with special guest [Lillias](#)

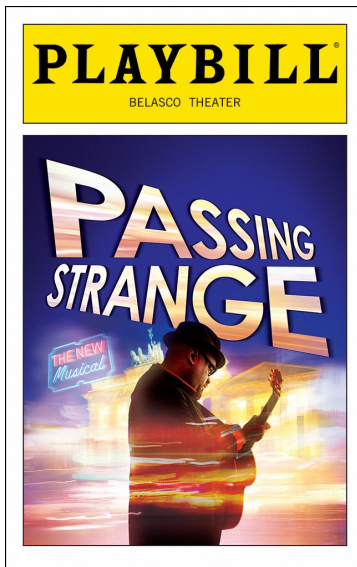


[White](#) to perform the show for [Broadway Cares/Equity Fights AIDS](#) and the [Cantor Fitzgerald Relief Fund](#).

The European premiere took place in 1994, hosted by the [Birmingham Rep](#), and then transferred to the [West End Royalty Theatre](#) (now the [Peacock Theatre](#)) in September 1994. The production won the [Olivier Award for Best New Musical](#).^[1]

One stormy night in the [Antilles](#) archipelago, thunder booms, making a small girl cry in fear. To comfort her, the village [storytellers](#) tell her the story of Ti Moune, a peasant girl who falls in love with a *grand homme*, Daniel Beauxhomme – a story of life, pain, love, grief, faith, and hope. In this story, four gods (consisting of [Asaka](#): Mother of the Earth, [Agwé](#): god of Water, [Erzulie](#): goddess of Love, and [Papa Ge](#): demon of Death) rule an island known as the [Jewel of the Antilles](#) where poor [peasants](#) worship them (Prologue/"We Dance"). The peasants, "black as night", live on one side of the island, and the *grands hommes*, lighter-skinned descendants of the original French planters and their slaves, live on the other. One night, Agwe unleashes a terrible storm upon the island, which in turn causes a disastrous flood, wiping out many villages. However, the gods save the life of a little orphan named Ti Moune by placing her in a tree above the flood's waves. She is found and subsequently adopted by the peasants Mama Euralie and Tonton Julian ("One Small Girl")

P



- [Passing Strange](#)

Passing Strange is a [comedy-drama rock musical](#) about a young African American's artistic [journey of self-discovery](#) in Europe, with strong elements of philosophical [existentialism](#), [metafiction](#) (especially [self-referential humor](#)), and the [artistic journey](#). The musical's lyrics and book are by [Stew](#) with music and orchestrations by Heidi Rodewald and Stew. It was created in collaboration with director [Annie Dorsen](#).

The musical was developed at the [Sundance Institute Theatre Lab](#) in 2004 and 2005, one of the few works to be invited back for a second round of development.^[1] It had productions in [Berkeley](#),

California and Off-Broadway before opening on Broadway in 2008, garnering strong reviews and several awards. Spike Lee filmed the musical on Broadway in July 2008, premiering the film in 2009.

Stew had never written a play before *Passing Strange*. In an interview with Berkeley Rep, where the play premiered, he said he was initially inspired by reading about the Old Globe Theatre, where Shakespeare productions were originally performed in front of rowdy audiences. A longtime rock musician and performer, he wanted to combine the energy of a rock show with the lively potential of a theater setting.^[2] Stew stated that the title "Passing Strange" comes from Shakespeare's 1603 play *Othello, the Moor of Venice*. In the play, the title character utters the following lines:

*My story being done,
She gave me for my pains a world of sighs;
She swore, in faith 'twas strange, 'twas passing strange;*



*'Twas pitiful. 'twas wondrous pitiful,
She wish'd she had not heard it, yet she wish'd
That heaven had made her such a man.*

—*Othello, the Moor of Venice*, act 1, scene 3, lines 158–163

Stew commented that the quote reminds him of a rock musician who tries to attract a girl with his on-the-road stories. "Passing" also refers to the

history of African Americans [passing as white](#), as well as the passage of time.^[3]

The plot itself involves an anonymous protagonist, called the Youth, who travels on a [picaresque](#) journey to find "the real", complicated by his need to rebel against his mother and society, "passing" through place to place and from lover to lover. His experiences are shaped by his black, American, and middle-class identity. As a musician, he attempts to express his true self through a number of musical genres, including gospel, punk, blues, jazz, and rock; however, the musical itself is most prominently grounded in rock music.

Stew summarized the story and the music: "It's ... about the costs of being a young artist. It's a 46-year-old guy looking back at the things that he did and the values he had in his 20s, sort of when you're making that decision to really be an artist ... We knew we were going to invent something 'cause we kind of knew this hadn't been done before, the goal being to bring the actual music that one hears in a club to the stage — not through some kind of theatrical musical-theater filter".^[4]

The musical was nominated for seven [Tony Awards](#), winning one, for best book. It won three [Drama Desk Awards](#), however, for outstanding musical, music and lyrics (out of seven nominations), among a number of other awards and nominations. The musical was also awarded the [New York Drama Critics Circle Award](#) for Best Musical; the Audelco Award for Best Musical, as well as Best Director (Annie Dorsen), Best Musical Director (Rodewald), and Best Performance (Daniel Breaker); and an [Obie Award](#) for Best New Theatre Piece, as well as Outstanding Ensemble.

- [Pippin \(musical\)](#)



Pippin is a 1972 [musical](#) with music and lyrics by [Stephen Schwartz](#) and a book by [Roger O. Hirson](#). [Bob Fosse](#), who directed the original Broadway production, also contributed to the [libretto](#). The musical uses the premise of a mysterious [performance troupe](#), led by a Leading



Player, to tell the story of [Pippin](#), a young prince on his search for [meaning](#) and significance.

The protagonist, Pippin, and his father, [Charlemagne](#), are characters derived from two real-life individuals of the early [Middle Ages](#), though the plot is fictional and presents no historical accuracy regarding either. The show was partially financed by [Motown Records](#). As of April 2019, the original run of *Pippin* is the 36th [longest-running Broadway show](#).

[Ben Vereen](#) and [Patina Miller](#) won [Tony Awards](#) for their portrayals of the Leading Player in the original Broadway production and the 2013

revival, respectively, making them the first actors to win Tonys for Best Leading Actor and Best Leading Actress in a Musical, for the same role.

Pippin was originally conceived as a student musical titled *Pippin, Pippin* and performed by [Carnegie Mellon University's Scotch'n'Soda](#) theatre troupe.^[1] Stephen Schwartz collaborated with Ron Strauss, and, when Schwartz decided to develop the show further, Strauss left the project. Schwartz had said that not a single line nor note from Carnegie Mellon's *Pippin, Pippin* made it into the final version



- [Play On!](#)



Play On! is a musical adaptation of Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*, featuring the music of Duke Ellington, with a book by Cheryl L. West. The musical resets the story in 1940s Harlem.

The original production, conceived by director Sheldon Epps, premiered in San Diego at the Old Globe Theatre in September 1996. After 19 previews, it opened on Broadway on March 20, 1997 at the Brooks Atkinson Theatre, where it ran for 61 performances. The cast included Tonya Pinkins, André De Shields, and Carl Anderson. An original cast recording was released on May 20, 1997 on Varèse Sarabande. A 1999 production of *Play On!* at the Pasadena Playhouse was recorded for the PBS series *Great Performances*.^[1]

The book, by playwright Cheryl L. West, departs from *Twelfth Night*'s usual setting of Illyria, resetting the play's action and characters in 1940s Swing-era Harlem.

Vy comes to swinging 1940s Harlem to write songs for the Duke, Harlem's greatest band leader. To overcome the sexist barriers of the time against women songwriters, she disguises herself as a man, Vy-man. She finds the Duke in tears over his loss of Lady Liv, Harlem's "queen of the blues". The Duke likes Vy-man's music, so he instructs the songwriter to go to the Cotton Club and present one of her songs as if it were a new song written by the Duke for Lady Liv. Lady Liv finds Vy-man charming, and a series of mistaken pairings results.

Meanwhile, several of the performers at the Cotton Club are rebelling against the overly serious and tyrannical club manager, Rev. Since Rev has a crush on Lady Liv, the performers persuade him that he should woo her by learning to swing and scat, giving up his old fashioned ballads. More confusion results before the truth is revealed, and the couples are appropriately united.

- [Porgy and Bess](#)



Porgy and Bess (/ˈpɔːrɡi/) is an English-language [opera](#) by the American composer [George Gershwin](#), with a [libretto](#) written by author [DuBose Heyward](#) and lyricist [Ira Gershwin](#). It was adapted from [Dorothy Heyward](#) and DuBose Heyward's play *Porgy*, itself an adaptation of DuBose Heyward's [1925 novel](#) of the same name.

Porgy and Bess was first performed in Boston on September 30, 1935, before it moved to [Broadway](#) in New York City.^[1] It featured a cast of classically trained African-American singers—a daring artistic choice at the time. After an initially unpopular public reception, a 1976 [Houston Grand Opera](#) production gained it new popularity, and it is now one of the best-known and most frequently performed operas.

The libretto of *Porgy and Bess* tells the story of Porgy, a disabled black street-beggar living in the slums of Charleston. It deals with his attempts to rescue Bess from the clutches of Crown, her violent and possessive lover,

and Sportin' Life, her drug dealer. The opera plot generally follows the stage play.

In the years following Gershwin's death, *Porgy and Bess* was adapted for smaller scale performances. It was [adapted as a film](#) in 1959. Some of the songs in the opera, such as "[Summertime](#)", became popular and are frequently recorded.

In the late 20th and early 21st centuries, the trend has been toward productions with greater fidelity to Gershwin's original intentions. Smaller-scale productions also continue to be mounted. A complete recorded version of the score was released in 1976; since then, it has been recorded several times.

The origin of *Porgy and Bess* is DuBose Heyward's 1925 novel [Porgy](#). Heyward produced a [play by the same name](#) with [Dorothy Heyward](#).



George Gershwin read *Porgy* in 1926 and proposed to Heyward to collaborate on an operatic version. In 1934, Gershwin and Heyward began work on the project by visiting the author's native [Charleston, South Carolina](#). In a 1935 [New York Times](#) article, Gershwin explained his motivation for calling *Porgy and Bess* a folk opera:

Porgy and Bess is a folk tale. Its people naturally would sing folk music. When I first began work in the music I decided against the use of original folk material because I wanted the music to be all of one piece. Therefore I wrote my own spirituals and folksongs. But they are still folk music—and therefore, being in operatic form, *Porgy and Bess* becomes a folk opera.

