

Musical Theater Studies: A Critical View of the Discipline's History in the United States and the United Kingdom

Wollman, Elizabeth L. 2021. "Musical Theater Studies: A Critical View of the Discipline's History in the United States and the United Kingdom." *Music Research Annual* 2: 1–29. ISSN 2563-7290

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ABSTRACT: This article traces the formation and development of musical theater studies in the United States and United Kingdom from the last decades of the twentieth century to the present. It discusses important trends in academia, technology, publishing, and law in both countries as they relate to the development of the discipline. The author cites a variety of scholarly writings in musical theater studies, as well as conversations with a wide range of scholars in the field and the results from a questionnaire circulated via social media and email to contemporary musical theater scholars. The article first presents a critical review of the history of musical theater studies in the US and the UK, then discusses the state of present scholarship, and concludes with suggestions for future directions in the field.

KEYWORDS: musical theater, canonization, historiography, interdisciplinary studies, popular culture, theater studies, musicology, musical theater studies

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Academic departments devoted to the performing arts in the United States and the United Kingdom have until very recently discouraged the study of musical theater. Until the final decades of the twentieth century, most popular entertainments, including musical theater, were typically dismissed by the academy as ephemeral and expendable: too closely associated with the presumably “unwashed” and uneducated masses, too driven by the commercial marketplace to matter as lasting art, and thus not serious enough to warrant scholarly interrogation or archival preservation. The slow if steady ascendancy of the approach championed by scholars associated with the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham, which was founded in 1964 and became increasingly influential through the last decades of the twentieth century, eventually intersected with a series of sociocultural, legal, and technological shifts that stimulated new academic interest in the study of popular entertainment. Cultural studies’ influence on academia resulted in an uptick in college courses related to popular entertainment, undergraduate majors and minors, and graduate programs as well as numerous new journals, conferences, archives, and technologies designed for both preservation and pedagogy. In the US and the UK, the development of musical theater studies as a scholarly discipline resulted from this broader, more general growth of interest in the study of popular entertainment.

Because higher education is a capitalist institution, scholarly disciplines tend to take root and take off when their existence proves beneficial to the academy. Undergraduate elective courses in popular entertainment, after all, are gleefully embraced by many students, just as scholarly books about blockbuster films, pop songs, and television shows tend to appeal to broader audiences than do dense treatises grounded in outdated concepts of Great Art, aimed solely at Great Scholars. Given how money ultimately drives even the fustiest academic departments housing the dustiest of scholars who tout the mustiest theories about “true” art’s distance from commerce, it makes some sense that musical theater studies only established itself in the US and the UK in the final decade of the twentieth century. Arguably, the discipline could not have developed until the commercial stage musical itself—long concentrated in big cities and run by an industry that was likewise geographically

circumscribed—began rebranding and developing itself to meet the demands of the global marketplace.¹ Based on a review of the scholarly writings in musical theater studies, conversations with a wide range of scholars in the field, and a questionnaire that was circulated on social media and via email, this article presents a critical review of the history of musical theater studies in the US and the UK, discusses the state of present scholarship, and suggests future directions in the field.

Musical theater studies was somewhat slower to cohere than similar subdisciplines because of limited access and support both within and beyond the academy. A cohesive academic approach to the musical was hindered, for example, by a lack of available source material and also by the fact that a “musical exists in no definitive form, and a performance is created from no single source” (Banfield 1993, 4). The musical’s numerous working parts, along with its general lack of a “finished, revered text” (Kirle 2005, 24), proved daunting for scholars from a variety of disciplines, especially given the propensity of humanities programs for text-based analysis. Pervasive discomfort with or outright distrust of interdisciplinary approaches did not help. Nor did the widespread practice among established scholars of “helping” doctoral students by pushing them toward areas of specialization that were deemed by the academy to be acceptably highbrow and thus more likely to ensure successful academic careers (24).