Gershwin's first version of the opera, running four hours (counting the two intermissions), was performed privately in a concert version in [Carnegie Hall](#), in the fall of 1935. He chose as his choral director [Eva Jessye](#), who also directed her own renowned choir. The world premiere performance



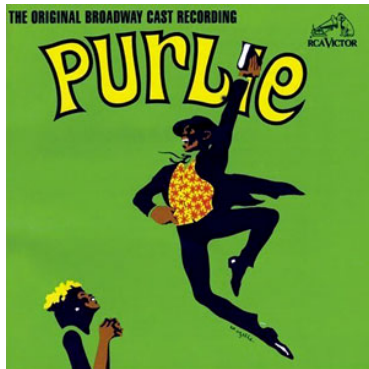
took place at the [Colonial Theatre](#) in Boston on September 30, 1935—the try-out for a work intended initially for Broadway where the opening took place at the [Alvin Theatre](#) in New York City on October 10, 1935.^[4] During rehearsals and in Boston, Gershwin made many cuts and refinements to shorten the running time and tighten the dramatic action. The run on

Broadway lasted 124 performances. The production and direction were entrusted to [Rouben Mamoulian](#), who had previously directed the Broadway productions of Heyward's play *Porgy*. The music director was [Alexander Smallens](#). The leading roles were played by [Todd Duncan](#) and [Anne Brown](#). Brown was a 20-year-old student at [Juilliard](#), the first African-American vocalist admitted there, when she read that George Gershwin was going to write a musical version of *Porgy*. She wrote him and asked to sing for him, and Gershwin's secretary invited her. Gershwin was impressed and began asking Brown to come and sing the songs as he composed them for *Porgy*.^[5] The character of Bess was originally a secondary character, but as Gershwin was impressed with Brown's singing, he expanded the part of Bess and cast Brown.^[6] When they had completed rehearsals and were ready to begin previews, Gershwin invited Brown to join him for lunch. At that meeting, he told her, "I want you to know, Miss Brown, that henceforth and forever after, George Gershwin's opera will be known as *Porgy and Bess*."^[citation needed]^[7] The influential [vaudeville](#) artist [John W. Bubbles](#) created the role of Sportin' Life; the role of Serena was created by [Ruby Elzy](#).

After the Broadway run, a tour started on January 27, 1936, in Philadelphia and traveled to Pittsburgh and Chicago before ending in Washington, D.C., on March 21, 1936. During the Washington run, the cast—as led by Todd Duncan—protested [segregation](#) at the [National Theatre](#). Eventually management gave in to the demands, resulting in the first integrated audience for a performance of any show at that venue.^[8]

In 1938, much of the original cast reunited for a [West Coast](#) revival that played in [Los Angeles](#) and at the [Curran Theatre](#) in [San Francisco](#). [Avon Long](#) took on the role of Sportin' Life for the first time, a role he would continue to play in many productions over a long career.

- [Purlie](#)



Purlie is a [musical](#) with a book by [Ossie Davis](#), [Philip Rose](#), and [Peter Udell](#), lyrics by Udell and music by [Gary Geld](#). It is based on Davis's 1961 play *Purlie Victorious*, which was later made into the 1963 film *Gone Are the Days!* and which included many of the original Broadway cast, including Davis, [Ruby Dee](#), [Alan Alda](#), [Beah Richards](#), [Godfrey Cambridge](#), and [Sorrell Booke](#). [The Rothschilds \(musical\)](#)

Purlie is set in an era when [Jim Crow laws](#) still were in effect in the [American South](#). Its focus is on the dynamic traveling preacher Purlie Victorious Judson, who returns to his small [Georgia](#) town hoping to save Big Bethel, the community's church, and emancipate the cotton pickers who work on oppressive Ol' Cap'n Cotchipee's [plantation](#). With the assistance of Lutiebelle Gussie Mae Jenkins, Purlie hopes to pry loose from Cotchipee an inheritance due his long-lost cousin and use the money to achieve his goals. Also playing a part in Purlie's plans is Cotchipee's son Charlie, who ultimately proves to be far more fair-minded than his [Simon Legree](#)-like father and who saves the church from destruction with an act of defiance that has dire consequences for the tyrannical Cap'n



R

- [Ragtime \(musical\)](#)



Ragtime is a musical with music by Stephen Flaherty, lyrics by Lynn Ahrens, and a book by Terrence McNally. It is based on the 1975 novel of the same name by E.L. Doctorow.

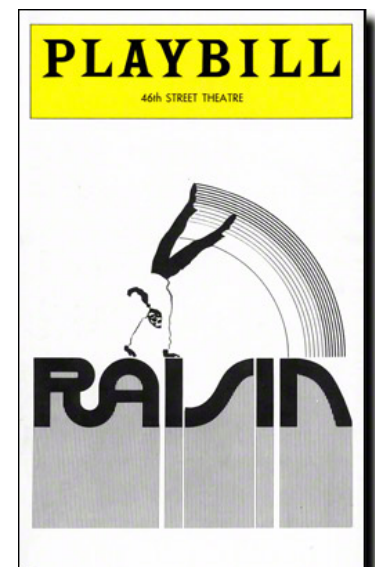
Set in the early 20th century, *Ragtime* tells the story of three groups in the United States: African Americans, represented by Coalhouse Walker Jr., a Harlem musician; upper-class suburbanites, represented by Mother, the matriarch of a white upper-class family in New Rochelle, New York; and Eastern European immigrants, represented by Tateh, a Jewish immigrant from Latvia. The show also incorporates historical figures such as Harry Houdini, Evelyn Nesbit, Booker T. Washington, J. P. Morgan, Henry Ford, Stanford White, Harry Kendall Thaw, Admiral Peary, Matthew Henson, and Emma Goldman.

- [Raisin \(musical\)](#)

Raisin is a musical with music by Judd Woldin, lyrics by Robert Brittan, and a book by Robert Nemiroff and Charlotte Zaltzberg. It is an adaptation of the Lorraine Hansberry play *A Raisin in the Sun*; the musical's book was co-written by Hansberry's husband, Robert Nemiroff.

The story concerns an African-American family in Chicago in 1951. The musical was nominated for nine Tony Awards, winning two, including Best Musical, and the Broadway production ran for 847 performances.

In Chicago in 1951, an African-American family, Ruth Younger, her husband Walter Lee Younger, their son

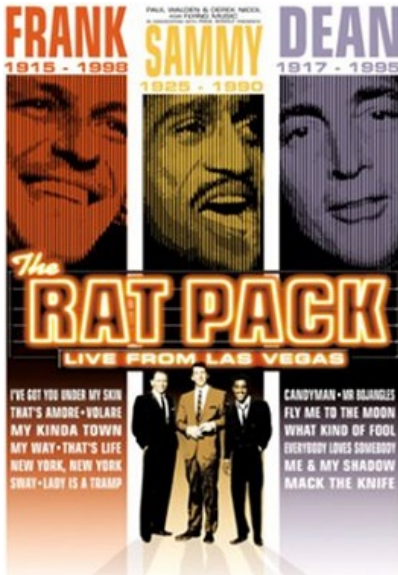




Travis and Walter's mother are living in a cramped apartment. Walter is a chauffeur but thinks that his father's life insurance policy proceeds will buy a way to a better life. He plans on buying a liquor store, but his mother Mama Lena Younger is against the selling of liquor. Tensions arise as Walter tries to convince Mama Lena to forget her dream of buying the family its own small house ("A Whole Lotta Sunlight").

Walter decides to make the deal for the liquor store and signs the papers with his partners Bobo Jones and Willie Harris. Beneatha Younger, Walter's sister, is in college and is romantically involved with an African exchange student, Asagai. When Walter comes home drunk he joins Beneatha in a celebratory dance, picturing himself as a chieftain ("African Dance"). Ruth and Walter fight about their future but they reconcile ("Sweet Time"). Mama arrives to announce that she has bought a house in the white neighborhood of Clybourne Park, and Walter leaves in anger ("You Done Right").

- [The Rat Pack: Live from Las Vegas](#)



The Rat Pack - Live From Las Vegas is a very successful stage musical produced by Flying Music Group Ltd. The stage show was conceived and created by [Mitch Sebastian](#), who was also the show's director and choreographer.

Developed over three years the original production opened outside [London](#) at the [Beck Theatre](#), Hayes in January 2000. A short tour featured Louis Hoover as [Frank Sinatra](#), Michael Howe as [Dean Martin](#) and [Peter Straker](#) as [Sammy Davis Junior](#). The show was rewritten and new set designs were added for a second UK tour in 2001 with [Clive Carter](#) and George Daniel Long playing [Dean](#)

[Martin](#) and [Sammy Davis Junior](#). It was not until the 2002 UK Tour that the show found its audience. Further rewrites and new set designs by Sean Kavanagh with costume designs by Paul Clarke and a cast that featured Stephen Triffitt (Frank) Mark Adams (Dean) and George Daniel Long (Sammy) performed a sold-out 6-month tour.

The production transferred to the West End for a limited 6-week engagement at [Theatre Royal Haymarket](#) in 2003. Due to rave reviews and sold-out performances, the run was extended for a further six weeks before transferring to Strand Theatre (now [Novello Theatre](#)), where it played for two years breaking all box office records in advance sales. The original West End cast starred Mark Adams (Martin), George Daniel Long (Davis Jr), and Stephen Triffitt (Sinatra). In May 2005, the show transferred to the [Savoy Theatre](#) where it ran for another two years, exceeding over 1000 consecutive performances.