A related deterrent was a lack of access not only to live productions but also to scholarly archives and collections, which again mirrored arts hierarchies in the academy.² Through the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries—especially prior to the tech boom that resulted in streaming and file-sharing services, which offered greater access to productions and related materials—most research libraries did not prioritize the acquisition, preservation, or organization of materials related to popular entertainment.

Yet another deterrent was the cultural associations that musical theater carried, especially at the tail end of the twentieth century. Like all popular entertainment, musical theater relies on the commercial marketplace; unlike other popular entertainment forms—for example, punk- and rock-influenced music genres—this reliance is rarely obscured in any way, making commercial musicals seem especially uncool and out of touch. Certainly on Broadway and in the West End, the stage musical’s broad presentational style, gee-whiz optimism, and obvious glitz—not to mention its steep ticket prices and geographical concentration in and association with the garishly lit, touristy, and expensive entertainment districts of Manhattan and London—can code as politically disengaged, culturally conservative, and socially exclusionary. Further, the musical’s fan base, at least as it is tracked in such intensely commercial centers, is frequently thought to include segments of the population that less-charitable observers might describe as more likely to follow trends than to set them: upper-middle-class, middle-aged White women; professional gay men; local teens with access to significant amounts of disposable income; retirees and other representatives of the so-called blue-haired crowd; and gawking, wide-eyed, slow-walking, slightly disoriented tourists, often with overdressed teens or overwhelmed tots in tow.

Musical theater has thus not been as warmly embraced in the academy as forms of popular culture that have associations with historic subcultures, youth movements, periods of social unrest, or sites of political resistance.³ Further, the musical’s uncool reputation has distanced musical theater studies from other disciplines that examine popular culture but whose objects of study are less obviously middlebrow, or at least more effective at concealing their dependence on the marketplace (Johnson et al. 2019). Nevertheless, repeated attempts in the 1970s and 1980s to shape musical theater studies into an interdisciplinary field led, by the mid- to late 1990s, to something approaching cohesion.

MUSICAL THEATER STUDIES BEFORE 1990

Prior to the 1990s, there was little scholarship on musical theater in either the US or the UK. Scholarly writing on the topic was often by academics who, having become established in disciplines considered legitimate, could

justify dabbling in material deemed comparatively inconsequential. Accordingly, many of the earliest scholarly publications about musicals go to great lengths to explain what musicals are and to defend the desire to research and write about them (M. Knapp 1978; Boroff 1984).

Such defensiveness was likely due in part to the fact that in both countries, there existed an overwhelming amount of published work on the musical from outside the academy, including writings by theater critics, aficionados, practitioners, and self-taught historians. The resultant slew of surveys, opinion-based histories, reference books, biographies, and coffee-table books ranged widely in terms of quality, accuracy, emphasis, and insight.⁴ Academic theater, dance, and music departments tended to keep their distance from such publications, while junior scholars who expressed interest in musicals were discouraged by established faculty. Further, the structure of most humanities departments—which typically require graduate students to devote their time and energy to mastering increasingly specific aspects of carefully delimited disciplines—made interdisciplinary research seem daunting and impossibly complicated.

In this respect, it is a wonder that any academics active in arts disciplines in the 1970s and 1980s were able to find their way to musical theater studies at all. The musicologist Geoffrey Block, who earned his doctorate in the early 1980s, writes in the preface of his book *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from “Show Boat” to Sondheim* that in “the early 1970s graduate students in historical musicology...were strongly discouraged from studying American music of any kind” (Block 2009, xii), let alone music for the popular stage. Musicologist John Graziano (pers. comm., January 22, 2020) remembers that well into the 1980s, American musicology prioritized the preservation and study of European art music, and that even most American composers working in the art music tradition were regularly dismissed as having little to no importance. As a PhD candidate in music at Yale in the early 1970s, musicologist Kim Kowalke recalls being asked by the early music scholar Claude Palisca about his dissertation plans. When Kowalke mentioned a “continuing interest in the musical theater in general and newfound curiosity about Kurt Weill in particular,” he was discouraged so quickly and bluntly that he ended up restricting “the scope of [his] dissertation to ‘Kurt Weill in Europe,’ [in] an unconcealed capitulation to the... ideological prejudices of both modernism and Eurocentrism characteristic of the ‘old musicology’” predominant in the academy (Kowalke 2007, 689).

These early US-based musical theater scholars were not alone in encountering the deep-seated elitism of American musicology. Musicologist Raymond Knapp—whose 1987 dissertation was on Brahms and who did not turn to musical theater studies until the first decade of the twenty-first century—points out that musicology was strongly influenced in the US by a mid-twentieth-century influx of European “émigrés steeped in German and Italian traditions,” who were largely perceived as connected by birthright to art music (R. Knapp, pers. comm., April 25 and December 22, 2020). The pervasive mystique of these scholars left a deep imprint on the discipline (Brinkmann and Wolff 1999; Josephson 2005).

American musicology is not alone in harboring internalized biases and hierarchies born of elitism and Eurocentrism. Theater studies programs in the US were similarly intolerant of commercial culture in general and musical theater in particular. Music and theater programs in the UK were no more amenable. British musical theater scholar Millie Taylor took a circuitous path toward her degree due entirely to necessity. In the late 1970s, having been unable to find a musical theater program anywhere in the UK, Taylor was part of the first cohort of undergraduates to enroll in the Music, Drama, and Dance program at Birmingham University, which was focused on Laban movement and opera studies. She then worked as a pit pianist and musical director, only to return to graduate studies years later, once the academic climate had changed (M. Taylor, pers. comm., March 31, 2020).⁵

In both the US and the UK at the time, dance studies departments typically emphasized ballet and modern dance and tended not to consider popular genres at all. Ryan Donovan, who worked as a professional dancer before earning his PhD in theater at the City University of New York (CUNY) Graduate Center in 2019, notes that until very recently, mention of musical theater rarely made its way into scholarship on dance. When it did, it

was typically “as a footnote about dancers who crossed over between modern dance companies and Broadway, or choreographers who did Broadway and concert dance,” like George Balanchine, Agnes de Mille, Helen Tamiris, and Hanya Holm (R. Donovan, pers. comm., March 2, 2020).

While elitism and the challenges of interdisciplinarity resulted in limited support for research on popular culture studies, so did a widespread embrace in arts and humanities departments of the ideas of the Frankfurt School, members of which tended to take a deeply suspicious view of popular culture. As Block argues, Frankfurt School thinkers, and especially Theodor Adorno, “vigorously championed and successfully promoted the view that great art was rightfully destined to be unpopular” (2009, xii).⁶ It seems uncoincidental that the growing criticism of the Frankfurt School that emerged near the end of the millennium coincided with a new focus on the very kinds of popular entertainment that Frankfurt adherents openly mistrusted.

Two additional factors contributing to the dearth of research on musical theater before the 1990s were the state of the theater archives and the industry’s resistance to making scores, libretti, production materials, or audiovisual recordings available for scholarly study. In the UK, the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), for example, has long housed collections comprising all performing arts, including musical theater, but the holdings were not widely digitized at this time.⁷ While both the (UK) National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) now have digital archives that researchers can access, the country has no centralized process for recording and preserving live performances.⁸ Many UK-based theater producers maintain or are currently developing personal archives, and there are public and private collections around the country that permit scholars varying degrees of access. Yet archival holdings in the UK remain less centralized and accessible than those in the US (M. Taylor, pers. comm., March 12, 2021).

A similar situation can be found in the US, even though there are more museums, libraries, and collections in the States, and they are more geographically dispersed. Despite all of that, the country’s largest and most accessible musical theater archives have grown significantly only since the end of the twentieth century. At the Library of Congress in Washington, DC, for example, sound recordings of all genres were inaccessible to patrons until 1972. The library occasionally acquired materials related to popular culture, but most of it remained boxed, stored, and uncataloged for decades. The library staff included no popular dance or theater specialists who might have helped cultivate and organize such collections until the early 1980s (Horowitz 2006). The New York Public Library was somewhat more willing to acquire materials related to the popular arts, especially when they documented the city’s culture industries (P. Miller, Campbell, and Kinkeldey 1979). As a result, the New York Public Library amassed significant popular music and dance holdings earlier than the Library of Congress. For example, its theater wing, which was established in 1931 following the acquisition of the personal collection of theater owner and impresario David Belasco, arguably had Broadway in its bones (Williams 1975).