- [The Real Ambassadors](#)
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- ***The Real Ambassadors*** is a jazz musical developed in the late 1950s and early 1960s by Dave and Lola Brubeck, in collaboration with Louis Armstrong and his band. It addressed the [Civil Rights Movement](#), the music business, America's place in the world during



the Cold War, the nature of God, and a number of other themes. It was set in a fictional African nation called Talgalla, and its central character was based on Armstrong and his time as a jazz ambassador.^[1] It was the first major large scale musical collaboration between Dave and Lola Brubeck and served as a template for their future musical collaborations. Songs from the musical were recorded by Columbia Records and a soundtrack album was released in 1962, just before the show's

premiere at the 1962 Monterey Jazz Festival with an all star cast *The Real Ambassadors* was able to capture the often complicated, and sometimes contradictory politics of the State Departments tours during the Cold War Era. Addressing African and Asian [nation building](#) in addition to the US civil rights struggle, it satirically portrayed the international politics of the tour.^[8] The musical also addressed the prevailing racial issues of the day, but did so within the context of witty satire. Below is an excerpt of Armstrong's opening lines to the piece "They Say I Look Like God". Despite Lola Brubeck's intention for some of her lyrics to be light and humorous in presentation, believing that some of the messages would be better received if presented in a satirical manner, Armstrong saw this performance as an opportunity for him to address many of the racial issues that he had struggled with for his entire career, and he made a request to sing the song straight. In one 2009 interview with Dave Brubeck, he remarked on Armstrong's seriousness: "Now, we wanted the audience to chuckle about the ridiculous segregation, but Louis was cryin'... and every time we wanted Louis to loosen up, he'd sing 'I'm really free. Thank God Almighty, I'm really free'."^[9] After years of demeaning roles in his public performances, the collaboration in *The Real Ambassadors* offered Armstrong material that was closer to his own sensibility and outlook.^[8]

The studio recording was finished in just one take, and everyone in the studio was "crying their eyes out" by the end of the performance. Armstrong's straight performance of Lola's lyrics, combined with Brubeck's subtle piano [comping](#) and gorgeous background vocals performed by Lambert, Hendricks, and Ross created a powerful, emotional musical experience for all involved.

- [Rent \(musical\)](#)

* As there is a claim that Johnathon Larson has stolen ideas of the musical (besides La Boheme) from a novel called "People in Trouble" that lesbian writer Sarah Schulman wrote, I include this link. I didn't have time to research this but felt it was worth mentioning. She wrote an entire book on the situation so look here for more info. If you are curious read these articles.

*

* <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2005/11/sarah-schulman-the-writer-rent-ripped-off.html>

<https://www.out.com/news-opinion/2019/1/26/real-history-rent-plagiarism-its-straight-creator>

Rent (stylized as **RENT**) is a rock musical with music, lyrics, and book by Jonathan Larson,^[1] loosely based on Giacomo Puccini's 1896 opera *La Bohème*. It tells the story of a group of impoverished young artists struggling to survive and create a life in Lower Manhattan's East Village in the thriving days of bohemian Alphabet City, under the shadow of HIV/AIDS.

The musical was first seen in a workshop production at New York Theatre Workshop in 1993. This same off-Broadway theatre was also the musical's initial home following its official 1996 opening. The show's creator, Jonathan Larson, died suddenly of an aortic dissection, believed to have been caused by undiagnosed Marfan syndrome, the night before the



off-Broadway premiere. The musical moved to [Broadway's](#) larger [Nederlander Theatre](#) on April 29, 1996.^[2]

In 1988, playwright [Billy Aronson](#) wanted to create "a musical based on [Puccini's](#) *La Bohème*, in which the luscious splendor of Puccini's world would be replaced with the coarseness and noise of modern New York."^[5] In 1989, Jonathan Larson, a 29-year-old composer, began collaborating with Aronson on this project, and the two composed together "Santa Fe", "Splatter" (later re-worked into the song "Rent"), and "I Should Tell You". Larson suggested setting the play "amid poverty, homelessness, spunky gay life, [drag queens](#) and [punk](#)" in the [East Village](#) neighborhood of [Manhattan](#), which happened to be down the street from his [Greenwich](#)

Village apartment. He also came up with the show's ultimate title (a decision that Aronson was unhappy with, at least until Larson pointed out that "rent" also means torn apart). In 1991, he asked Aronson if he could use Aronson's original concept and make *Rent* his own. Larson had ambitious expectations for *Rent*; his ultimate dream was to write a rock opera "to bring musical theater to the [MTV generation](#)".^[6] Aronson and Larson made an agreement that if the show went to Broadway, Aronson would share in the proceeds and be given credit for "original concept & additional lyrics".^[6]

Jonathan Larson focused on composing *Rent* in the early 1990s, waiting tables at the [Moondance Diner](#) to support himself. Over the course of years, Larson wrote hundreds of songs and made many drastic changes to the show, which in its final incarnation contained 42 songs. In the fall of 1992, Larson approached James Nicola, artistic director of New York Theatre Workshop, with a tape and copy of *Rent*'s script. When *Rent* had its first staged reading at [New York Theatre Workshop](#) in March 1993, it became evident that, despite its very promising material and moving musical numbers, many structural problems needed to be addressed, including its cumbersome length and overly complex plot

This workshop version of *Rent* starred [Anthony Rapp](#) as Mark and [Daphne Rubin-Vega](#) as Mimi. Larson continued to work on *Rent*, gradually reworking its flaws and staging more workshop productions.^[7]

On January 24, 1996, after the musical's final dress rehearsal before its off-Broadway opening, Larson had his first (and only) newspaper interview with music critic [Anthony Tommasini](#) of *The New York Times*, attracted by the coincidence that the show was debuting exactly 100 years after Puccini's opera. Larson would not live to see *Rent*'s success; he died from an undiagnosed [aortic aneurysm](#) (believed to have resulted from [Marfan syndrome](#)) in the early morning of January 25, 1996. Friends and family gathered at the New York Theatre Workshop, and the first preview of *Rent* became a sing-through of the musical in Larson's memory.^{[6][8]}

The show premiered as planned and quickly gained popularity fueled by enthusiastic reviews and the recent death of its composer. It proved extremely successful during its off-Broadway run, selling out all its shows at the 150-seat New York Theater Workshop.^[2] Due to such overwhelming popularity and a need for a larger theater, *Rent* moved to Broadway's then-

under-renovation Nederlander Theatre on 41st Street on April 29, 1996.^[2] At the production's request, final touches on the theater's remodeling and renovation were put on hold before and during the run of "Rent" because the show's producers and creative team felt the unfinished look fit in well with the gritty setting of the show.

Larson's inspiration for *Rent's* content came from several different sources. Many of the characters and plot elements are drawn directly from Giacomo Puccini's opera *La Bohème*, the world premiere of which was in 1896, a century before *Rent's* premiere.^[9] *La Bohème* was also about the lives of poor young artists. *Tuberculosis*, the plague of Puccini's opera, is replaced by HIV/AIDS in *Rent*; 1800s Paris is replaced by New York's East Village in the late 1980s or early 1990s. The names and identities of *Rent's* characters also heavily reflect Puccini's original characters, though they are not all direct adaptations. For example, Joanne in *Rent* represents the character of Alcindoro in *Bohème*, but is also partially based on Marcello. Also, Joanne is the only *Rent* character whose predecessor in *La Bohème* is a different sex.

Other examples of parallels between Larson's and Puccini's work include Larson's song "Light My Candle", which draws melodic content directly from "Che gelida manina";^[10] "Quando me'n vo" ("Musetta's Waltz"), a melody taken directly from Puccini's opera; and "Goodbye Love", a long, painful piece that reflects a confrontation and parting between characters in both Puccini's and Larson's work.^[11] "Quando me'n vo" is paralleled in the first verse of "Take Me or Leave Me", when Maureen describes the way people stare when she walks in the street. It is also directly referred to in the scene where the characters are celebrating their *bohemian life*. Mark says, "Roger will attempt to write a bittersweet, evocative song..." Roger plays a quick piece, and Mark adds, "...that *doesn't* remind us of 'Musetta's Waltz'." This part of "Musetta's Waltz" is also later used in "Your Eyes", a song Roger writes.

Rent is also a somewhat autobiographical work, as Larson incorporated many elements of his life into his show. Larson lived in New York for many years as a starving artist with an uncertain future. He sacrificed a life of stability for his art, and shared many of the same hopes and fears as his characters. Like his characters he endured poor living conditions, and some of these conditions (e.g. illegal wood-burning stove, bathtub in the middle of his kitchen, broken buzzer [his guests had to call from the pay

phone across the street and he would throw down the keys, as in "Rent"']) made their way into the play.^[12] Part of the motivation behind the storyline in which Maureen leaves Mark for a woman (Joanne) is based on the fact that Larson's own girlfriend left him for a woman. The Mark Cohen character is based on Larson's friends, cinematographer and producer Jonathan Burkhart and documentary filmmaker Eddie Rosenstein.

Playwright [Sarah Schulman](#) alleged that *Rent* bore striking similarities to her novel *People in Trouble*.^[13]

The line, "I'm more of a man than you'll ever be... and more of a woman than you'll ever get!", attributed to Angel Dumott Schunard at her funeral, was previously used by the character Hollywood Montrose, who appeared in the films *Mannequin* (1987) and *Mannequin Two: On the Move* (1991). Like Angel, Hollywood performs a song and dance number and sometimes wears women's clothing. This line was originally in the film *Car Wash* (1976), delivered by [Antonio Fargas](#) as a flamboyant homosexual cross dresser.

The earliest concepts of the characters differ largely from the finished products. Everyone except Mark had AIDS, including Maureen and Joanne; Maureen was a serious, angry character who played off [Oedipus](#) in her performance piece instead of [Hey Diddle Diddle](#); Mark was, at one point, a painter instead of a filmmaker; Roger was named Ralph and wrote musical plays; Angel was a [jazz philosopher](#), while Collins was a street performer; Angel and Collins were both originally described as Caucasian; and Benny had a somewhat enlarged role in the story, taking part in songs like "Real Estate", which was later cut.[[]

- [Romance in Hard Times](#)

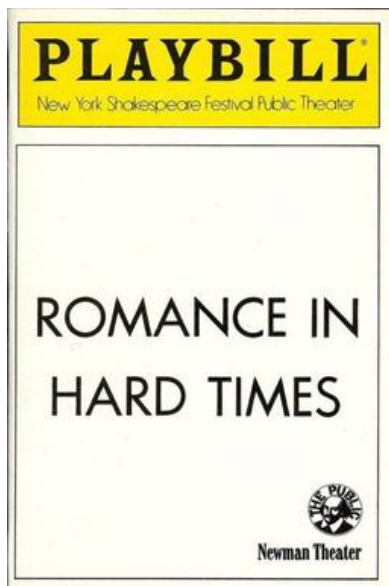
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Romance in Hard Times is a musical by [William Finn](#). It ran briefly [Off-Broadway](#) in 1989 at the [Public Theater](#).