Even so, most of the New York Public Library’s popular culture acquisitions moldered in storage for decades prior to the 1965 opening of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts at Lincoln Center. While crates of sheet music were regularly donated by Tin Pan Alley’s many publishers, the New York Public Library lacked the funds and labor required to organize and catalog it (Campbell 1979).⁹ Similarly, despite a huge and ever-growing collection of sound recordings, the public library had no safe, comfortable, or practical means for the public to access its collections before the Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives of Recorded Sound was established in the research division of the new Lincoln Center building in 1965 (P. Miller et al. 1979).¹⁰

The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts allowed the music, theater, and dance divisions to combine for the first time and made a listening library, recording repository, and research center possible in the process. The new library in the new Lincoln Center complex boosted the visibility of the city’s musical theater holdings, which in turn encouraged more use and steady growth. Nonetheless, building up some parts of the collection proved more difficult than others: the cherished Theatre on Film and Tape Archive (TOFT), for instance, did not open until 1970, and through its earliest years held more promise than film or tape (for more about TOFT, see New York Public Library 2021). TOFT founder and director Betty Corwin had to work

out rights and permissions agreements with the theater industry's "eight or nine" unions and guilds, most of which were skeptical of her project and wary about permitting the recording of live productions for any reason. Negotiations took a few additional years, during which TOFT was unable to build its holdings (Haun 2017).¹¹

Arguably, the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts could not have been built without Broadway's help: the Rodgers and Hammerstein Foundation was a significant contributor to its sound archives; the city's theater unions and guilds eventually permitted the establishment and growth of the TOFT project; and choreographer Jerome Robbins contributed significant earnings from *Fiddler on the Roof* so the library could build what became the Jerome Robbins Archive of the Recorded Moving Image. Robbins's donation also helped "[preserve] film and video material, hire staff, purchase films and viewing equipment, document significant works, and develop guidelines to protect against copyright violation and plagiarism" (Brooks 2011, 470).¹²

What is often cited as the first academic conference in the US devoted to American popular culture took place under the auspices of the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts.¹³ The Conference on the History of American Popular Entertainment, cosponsored by the American Society for Theatre Research (ASTR) and the Theatre Library Association (TLA), was held in November 1977 at Lincoln Center. Devised to explore "long neglected aspects of theatrical performance—those aimed at a broad, relatively 'unsophisticated' audience," the conference did not touch directly on the American musical, for which accessible archival holdings remained sparse. The library's increasingly well-organized and cataloged collection of American sheet music, however, had by this point prompted new scholarly attention to predecessors of the contemporary musical: minstrelsy, vaudeville, and burlesque; Wild West, tent repertoire, and medicine shows; circuses, amusement parks, and theme parks; and early American popular dance styles (Matlaw 1979, v–vii).

The conference summation was delivered by Ray B. Browne, then professor of English at Bowling Green State University and the scholar often credited with founding popular culture studies in the US. Browne implored his fellow scholars to "scuttle the old Puritanical notion that the arts are meant to improve society," since it is impossible, he argued, "to chart the blood flow of a nation without studying... [its] popular entertainment" (R. Browne 1979, 294–295). Browne made a special plea for larger, more varied archives: "Now that scholars realize the importance of popular entertainment in American society," he said, "we should dedicate ourselves... to understanding the various forms of the past... but also to preserving those of the present so that our counterparts in the future will have more material to work with than we might have now" (297).

Several important developments that served this goal occurred between the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Broadway artists and their families began regularly donating their personal collections to the Library for the Performing Arts, which in turn was able to rapidly expand its musical theater holdings. After composer Frank Loesser's widow donated his papers in 1977 (Boziwick 2012), similar donations began to snowball. Through the 1980s, the library accepted scores, lyrics, scripts, set and lighting designs, correspondence, and personal papers from many Broadway denizens, including lighting designer Jules Fisher (in 1979), the Sardi family of restaurateurs (1979), lyricists Carolyn Leigh (1982) and Dorothy Fields (1984), composer Harold Arlen (1986), musical comedy duo Betty Comden and Adolph Green (1986), producer and director Harold Prince (1986), impresario Florenz Ziegfeld Jr. (1987), and composer Victor Herbert (1989).

Also, the discovery in November 1982 of some eighty crates in an abandoned warehouse in Secaucus, New Jersey, long used by Warner Bros. resulted in international press coverage. Heralded as one of the most "monumental discoveries in the history of American musical theater" (Page 1982, 1-1), the crates contained drafts of scores from film and stage musicals, rare and unpublished songs, incidental music, thematic material, handwritten notes, and correspondence by George Gershwin, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, Lorenz Hart, Oscar Hammerstein II, Jerome Kern, Vincent Youmans, Sigmund Romberg, and Rudolph Friml. To inventory, catalog, and preserve these materials took most of the decade due to legal skirmishes over which portions should be archived, published, or returned to various estates (Steig 1987). The magnitude of the discovery prompted renewed interest in musical theater in general and in the music of George Gershwin in particular. By 1987, the

value of Gershwin manuscripts had soared, concert versions of long-forgotten musicals were being staged across the US, productions previously assumed lost to history were being painstakingly reconstructed, and Gershwin-themed albums by various recording artists competed with one another for top slots on the *Billboard* charts (Holden 1988).

While scholars and collectors framed the warehouse discovery not merely as a collection of ephemera by Tin Pan Alley hacks but rather as a priceless treasure left behind by American artists of yore, tensions that had long pitted art against commerce on Broadway began to intensify.¹⁴ The so-called British Invasion of Broadway began in the early 1980s with the highly anticipated opening of *Cats*, and with it the ascendancy of composer and impresario Andrew Lloyd Webber and theater producer and owner Cameron Mackintosh. The subsequent international popularity of the megamusical sparked new debate about which shows deserved canonization as great art and which should be dismissed as mere commercial entertainment. The two composers most typically posed as rivals in the commerce vs. art debates of the time were Lloyd Webber and Stephen Sondheim (Citron 2001; Sternfeld 2006). As the young, foreign, remarkably successful newcomer, Lloyd Webber was often positioned in the press, popular histories, and early musical theater scholarship as a corrupting purveyor of commercial frivolity and spectacle. In contrast, Sondheim was typically championed as a gifted, brilliant creator of serious, lasting art and the sole inheritor of Broadway's glorious golden age—which was now imagined, somehow, as untainted by commerce. The money Lloyd Webber's productions made, and the fact that Sondheim's musicals tended to be critically acclaimed (if never as popular or as lucrative), only helped to perpetuate the art/commerce divide.

Then again, this binary had arguably taken root in nascent musical theater studies long before *Cats* first leapt from the West End to Broadway. Anxieties born in part of defensiveness resulted in the very kinds of hierarchical thinking that had kept so many scholars from pursuing popular culture studies in the first place. Grave concerns about how commercialism was rapidly eclipsing the brilliant artistry of Broadway's storied past, for example, were central to several papers given at the first major American conference devoted to the study of musical theater. Inspired by the 1977 Conference on the History of American Popular Entertainment, the Conference on Musical Theatre in America was convened at the C. W. Post Center of Long Island University in April 1981. Jointly sponsored by ASTR, the Sonneck Society (now the Society for American Music, SAM), and the TLA, this conference was organized in a roughly chronological fashion, with panels comprising "theatre and dance specialists, musicologists, librarians, performers, and other theatre practitioners" who discussed the eighteenth- and nineteenth-century origins of musical theater as well as twentieth-century revues and book musicals. Other panels and roundtables were devoted to musical theater dance, the musical's many working parts, and the state of the archive (Loney 1983, xiv).