The musical takes place in a soup kitchen in New York City during the Depression.^[9] Hennie, a pregnant woman who works in the soup kitchen, decides not to give birth until children have a better world. **Eleanor Roosevelt** provides messages of hope. An earlier version of the same show, *America Kicks Up Its Heels*, received two staged readings from **Playwrights Horizons**,^[1] along with a fully staged production running from March 3, 1983 to March 27, 1983. Directed by Mary Kyte and Ben Levit, and choreographed by Kyte, the cast featured Alix Korey, Dick Latessa, and Robert Dorfman.^[2]

The musical was part of the 1989 and 1990 **Public Theater New York Shakespeare Festival** in New York City. *Romance in Hard Times* was presented in one of **Joseph Papp's** "musical laboratories" at the Public Theater's Anspacher Theater for three weeks in June 1989. Directed by **David Warren**, the cast featured **Lillias White**. It was open to the public but not for critics.^[3]

The musical then opened **Off-Broadway** at The Public Theater on November 14, 1989 and closed on December 17, 1989. The musical was



A New Musical Finds Comedy And Romance in Hard Times

By MARILYN STASSO

WILLIAM FINN thought he'd never get out of the soup kitchen where he'd been slaving for more than seven years on his new musical. Then along came the producer Joseph Papp to offer him not a way out of the kitchen but a new recipe for making soup. What they cooked up was a new version of "Romance in Hard Times," a worldly comic musical written and composed by Mr. Finn and set in a Depression-era soup kitchen. It opens Thursday at the Public Theater.

"Romance" means a lot to both Mr. Finn, its creator, and Mr. Papp, the attentive sous-chef at his elbow. The show is the second production after the recent Joe Orton-Todd Rundgren musical, "Up Against It," in an ambitious program begun by the New York Shakespeare Festival for the development of original musicals through a series of readings and workshops. To Mr. Papp, these "musical laboratories" represent a new workable process of developing musicals in limited-run productions that might transfer to Broadway. He is also counting on these laboratory-produced shows — which are budgeted at \$100,000 to \$200,000 and entail long-term commitment to the creative artists involved — to attract fresh musical talent to the Shakespeare Festival.

"We've done our bit by sticking with the show through the whole process, and then getting it up so people can see it," said Mr. Papp, who had to curtail the Shakespeare Festival's commitment to Shakespeare (from three productions this season to two) to guarantee a full run. "The idea now is for other people, hopefully nonprofit groups, to see the show and maybe go in with us on any future productions. The economics these days, that's the only way you can do a musical."

The festival's support has meant that Mr. Finn could write about America's economic depression without actually living through one of his own. "We're talking bare-bones mini-

Marilyn Stasso, who writes frequently about theater, is the author of the Crime column for *The New York Times Book Review*.

Joseph Papp's support enabled William Finn to write about the Depression without living through one.

—mum," he laughs, "but the money was a real help."

Along with the three-year substance-abuse stipend he got, he received three unsung readings of his piece, one staged workshop production that, after a month of rehearsals, ran for three weeks last spring, and the current full-fledged show. As the work progressed through its various creative phases, he was also able to draw on the resources of the Shakespeare Festival in acquiring a director, David Warren (who came to the project in the summer of 1988 following the death of Wilford Leach, the theater's resident musical-theater director), a cast of 14 actor-singers and a 12-member orchestra. Not to mention Mr. Papp's close, personal interest in the project.

"The best thing about the workshop was that I learned how to write for singers," said Mr. Finn, who most recently contributed music to James Lapine's version of "The Winter's Tale" for the Shakespeare Festival, and wrote the lyrics to Graciela Daniele's short-lived Broadway production of "Dangerous Games." Two earlier works for which he wrote both book and score, "In Trouser" (1979) and "March of the Falsetto" (1981), won him critical awards and a Guggenheim fellowship when they were mounted by Playwrights Horizons, which will produce a sequel to those works, "The Marvin Songs," sometime next year. In 1982 the company also nurtured an earlier version of "Romance" when it was called "America Kicks Up Its Heels."

"I've worked like dogs on it," recalled André Bishop, the artistic director of Playwrights Horizons. Over a two-year period the nonprofit com-

pany gave the show two staged readings and a fully mounted showcase production on its main stage. "But the piece was so richly layered, so much bigger in scope and density than anything we had done — and I was so much younger and stupider — that, even though we were all obsessed with it, it was just beyond our capabilities at the time. I'm really glad that Papp was able to take it up and bring fresh eyes to it."

Under the scrutiny of Mr. Papp and Mr. Leach, the show underwent radical changes at the Public, beginning with the switch from a virtually all-white cast to a predominantly black singing ensemble. Lillias White joined the show for the workshop last spring, in the key role of Bessie, a pregnant woman who becomes a folk hero when she refuses to give birth until the world becomes a better place for children. Lawrence Clayton, who plays Bessie's husband, and Cleavant Derricks, an another man who loves her, signed on at different stages during the three-year development of "Romance" at the Public. The show was something of a reunion for these three performers, who had all appeared in Michael Bennett's Broadway production of "Dreamgirls." Victor Trent Cook, who joined the show on its second reading in 1987 at the Public, was brought out from the chorus and given a solo.

"Once Joe found me these wonderful singing voices to write for," said Mr. Finn, "the music completely changed. The songs used to have a much more traditional theater sound. But when I found myself writing specifically for these absolutely celestial voices, I began writing music that was more like gospel and jazz and ragtime."

"After I started creating new music for these gorgeous, soaring voices, the lyrics changed, too," he said. "In the beginning, I was trying for verbal dexterity and wit; but that was me showing off, not taking the characters' problems seriously enough. As we worked, the lyrics became much simpler."

With new voices and more outspoken lyrics, the characters — homeless, jobless people who are jolted out of misery and jolted into extraordinary action by Eleanor Roosevelt's unflinching messages of hope and good cheer — were also transformed.



Lawrence Clayton and Lillias White—characters transformed by Eleanor Roosevelt's unflinching hope

Alix Korey, who plays a snooty society blue-blood who dishes up the grub in the soup kitchen, said that only three characters and their big solo numbers retain the shape in which they were originally created.

"My own character was much more of a comic figure in the beginning," said Mr. Korey, who has been with the show since its inception. "There's more reality, more truth to her now. In the same way, the whole show is still as absurdly comic; but it has much more humanity."

The most dramatic change in the book, Mr. Finn said, was the removal of a modern-day story about homeless people that at one time was juxtaposed onto the 1930's storyline. The parallel plots didn't mesh, he explained, because he doesn't really believe that social parallels can be drawn between the two eras.

"During the Depression, people were still allowed to hope, even though there was no reason for them to," he said. "Something about the American psyche at that time allowed them to believe that they could get control of their lives. That's what I found so triumphant and so wonderful about them."

"The story would be much bleaker if I had placed it in the present. Besides, poverty and homelessness are not what I'm talking about in this show. For me, this is about people who are trying to take control of their

lives and who never lose hope that they can do it."

Working on the show, he said, was also a way of confronting an economic and emotional depression of his own. "I had a few bad years after 'Falsetto,'" he said, "in which I had real trouble getting control of my own life. But I never lost hope."

For want of a better model among the living, he created his own hero in the Eleanor Roosevelt character of his show. "She represents the hope and the joy that a country's leaders should supply," he said, "along with the vision and the decency and the comfort and the warmth that people need in times of trouble."

again directed by David Warren with musical direction by Ted Sperling and choreography by Marcia Milgrom Dodge. The cast featured Lillias White, Cleavant Derricks, Victor Trent Cook, Rufus Bonds, Jr., James Stovall, and Alix Korey.^[4] White won the Obie Award, Performance, in 199

- [Runaways \(musical\)](#)

Runaways is a musical which was written, composed, choreographed and directed by [Elizabeth Swados](#), about the lives of children who run away from home and live on the city streets. The characters were taken from workshops conducted by Swados with real-life runaways in the late 1970s. Swados took her idea for a musical with the theme of running away "from



home, from a boyfriend, from a predator,... from yourself" to [Joseph Papp](#), who agreed to produce it. She looked for the children who would be in the musical in various places in New York City, such as a community center, and "little by little, we built a world where runaways came together, told their stories, and acted out the hardships they endured."^[1] Swados did research for her project as she gathered the cast, and some in the cast



were actual runaways. The show was done in a series of songs, monologues, scenes, poems, and dances

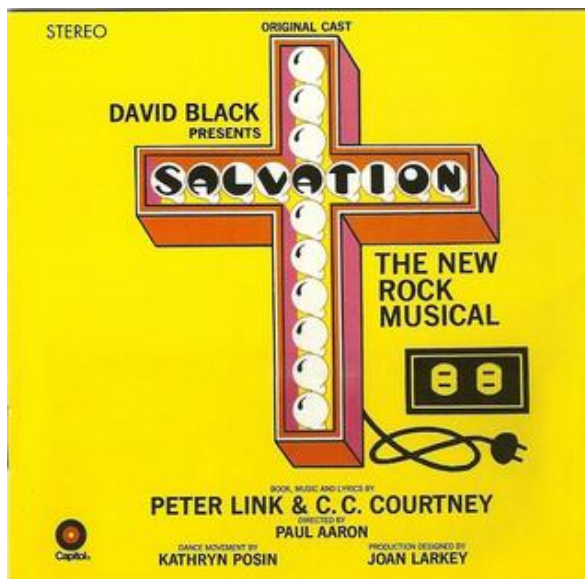
20 "multi racial, multi ethnic" children explore the "fragmented" life of the runaway^[6] in an inner city. Through songs, monologues and poems the children examine and explain why they are runaways. They are abused, come from broken families, or are in an orphanage. The children show a

range of emotions, and are seen as victims but also "perpetrators". They "plead with their families and society 'Let Me Be A Kid Again.

S

- [Salvation \(musical\)](#)

Salvation is a 1969 [Off-Broadway rock musical](#) with music, lyrics, and book by [Peter Link](#) & C.C. Courtney. The production opened on September 24, 1969, at the [Jan Hus Playhouse](#) and ended on April 19, 1970, after 239 performances. [Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs \(musical\)](#)



The idea came from Courtney and his frustration with organized religion. Both Link and he wrote the show, and appeared in it as well. Courtney said of the show, "I was walking through [Central Park](#), and the whole show just sort of came to me on that 20-minute walk. I usually did the concept and the book and the lyrics, and Peter did the music. So I hit him with the idea and he was hot to do that. In fact, he probably was more anxious to do it than I was...He's very productive. So I said let's do it, and I started working on the lyrics and

giving them to him as fast as I could. So it became, in effect, well, the plot is pretty much my life story." Both were actors looking for the next thing. Courtney was appearing on the [NBC](#) daytime drama [The Doctors](#). At the same time, Link was on the [CBS](#) daytime drama [As the World Turns](#) as the pot-smoking, troubled Tom Hughes. Afterwards, Link would join [Hair](#) and replace [Gerome Ragni](#) as Berger.