In his preface and introduction to the conference proceedings, theater historian Glenn Loney described the growing desire for an academic field that had yet to cohere. He mentioned a steady growth of archival materials and expressed concern about the reliance on critics' reviews in the absence of other secondary sources and a larger dearth of primary ones. He pointed out that despite the existence of numerous well-established and influential scholarly societies devoted to theater, music, and dance, none had shown interest in or willingness to include musical theater studies. He argued that any sustained scholarly focus on musical theater would remain seriously hindered by the cost of obtaining permissions to reprint lyrics, dialogue, and even the briefest snippets of music in scholarly publications. Loney begged in his conclusion for scholarly societies in the humanities to "arrive at an agreement with those organizations that represent composers and lyricists, recognising the special needs and circumstances of scholars...as distinguished from the use of quotations in frankly commercial works, which are expected to make a profit and for which the fees can be paid. Otherwise, it will prove financially prohibitive to write an analytical paper on the lyrics of Stephen Sondheim" (1983, 11).

This final remark again points to assumptions governing what academics brave enough to cross into musical theater studies should be prioritizing. It mirrors similar comments made in the conference's keynote talk by

Broadway composer and conductor Lehman Engel and in its closing remarks by musical chronicler Gerald Bordman. In his keynote, Engel declared the death of Broadway's golden age, which he attested began "around 1935, with *Porgy and Bess*," only to come to an abrupt, ignoble end in 1968 with *Hair* (Engel 1983, 19). Like Loney, Engel positioned Sondheim as the sole inheritor of Broadway's artistic past. He acknowledged the importance of the archive as a site for preservation, now that art on Broadway had so clearly fallen prey to the greedy scramble for commercial gain. Bordman, too, linked a need for preservation directly to what he saw as Broadway's troubling distance from art: "It may sound strange for me to say this, being a scholar of the American musical theatre, but I don't go to the American musical theatre anymore," he mused. "I don't like what I see or hear, so it's a pleasure to draw the conclusion that the American musical theatre is alive and well in academia, if not on Broadway." Bordman concluded by voicing hope that Broadway's past would be preserved, given all the "agonies the American musical theatre is suffering today" (1983, 413–414).

The Musical Theatre in America conference might have helped to perpetuate hierarchies extant in music, theater, and dance scholarship, but it also marked an important early stage in musical theater studies. It did what no conference in the US had managed prior, simply by gathering a large group of like-minded scholars, critics, practitioners, and industry people who publicly articulated the value in studying the musical. In the years after this conference, new developments in technology, academia, the archive, and both the publishing and theater industries would help further the growth of musical theater studies in the US and the UK.

MUSICAL THEATER STUDIES AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

In the last decades of the twentieth century, numerous well-received studies touching on musicals from a widening variety of scholarly disciplines began to appear. For example, composer Alec Wilder's iconic study *American Popular Song: The Great Innovators, 1900–1950* was first released in 1973. Musicologist Charles Hamm—long frustrated by his peers' disdain for popular culture and frequently credited as one of "the first scholars to study the history of American popular music with musicological rigor and sensitivity to complex racial and ethnic dynamics" (Woolfe 2011, para. 5)—published his landmark book *Yesterdays: Popular Song in America* in 1979. From film studies came formative texts such as Jane Feuer's (1982) work *The Hollywood Musical* and Rick Altman's (1982) edited volume *Genre: The Musical*; several years later, Altman's (1987) text *The American Film Musical* and Gerald Mast's (1990) somewhat broader study *Can't Help Singin': The American Musical on Stage and Screen* appeared. In 1988, historian Allen Woll's book *Black Musical Theatre: From "Coontown" to "Dreamgirls"* was published. Philip Furia's (1992) text *The Poets of Tin Pan Alley: A History of America's Greatest Lyricists* and queer theorist Alexander Doty's (1993) title *Making Things Perfectly Queer: Interpreting Mass Culture* followed. These influential works, all of which helped to shape the current discipline, demonstrate how musical theater studies was interdisciplinary from its inception. They also reflect the pliability of musical theater as subject matter: clearly, musicals are approachable from and can be analyzed through an array of scholarly lenses.