The show was written in two weeks, and it first premiered in a showcase production at [The Village Gate](#), financed by Courtney and Link. It opened

on March 11, 1969, and was given a positive review by *New York Times* columnist [Lawrence Van Gelder](#). It was picked up by producer David Black, who had produced *George M!*, and got them booked at the [Mitzi E. Newhouse Theater](#) by the [Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts](#), but unfortunately, the booking was canceled, supposedly by the director, [Robert Montgomery](#). Courtney said of the incident, "I heard lots of rumors about what happened, mainly that Robert Montgomery didn't like this kind of filthy, disgusting stuff--that's why we didn't get to open at Lincoln Center."

Black got the musical moved to the Jan Hus Playhouse for its off-Broadway run, starting on September 24, 1969 and ending on April 19, 1970, after 239 performances. It earned a profit of \$55,000. Black convinced Link and Courtney to close the New York production for the summer, bring it to [Los Angeles](#), and try to reopen it in the fall in a Broadway theatre. Due to bad casting, *Salvation* never got a chance on Broadway. Two efforts to help the show came too late. The first was the cast album by [Capitol Records](#), produced by [Nick Venet](#), which had begun to do well. The second was singer [Ronnie Dyson](#) (*Hair*), who recorded a single of "(If You Let Me Make Love to You Then) Why Can't I Touch You?", which sold over a million copies and peaked at #8 in 1970.

- [Sarafina! \(musical\)](#)

Sarafina! is a [South African musical](#) by [Mbongeni Ngema](#) depicting students involved in the [Soweto Riots](#), in opposition to [apartheid](#). It was also adapted into a [1992 film](#) starring [Whoopi Goldberg](#) and [Leleti Khumalo](#). *Sarafina!* premiered on [Broadway](#) on 28 January 1988, at the [Cort Theatre](#), and closed on 2 July 1989, after 597 performances and 11 previews. The musical was conceived and directed by Mbongeni Ngema, who also wrote the book, music, and lyrics. The play was first



presented at [The Market Theatre, Johannesburg, South Africa](#), in June 1987. The cast included [Leleti Khumalo](#) as Sarafina.

Leleti Khumalo received a [Tony Award](#) nomination, Best Featured Actress in a Musical, as well as a [NAACP Image Award](#) for her Broadway theatre portrayal of the title character. The production was also nominated for the Tony Award for: Best Musical, Best Original Score, Best Choreography, and Best Direction of a Musical.

The show presents a school uprising similar to the [Soweto uprising](#) on 16 June 1976. A narrator introduces several characters among them the schoolgirl activist Sarafina. Things get out of control when policemen shoot several pupils at the school. Nevertheless, the musical ends with a cheerful farewell show of pupils leaving school, which takes most of the second act.

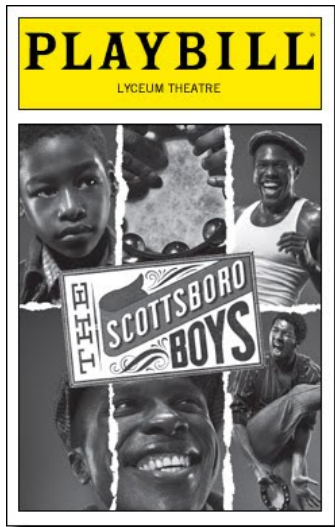


The production of the play was chronicled in the documentary film *Voices of Sarafina!*

• [The Scottsboro Boys \(musical\)](#)

The Scottsboro Boys is a musical with a book by [David Thompson](#), music by [John Kander](#) and lyrics by [Fred Ebb](#). Based on the [Scottsboro Boys](#) trial, the musical is one of the last collaborations between [Kander and Ebb](#) prior to the latter's death. The

musical has the framework of a [minstrel show](#), altered to "create a musical social critique" with a company that, except for one, consists "entirely of African-American performers".^[1]



The musical debuted Off-Broadway and then moved to Broadway in 2010 for a run of only two months. It received twelve [Tony Award](#) nominations, but failed to win any.^[2] The previous record for nominations without a win was eleven, held by *Steel Pier* and the original production of *Chicago*, both also by Kander and Ebb. The musical's twelve nominations were second only to *The Book of Mormon*, which garnered fourteen nominations that

year.^[2] Nevertheless, *The Scottsboro Boys* played in

US regional theatres in 2012 and moved to London in 2013, where, after a sell-out production at the [Young Vic](#), it moved to the [West End](#) in 2014.

As she is waiting for a bus, a lady lifts a corner of a cake box she's holding. As it brings back memories, the scene around her fades away, and the minstrels arrive ("Minstrel March"). The Interlocutor, the host of the [Minstrel Show](#), introduces the players in the troupe, including Mr. Bones and Mr. Tambo, then begins the story of the [Scottsboro Boys](#) ("Hey, Hey, Hey, Hey!").

In 1931, [Haywood Patterson](#), one of the nine boys riding in a boxcar on a train to Memphis, is ready to see the world ("Commencing in

Chattanooga"). As the train is stopped, two white girls jump out, and two policemen recognize them as prostitutes. To get away, they accuse the nearby boys of rape ("Alabama Ladies"), and the boys are sent to jail. At their trial, their lawyer is drunk and mounts no defense, and Haywood, speaking for the boys, can only respond that he has done nothing. ("Nothin'") They are found guilty and are sentenced to death at [Kilby Prison](#). Eugene, the youngest, has nightmares ("Electric Chair"). Awaiting execution, the boys long to return home ("Go Back Home"). Just as the executions are about to begin, the verdict is overturned. In the North, the case has become a [cause célèbre](#), and the Supreme Court has ruled the boys didn't have effective counsel. While the boys aren't free, they do get another trial ("Shout!").



- [The Seven \(play\)](#)



The Seven is a 2005 musical written and composed by [Will Power](#). Before its 2006 premiere as a two-act play at New York Theatre Workshop, the

work had been developed in San Francisco as a one-act presentation.^[1] *The Seven* is a modernized version of the Greek tragedy, [Seven Against Thebes](#) written in 467 B.C by [Aeschylus](#), which relates a story about King [Oedipus](#)' sons, [Eteocles](#) and [Polynices](#) fighting to gain control over the city of [Thebes](#).

Power set his re-working of the play in a contemporary American urban setting, and used rhyming couplets and a range of musical styles such as hip-hop, soul, funk, R&B and a capella to relate to the story to contemporary concerns.^[2] Charles Isherwood, a critic for the *New York Times*, called the play "a strange new hybrid: a hip-hop musical comedy-tragedy."^[3]

The New York Theater Workshop presentation was directed by [Jo Bonney](#) with choreography by [Bill T. Jones](#). The play was awarded [Lucille Lortel Awards](#) in 2006 for Outstanding Musical, Outstanding Choreographer (Bill T. Jones) and Outstanding Sound Design (Darron L. West

- [Shades of Harlem](#)

"Shades of Harlem: A Cotton Club Musical" is an [Off-Broadway musical theater](#) revue of songs from the [Harlem Renaissance](#). The show debuted on August 1983 at the [Village Gate](#) and has gone on to play around the world. The show features [jazz music](#) and dancing that would have been popular at the [Cotton Club](#) during the Harlem Renaissance. Original performances included dancers from the era, including [Ludie Jones](#) and [Juanita Boisseau](#). The show received mixed reviews.

"Shades of Harlem" was created by [playwright](#), [Jeree Wade](#) and billed as "A [Cotton Club Musical](#)."^{[1][2]} Wade wrote the show both to celebrate the past of [black history](#) and to look forward to a hopeful future for [African Americans](#).^[3] Writers include Frank Owens, Ty Stephen, Branice McKenzie and Wade.^[4] Stephens created the [choreography](#).^[5] Original sets were done by Linda Lombardi.^[6] Wade used members of the Swinging Seniors, including [Ludie Jones](#), to ensure the performances were authentic.^{[1][7]} The show is a [musical](#) that is intended to celebrate the music and dance of the [Harlem Renaissance](#).^[1]

An early version of the show debuted at [Brown University](#) in 1983 and was then rewritten and expanded.^[8] "Shades of Harlem" premiered August of 1983 at the [Village Gate](#) and was sold out that night.^{[1][8]} After, it had an eight-month run at Village Gate.^[8] On March 3, 1985, the show had its 200th staging at Village Gate.^[6] The musical has been performed regularly over time and across the world.^[9] The show lasts for about 3 hours.^[4]

The musical is basically a recreation of a night at the [Cotton Club](#).^[10] Music includes numbers by [Duke Ellington](#), [Billie Holiday](#) and [Fats Waller](#).^[10] Jones, [Juanita Boisseau](#), and [Alice Wilkie](#), original dancers from the Harlem Renaissance, were involved in the shows.^{[10][11]} Classic songs featured in the musical include "Stompin' At the Savoy," "I Got it Bad (and That Ain't Good)," and "God Bless the Child."^[12] Owens also included his own original songs.^[13] The [history of Harlem](#) is depicted behind the dancers and singers during the show, highlighting landmarks of black culture and famous people

- [Soul Sister \(musical\)](#)

Soul Sister is a jukebox musical based on the life and times [Tina Turner](#) and [Ike Turner](#), written by John Miller and Pete Brooks, with the original production directed by Bob Eaton.

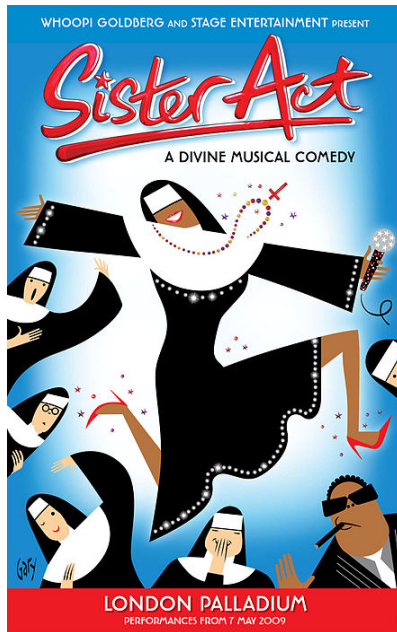


Soul Sister opened at the [Hackney Empire](#) where it played a limited run from 14 April - 5 May 2012.^[1] The production transferred at the [Savoy Theatre](#) in the [West End](#) on 23 August 2012, following previews from 20 August. It played a limited run to 29 September 2012.^[2] Emi Wokoma starred as [Tina Turner](#), for which she was nominated for the [Watsonstage.com Award](#) for Best Actress in a Musical.^[3] The musical was nominated for 2013 [Laurence Olivier Award](#) for Best New Musical.^[4]

The production, again starring Wokoma, toured the UK in 2013

- [Sister Act \(musical\)](#)

Sister Act is a musical based on the hit 1992 film of the same name with music by Alan Menken, lyrics by Glenn Slater, book by Bill and Cheri Steinkellner, and additional book material by Douglas Carter Beane. After having a regional premiere in 2006 in Pasadena, California,^[1] the original West End production opened on June 2, 2009 at the London Palladium, starring Patina Miller and produced by Stage Entertainment and Whoopi Goldberg.^[2] Subsequent productions have been seen on Broadway and in many countries around the world.



In Philadelphia, Mother Superior declares that the convent is in need (*Prologue*) before Deloris Van Cartier, crowned 'Lady Fabulous' of 1978, is seen performing in the night club run by her gangster



boyfriend Curtis Shank ("Take Me to Heaven"). Deloris is overjoyed as she believes her boyfriend is going to introduce her to a record producer on that day (her birthday), although she soon learns that this is not to be. Hurt and frustrated, Deloris goes to her backup singers KT and LaRosa, about her dreams of stardom and fame ("Fabulous, Baby!"). She decides to break up with Shank and head out of Philadelphia to go fulfill her dreams on her own. However she gets to Shank just in time to see him and his crew made up of nephew TJ, Bones, and Dinero, shoot someone who they believe has "squealed" about them to the cops. Horrified, Deloris runs away and Shank orders his men to get her and bring her back. Deloris runs to a police station and tells the desk chief, Eddie, about what happened. The two recognize each other as old friends from school with Deloris calling him "Sweaty Eddie". Eddie decides that Deloris needs to go into the witness protection program and sends her to the place he believes Shank will never find her - a convent called The Holy Order of the Little Sisters of Our Mother of Perpetual Faith.



- [Six \(musical\)](#)

Six is a British musical with book, music, and lyrics by [Toby Marlow](#) and [Lucy Moss](#).^[1] The musical is a modern retelling of the lives of the [six wives of Henry VIII](#) presented as a pop concert, as the wives take turns singing and telling their story to see who suffered the most due to Henry and should, therefore, become the group's lead singer.

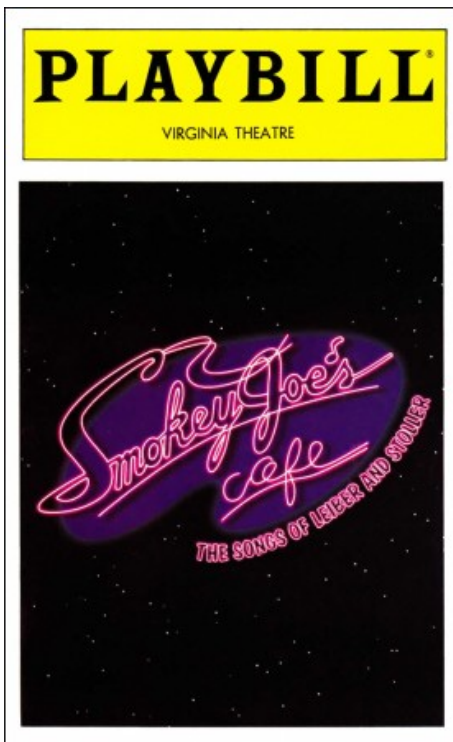
The musical was first presented by Cambridge University students at the [Edinburgh Fringe Festival](#) in 2017. It has

since gone on to professional productions in the [West End](#) and internationally.

The show opens with the six Queens performing an opening number in pop-concert, girl-group fashion introducing themselves. They also welcome the audience to the performance ("Ex-Wives"). They address the crowd and tell them that this show will feature a competition, and whoever had the "biggest load of B.S." to deal with from the man who married them, [Henry VIII](#), will become the lead singer of the group ("Ex-Wives (Reprise)"). They perform in the order in which they were married to Henry. [Catherine of Aragon](#) starts off and recounts her marriage to Henry and later annulment, and almost being put into a nunnery when he began lusting after [Anne Boleyn](#) ("No Way"). When Aragon claims that she is the winner, the other

Queens mention Anne and how she overlapped with Aragon during the former's marriage, resulting in said annulment ("Anne Boleyn (Interlude)"), and Anne recounts her time as Queen with Henry and her eventual execution ("Don't Lose Ur Head"). She then continues to argue that she deserves to win the competition due to her execution and further begins to sing a new solo "about the moment [she] found out Catherine of Aragon had tragically died". This attempted solo is interrupted by the other queens. [Jane Seymour](#) then announces it is her turn to recount what she

put up with, but the other Queens mock her for not having as much to deal with as, in her words, she was "the only one he truly loved". Jane admits that while she may have been lucky for not having to suffer at his hand, she still stood by him throughout all his faults ("Heart of Stone").



- [Smokey Joe's Cafe](#)

Smokey Joe's Cafe is a musical [revue](#) showcasing 39 [pop standards](#), including [rock and roll](#) and [rhythm and blues](#) songs written by songwriters [Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller](#). The Original Broadway cast recording, *Smokey Joe's Cafe: The Songs Of Leiber And Stoller*, won a [Grammy award](#) in 1997.

After a [Los Angeles](#) tryout, the revue opened on [Broadway](#) in 1995, running for 2,036 performances, making it the longest-running musical revue in Broadway history.^[1] It also had a London run in 1996.

In revue format with no unifying theme, the 39 songs are presented by various members of the cast in various combinations, with no dialogue. There are novelty songs ("[Charlie Brown](#)"), romantic ballads ("Spanish Harlem"), and infectious melodies ("There Goes My Baby")

Music and lyrics for all songs are by Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller, unless otherwise noted. The song "Smokey Joe's Cafe" is not performed in the

show, although a brief instrumental excerpt is used in Act II as transitional music.



- [Sophisticated Ladies](#)

Sophisticated Ladies is a musical revue based on the music of Duke Ellington. The

musical ran on Broadway in 1981-83, earning 2 awards and 8 nominations at the 35th Tony Awards.

Sophisticated Ladies opened on Broadway at the Lunt-Fontanne Theatre on March 1, 1981 and closed on January 2, 1983 after 767 performances and fifteen previews. The musical was conceived by Donald McKayle, directed by Michael Smuin, and choreographed by McKayle, Smuin, Henry LeTang, Bruce Heath, and Mercedes Ellington. Scenic design was by Tony Walton, costume design by Willa Kim and lighting design was by Jennifer Tipton. The original cast included Gregory Hines, Judith Jamison, Phyllis Hyman, Hinton Battle, Gregg Burge, and Mercer Ellington. Hines' older brother Maurice joined the cast later in the run.

- [Stand by the River](#)

Stand by the River is a musical written by Joanne and Mark Sutton-Smith based on the life of abolitionist William Still, his liberation of Jane Johnson and her two sons from slavery in 1855, and the federal trial that summer. A member of the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society in Philadelphia and chairman of its Vigilance Committee, Still took Johnson and her sons from her master and into hiding just before their ship was to depart. They were en route from Washington, DC to New York City (from where they would sail to Nicaragua with her master.) He was acquitted in the jury trial.

The work was presented in [New York City](#) in an [Equity](#) staged reading, in February 2003, at the Theatre at [St. Clements](#), directed by Larry Thelen of [Goodspeed Musicals](#). It was produced at Theatre Building Chicago's "Stages" festival in 2003, as well as the NYC ASCAP Musical Theater Workshop in 2004.

It has also been produced in colleges, libraries, and historical societies. The musical has attracted wide interest, and has been reported and reviewed in more than 20 publications and media outlets, including [National Public Radio](#), and the [op-ed](#) section of [The Philadelphia Inquirer](#).

In the summer of 2011, an abridged version

- [A Strange Loop](#)

A Strange Loop is a musical with book, music and lyrics by [Michael R.](#)



[Jackson](#). The show had its world premiere [Off-Broadway](#) at [Playwrights Horizons](#) and ran from May 24 to July 28, 2019. The original cast recording was released on September 27, 2019 on Yellow Sound Label.^[1] The album peaked at number 6 on the [Billboard](#) Cast Albums chart

The musical is about Usher, so named because of his day-job as an *usher* for *The Lion King* on Broadway, an overweight, gay, black writer as he tries to navigate the *heteronormative* white world. He remarks that he thinks he'll never be as successful as the *singer who shares his name*, something he has in common with the writer of this musical. He is backed by a six-person all-black ensemble who voice his inner thoughts as he begrudgingly *ghost writes* a new *Tyler Perry* movie.

Usher is a black, queer writer, working a day job he hates while writing his original musical: a piece about a black, queer writer, working a day job he hates while writing his original musical. Michael R. Jackson's blistering, momentous new musical follows a young artist at war with a host of demons — not least of which, the punishing thoughts in his own head — in an attempt to capture and understand his own strange loop

Review

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2019/07/01/the-ecstatic-doubling-of-a-strange-loop>

- [Summer: The Donna Summer Musical](#)

Summer: The Donna Summer Musical is a musical with book by Colman Domingo, Robert Cary, and Des McAnuff and music and lyrics Donna Summer, Giorgio Moroder, Pete Bellotte, Paul Jabara, and others, based on the life of Summer.