For all of its extraordinary interdisciplinarity, musical theater studies continued to absorb many of its parent disciplines' preoccupations with canonization, and with it a collectively imagined if stubbornly potent divide between art and commerce. Such ongoing preoccupations were perhaps most obviously manifest in the field's overwhelming focus on a chronology of critically lauded and usually (if not always) commercially successful musicals, written, composed, and staged on Broadway or in the West End by a lengthening succession of mostly White, male professional theater artists (Whitfield 2019; R. Knapp 2020).

Some of the earliest scholarly work on the Broadway canon came from the field of musicology. These writings were all modeled on studies of elite European performance genres deemed comparable to the musical. Joseph Swain's (1990) study *The Broadway Musical: A Critical and Musical Survey* borrowed from Joseph Kerman's (1956) text *Opera as Drama* to position composers of musical theater as dramatists. Swain's book, the first

scholarly treatment of the musical to win the ASCAP Foundation's Deems Taylor Award, takes a chronological approach to fifteen musicals that Swain felt were the most artistically valuable Broadway had ever produced. In linking superior artistry with "integration"—and thus by equating a score's success with how well it helps "establish characters, move the plot, intensify conflicts, and constitute other events that would be expected of a spoken play" (1990, 3)—Swain worked to lend legitimacy to the musical, if also reproducing the ongoing preoccupation with artistic greatness. From a contemporary perspective, Swain's concerns with artistic legitimacy and canonization are problematic. Putting his book in context, however, one might ask how such concerns could have been avoided at a time when musical theater studies was only just beginning to be taken seriously, and then only in some pockets of the academy.

Swain was hardly unique in relying on established models to make scholarly inroads. Stephen Banfield also drew on pre-existing models when his research interests arrived, almost by accident, at musicals. Following the publication of his first book, *Sensibility and English Song* (1985), Banfield began work on a global history of the waltz. While he was in early research stages, he gave a paper on Sondheim's waltzes at the 1986 meeting of the Sonneck Society. Though he intended the presentation as "a kind of pilot study" for the book, he was approached by the musicologist Richard Crawford to "propose a book on Sondheim for [Crawford's] University of Michigan Press American Music series," which prompted Banfield to redirect his research (S. Banfield, pers. comm., May 22, 2020).¹⁵ In the introduction to the resulting book, *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals*, Banfield (1993, 5–6) credits Swain for providing "the first sustained critical handling of the music in American musicals," even as he laments Swain's focus on music at the expense of all other aspects of what is ultimately "a multidisciplinary genre." Banfield opens the field for further inquiry by suggesting that other scholars approach the genre from directions he does not. He calls especially for other scholars to take up more rigorous examinations of "where the musical stands on the popular-serious spectrum and how this affects our understanding of its parameters" (7). *Sondheim's Broadway Musicals* became the first book about musical theater to win SAM's Irving Lowens Book Award,¹⁶ and the very first to win the Kurt Weill Prize, established by the Kurt Weill Foundation for Music in 1995. Academic honors like the ones bestowed on Banfield became more commonplace for musical theater scholars in the following decade and helped legitimize musical theater studies at a time when other factors from within and beyond the academy were also helping the field along.¹⁷

The 1990s saw the cultivation of worldwide interest in the stage musical, the globalization of which was not universally embraced by scholars, audiences, or members of the theater industry but was crucial to the genre's continued development and appeal. At earlier points in the second half of the twentieth century, musical theater had begun to lose audiences in the US and the UK, where it was deemed outmoded and out of touch. Of course, immediately following World War II, the physically damaged and economically devastated UK had more serious concerns than the question of which shows were running in the West End. But for years after the war, British producers and theater artists relied heavily on comfortingly familiar if highly antiquated "pre-war conventions of operetta and musical comedy" (Gordon 2016, 8), a practice that surely rose from necessity. By the mid-1950s, British musicals began to evolve to meet the changing needs of postwar audiences, but not until the 1970 debut of Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice's internationally popular concept album *Jesus Christ Superstar*, which prompted Broadway (1971) and West End (1972) productions, did the genre begin to attain the kind of international attention it had enjoyed before World War I (Gordon, Jubin, and Taylor 2016; for more on the history of musicals in the UK, see Gordon and Jubin 2016).