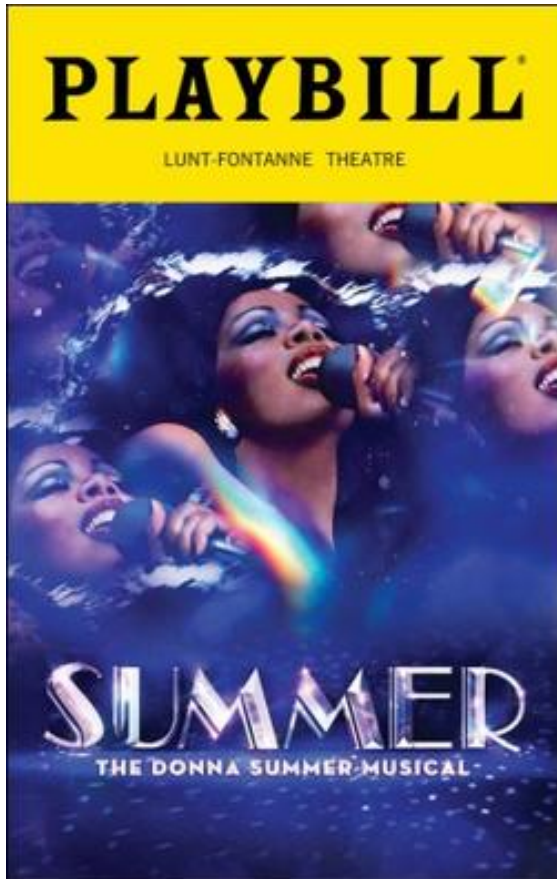
The musical made its premiere at the [La Jolla Playhouse](#) in November 2017 and opened on [Broadway](#) in April 2018.



The [La Jolla Playhouse](#) presented the musical in a limited engagement from November 7 until December 24, 2017.

The musical premiered on Broadway at the [Lunt-Fontanne Theatre](#) on March 28, 2018 (previews), prior to an April 23, 2018 opening.^[1] The musical is directed by Des McAnuff, with scenic design by Robert Brill,

costumes by [Paul Tazewell](#), lighting by [Howell Binkley](#), projections by Sean Nieuwenhuis, sound by [Gareth Owen](#), and was produced by [Tommy Mottola](#) and [Thalía](#).^{[2][3]}



The musical closed on Broadway on December 30, 2018 after 289 performances.

A tour in North America started September 29, 2019.^[4] The tour started at the RBTL Auditorium in Rochester, New York. The cast will feature Dan'yelle Williamson (Diva Donna), Alex Hairston (Disco Donna), and Olivia Eleese Hardy (Duckling Donna).^[5]

Broadway Licensing acquired the rights for all future stock and amateur performances

The musical shows Donna Summer at three times of her life. Duckling Donna is in her pre-teens, starting out in Boston; Disco Donna, in her late teens and 20s, has her initial success; Diva Donna is in her 50s and at the top of her career.

- [Swinging on a Star \(musical\)](#)

Swinging on a Star is a [musical](#) revue, featuring the music of [Johnny Burke](#), with the lyrics by Burke and the music by Burke and several of his partners, such as [Erroll Garner](#) and [Jimmy Van Heusen](#). The name of the

revue is from the Oscar-winning song that Burke wrote with Jimmy Van Heusen for the 1944 film *Going My Way*.

Swinging on a Star premiered at the [George Street Playhouse, New Brunswick, New Jersey](#), on April 16, 1994, running to May 1994. The revue was conceived, written and directed by Michael Leeds, with costumes by Judy Dearing, sets by Deborah Jasien and choreography by [Kathleen Marshall](#). The cast featured [Michael McGrath](#), Alton Fitzgerald White, Kathy Fitzgerald and [Lewis Cleale](#).^{[1][2][3]}

The revue was next produced at the [Goodspeed Opera House](#), Connecticut in 1995.^{[4][3]}

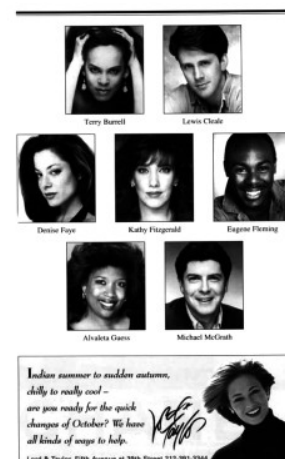
The show opened on [Broadway](#) at the [Music Box Theatre](#) on October 22, 1995^{[5][6]} and closed on January 13, 1996 after 96 performances and 19 previews. Directed by Michael Leeds and choreographed by Kathleen Marshall, it featured Michael McGrath, Teresa Burrell, Lewis Cleale, [Denise Faye](#), Eugene Fleming, Kathy Fitzgerald, and [Alvaleta Guess](#).^{[7][3]}



T

- [Tina \(musical\)](#)

Tina: The Tina Turner Musical is a jukebox musical featuring the music of [Tina Turner](#) and depicting her life from her humble beginnings in [Nutbush, Tennessee](#), to her transformation into a rock 'n roll star. Directed by [Phyllida Lloyd](#) with a book by [Katori Hall](#), Frank Ketelaar, and Kees Prins, the musical had its world premiere on 17 April 2018 at the [Aldwych Theatre](#) in [London](#). The [Broadway](#) production opened on 7 November 2019.^[1]



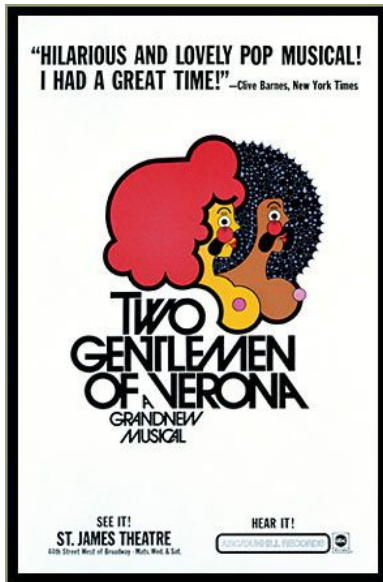
Tina is the second jukebox musical based on Tina Turner's life and songs, after the 2012 British musical *Soul Sister*.



Two Gentlemen of Verona is a rock musical, with a book by John Guare and Mel Shapiro, lyrics by Guare and music by Galt MacDermot, based on the Shakespeare comedy of the same name.

The original Broadway production, in 1971, won the Tony Awards for Best Musical and Best Book of a Musical. A London production followed in 1973. The Public Theater revived the piece in 2005.

Proteus and Valentine, lifelong friends, each leave their rural hometown of Verona to experience life in the city of Milan. Valentine strikes out on his own, arriving first; he falls in love with Sylvia, and makes plans to win her hand. However, her father, the Duke of Milan, has betrothed her to the wealthy but undesirable Thurio. Antonio, a Veronese nobleman, then decides to send his son Proteus to the Duke's court in Milan, to experience a more well-rounded life. After his arrival in Milan, Proteus also sets his



sights on Sylvia, disregarding his loyalty to both Valentine and Julia (his sweetheart back home). Valentine admits his own plans to elope with Sylvia. Proteus tells the Duke of their plans, gaining favor for himself - and causing Valentine's banishment from the court. Meanwhile, in Verona, Julia asks her maid Lucetta for help, in deciding upon which of the two she should fall in love with. Julia disguises herself as a man (Sebastian, a [page](#)) so she can travel to Milan to be reunited with Proteus. After arriving at court, she witnesses Proteus and Thurio wooing Silvia.

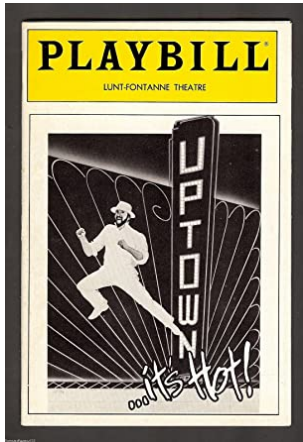
- [Uptown... It's Hot!](#)
-



Uptown... It's Hot! was a 1986 [Broadway](#) play created, directed, choreographed by and starring [Maurice Hines](#). Performed at the [Lunt-Fontanne Theatre](#), the play was a musical anthology chronicling the history of [African-American music](#) in the United States.

Although the music garnered praise, the play received generally unfavorable reviews.^{[1][2][3]} *New York Times* critic [Frank Rich](#) called it "the theatrical equivalent of a telephone-booth-stuffing contest" and "an orgy of grotesque and sometimes necrophiliac mimicry."^[1] The play did, however, earn Hines a [Tony Award](#) nomination for Best Performance by a Leading Actor in a Musical.^[4]

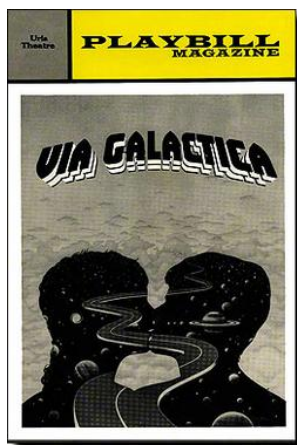
Uptown... It's Hot! ran from January 28 to February 16, 1986, ending its run after 24 performanc



- [Via Galactica](#)

Via Galactica is a [rock musical](#) with a book by [Christopher Gore](#) and Judith Ross, lyrics by Gore, and music by [Galt MacDermot](#). It marked the Broadway debut of actor [Mark Baker](#).^[1]

Originally entitled *Up!*, it offers a futuristic story of social outcasts living on an [asteroid](#) in the year 2972. Among them is Gabriel Finn, a space





sanitation man who collects trash in a clamshell-shaped garbage ship called the [Helen of Troy](#).

The storyline was so incomprehensible that at the last moment producers decided to insert a plot synopsis in the [Playbill](#), but audiences were still baffled by what they were witnessing unfold on stage. [Pyrotechnic](#) displays and other [special effects](#) did little to enhance the project.

After fifteen previews, the [Broadway](#) production, directed by [Peter Hall](#), produced by [George W. George](#) and choreographed by [George Faison](#), opened on November 28, 1972, the first production at the brand new [Uris Theatre](#) where, unable to withstand a universal assault by the critics, it ran for only seven performances. The cast included [Raul Julia](#), [Irene Cara](#), [Keene Curtis](#), [Chuck Cissel](#), [Ralph Carter](#), [Melanie Chartoff](#), and [Virginia Vestoff](#).



- [The View UpStairs](#)

The View UpStairs is a musical with music, lyrics and book by [Max Vernon](#) based on the real-life events of the [1973 arson attack](#) at the UpStairs Lounge, a gay bar in New Orleans. This attack resulted in the deaths of 32 people, the deadliest attack^[1] on a gay club in U.S. history before the [2016 Orlando nightclub shooting](#). The show is inspired by and pays tributes to many of the patrons who frequented the venue.

The single-act show runs for approximately 1 hour and 45 minutes and is set entirely within the UpStairs Lounge.^[1]



W

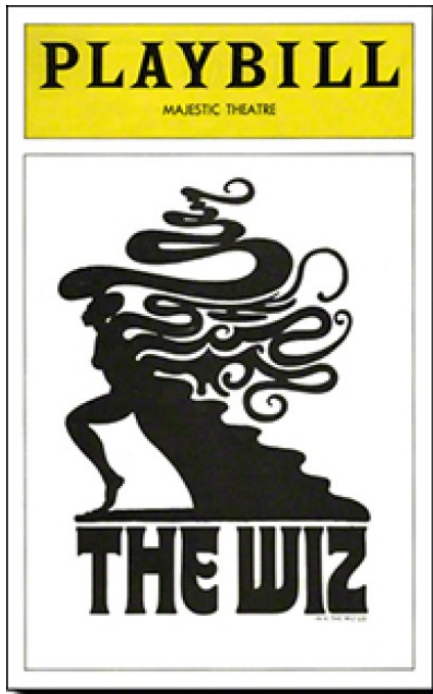
- [The Wild Party \(LaChiusa musical\)](#)

The Wild Party is a musical with a book by Michael John LaChiusa and George C. Wolfe and music and lyrics by LaChiusa. It is based on the 1928 Joseph Moncure March narrative poem of the same name.

The Broadway production coincidentally opened during the same theatrical season (1999–2000) as an off-Broadway musical with the same title and source material.

The show is presented as a series of vaudeville sketches, complete with signs at the beginning and the end (but abandoned for most of the show) announcing the next scene propped on an easel at the side of the stage. Queenie and Burrs, whose relationship is disintegrating, host a party fueled by bathtub gin, cocaine, and uninhibited sexual behavior. It quickly devolves into an orgy that culminates in tragedy. The guests include fading star Dolores; Kate, Queenie's best friend and rival; Black, Kate's younger lover, who has his eye on Queenie; Jackie, a rich, "ambisexual" kid who has his eye on everyone, regardless of gender or age; Oscar and Phil D'Armano, a gay couple/brother act; lesbian stripper Miss Madelaine True and her morphine-addicted girlfriend Sally; Black prizefighter Eddie, his white wife Mae and Mae's underaged Lolita-like sister, Nadine.

The Vaudeville The company recounts the story of Queenie, a blonde who works as a showgirl in the Vaudeville, who is attracted to "violent and vicious" men ("Queenie Was A Blonde"). She is currently living with a man named Burrs, who works in the same vaudeville, as the act after her. His act is a minstrel show, where he performs in black face ("Marie Is Tricky"). One Sunday, Queenie wakes up restless and she and Burrs soon come to blows. To try to put less strain on their relationship (and to convince her to put a knife down), Burrs suggest they throw a huge party and invite "all the old gang". Queenie is ecstatic and they get prepared for the evening ("Wild Party").



- [The Wiz](#)

The Wiz: The Super Soul Musical "Wonderful Wizard of Oz" is a [musical](#) with music and lyrics by [Charlie Smalls](#) (and others) and book by [William F. Brown](#). It is a retelling of L. Frank Baum's children's novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) in the context of modern [African-American culture](#). It opened on October 21, 1974, at the [Morris A. Mechanic Theatre](#) in [Baltimore, Maryland](#), and moved to [Broadway's Majestic Theatre](#)^[2] with a new cast on January 5, 1975.

The 1975 [Broadway](#) production won seven [Tony Awards](#), including [Best Musical](#). It was an early example of Broadway's

mainstream acceptance of works with an all-black cast. It has had revivals in [New York](#), [London](#), [San Diego](#) and the [Netherlands](#), and a limited-run revival was presented by *Encores!* at [New York City Center](#) in June 2009. A big-budget [film adaptation](#) of the same name was released in 1978, with [Ted Ross](#) and [Mabel King](#) reprising their roles. A live television production of the stage version, *The Wiz Live!*, was broadcast on [NBC](#) on December 3, 2015, with an encore presentation on December 19 of the same year.

The idea for the musical originated with producer [Ken Harper](#). He replaced the original director, [Gilbert Moses](#), with [Geoffrey Holder](#) in [Detroit](#) during out-of-town [tryouts](#).



The original Baltimore cast included [Renee Harris](#) as Dorothy, Charles Valentino as the Scarecrow, [Ben Harney](#) as the Tin Man, Ken Prymus as the Cowardly Lion, and [Butterfly McQueen](#) as the Queen of the Field Mice. Only Harney would remain in the Broadway cast, but in a much smaller role. Harris stayed on as understudy for the role of Dorothy, as did McQueen for the role of Addaperle.

- [Stephanie Mills](#) as [Dorothy](#)
- [Hinton Battle](#) as the [Scarecrow](#)
- [Tiger Haynes](#) as the [Tin Man](#)
- [Ted Ross](#) as the [Lion](#)
- [Dee Dee Bridgewater](#) as [Glinda, the Good Witch of the South](#)
- [André De Shields](#) as the [Wizard](#)
- [Mabel King](#) as Evillene, the [Wicked Witch of the West](#)
- [Clarice Taylor](#) as Addaperle, the [Good Witch of the North](#)
- [Tasha Thomas](#) as [Aunt Em](#)
- [Ralph Wilcox](#) as [Uncle Henry/Lord High Underling](#)
- [Phylicia Ayers-Allen](#) as a [Munchkin](#)
- [Victor Willis](#) as [Uncle Henry](#) (replacement), [The Wiz](#) (understudy), [The Lion](#) (understudy), [Tin Man](#) (understudy)^{[4][5]}

Sixteen-year-old [Dorothy Gale](#) lives with her [Aunt Em](#), [Uncle Henry](#), and dog, [Toto](#), on their farm in [Kansas](#). Though her work on the farm keeps her



busy, she often gets distracted in her boredom with farm life, choosing instead to play with Toto and dream of someday seeing far-off lands. Aunt Em, however, has little patience for Dorothy's daydreaming, believing that dawdling is contrary to their way of life. After an argument, Aunt Em apologizes to Dorothy for an unintentionally hurtful remark. She explains that she only scolds because she wants Dorothy to be the best she can be, and fears that Dorothy will not be prepared for the responsibilities life will soon put upon her. Aunt Em loves Dorothy dearly and hopes they will always be as close as they were when Dorothy was younger ("The Feeling We Once Had").

Y

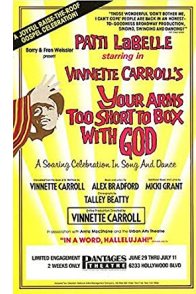
- [Your Arms Too Short to Box with God](#)

Your Arms Too Short to Box with God: A Soaring Celebration in Song and Dance is a [Broadway musical](#) based on the [Biblical Book of Matthew](#),

with music and lyrics by [Alex Bradford](#) and a book by [Vinnette Carroll](#), who also directed. [Micki Grant](#) was credited for "additional music and lyrics."

A 1980 revival was the Broadway debut of star [Jennifer Holliday](#), then billed as Jennifer-Yvette Holliday

Produced by [Frankie Hewitt](#) and the [Shubert Organization](#), it opened December 22, 1976, at [Broadway's Lyceum Theatre](#) in [New York City](#). It moved to the [Eugene O'Neill Theatre](#) on November 16, 1977, and closed January 1, 1978, after 429 performances.^[1]



Revival^[edit]

Your Arms Too Short to Box with God was revived twice on Broadway, first at the [Ambassador Theatre](#) and the [Belasco Theatre](#) (June 2–October 12, 1980), then at the [Alvin Theatre](#) (September 9–November 7, 1982). During the 1982 run, [Al Green](#) appeared with [Patti LaBelle](#) in the show.^[1]



Z

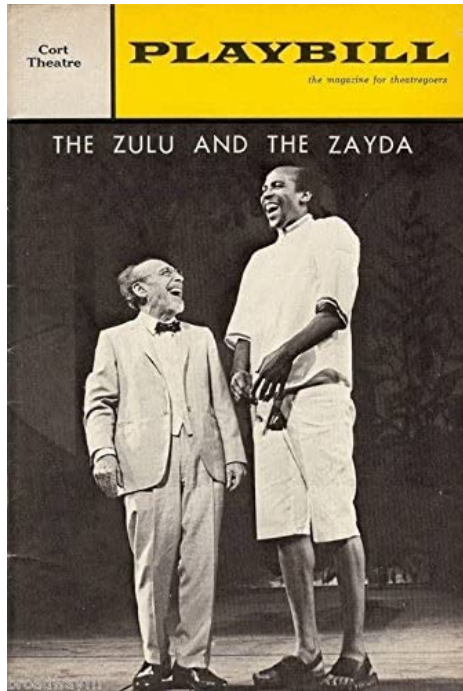
- [The Zulu and the Zayda](#)



The Zulu and the Zayda is a musical play by [Howard Da Silva](#) and [Felix Leon](#), with music and lyrics by [Harold Rome](#) (his last musical score),^[1] and directed by [Dore Schary](#). It was based on a story by [Dan Jacobson](#). Described as a comedy with music, the play has two acts and 18 scenes.^[2]

Produced by [Theodore Mann](#) and [Dore Schary](#), the [Broadway](#) production, opened on 10 November 1965 at the [Cort Theatre](#), where it ran for 179 performances. The cast included [Menasha Skulnik](#), [Ossie Davis](#), and [Louis Gossett](#). It also featured [Yaphet Kotto](#) in his first Broadway appearance

Set in [Johannesburg](#), South Africa, this comedy is about a lively Jewish grandfather (zayda is the Yiddish word for grandfather) who moves to Africa from London, whose family (the Grossmans) hires Paulus, a native



(a member of the Zulu tribe), and brother of a family servant, as a companion, and "grandfather sitter."^[4] The relationship between the zayda and Paulus, the Zulu, bridges the gulf between black and white, Africa and Europe, and age and youth, as Paulus teaches his new friend local Zulu phrases while he himself learns Yiddish expressions. Eventually, local prejudices interfere, but there is a happy ending.^[4]

The play description written by C. Burr, included on the original cast album, notes:

THE ZULU AND THE ZAYDA is a play with music about two remarkably undiscouraged people living under very discouraging circumstances. The Zulu's circumstances are, as most of us know and feel, that he lives in a homeland taken over by white proprietors in which he must watch every step and every breath just to keep what little freedom he has left to him....

A zayda, as we learn, is a Jewish grandfather. This particular zayda is 79 years old and has been twice uprooted in his life, first from Slutsk, his native village in Czarist Russia, and more recently from London, where for many years he was happily selling wares from a pushcart. Now he finds himself in Johannesburg, where his devoted son, who runs a prosperous hardware store and nervously tries to avoid trouble while raising a family, has brought him to live out the rest of his years.