Musicals remained popular in the US immediately after World War II, but the subsequent baby boom widened the generation gap significantly enough to cause unprecedented shifts in American taste cultures. The advent of new technologies and mass entertainment genres, combined with the sociopolitical upheavals of the 1960s, caused commercial musicals to become increasingly dismissed as hoary, disconnected, and aimed primarily at spectators well above the age of thirty. New York City's financial crisis, which worsened through the 1960s and 1970s, resulted in a sharp decline in tourism and took an additional toll on the theater industry.

Only once the crisis ended in 1977 did the city and state of New York step up attempts to capitalize on theater tourism. Serious efforts to re-envision the perpetually seedy Times Square neighborhood as a more welcoming destination for people of all ages, and from all places, did not begin until early in the 1980s (Wollman 2012).

What the US and UK theater hubs had in common by this point were Lloyd Webber and Mackintosh, both of whom had youth, incredible marketing savvy, and a driving interest in developing stage musicals for international consumption. The two men opened new frontiers for stage musicals, and in the process they infused Broadway and the West End with new energy. They also brought a new emphasis on visual spectacle, skyrocketing costs of production, and a fresh chorus of laments about the impending death of art in pursuit of money. The redevelopment of Times Square in the 1990s, too, helped make the theater district into a more family-friendly and internationally appealing tourist destination, but it also placed new emphasis on expensive, spectacular productions with corporate backing from entertainment conglomerates.

While concerns about Broadway's growing pains were aired in the press, within the industry, and among scholars, Sondheim's assumed role as sole heir to the gloried artistic past extended well beyond Broadway. In 1989, the UK experienced what the press dubbed "Sondheim Mania" following the August 1989 news that Mackintosh had established "a \$2.9 million endowment to support student drama" at Oxford and that Sondheim had been named the "first Visiting Professor of Drama and Musical Theater" (*New York Times* 1989, C16). The Oxford appointment had Sondheim working with thirteen students on their own musical theater projects while simultaneously overseeing rehearsals for the West End premiere of *Sunday in the Park with George* at the National Theatre. Sondheim was already well respected in England, and his reputation was only reinforced during his visit. Reports of his time in the UK bolstered the art/commerce and Sondheim/Lloyd Webber binaries. Nevertheless, some journalists understood that the two were linked. The *New York Times*, for example, observed that Lloyd Webber's commercial power and international reach had "subsidized Mr. Sondheim's work in Britain inasmuch as profits from his 'Cats' and 'Phantom of the Opera'...helped Mr. Mackintosh to produce 'Follies,' and to donate about \$170,000 to the National Theatre's production of 'Sunday in the Park with George'" (M. Wolf 1990, H5).

When he was interviewed for the same *Times* article, *Side by Side by Sondheim* director Ned Sherrin called Lloyd Webber "one of our own" and acknowledged that "we have to love our lads." He added, however, that Sondheim's musicals were especially beloved in the UK for their comparative intellectualism and artistry, since British audiences are "happier to have our minds tested" (H5). Citing Sondheim productions like *A Little Night Music* (which was based on an Ingmar Bergman film) and *Sunday in the Park with George* (which was inspired by a painting by Georges Seurat), the article suggests, "After all, what's more attractive to Europeans than European subjects, especially as presented by an American composer whom the English can wrest from the perceived vagaries and vulgarities of Broadway?" (H40).

Shortly after Sondheim's stint in the UK, the country experienced a series of sweeping educational reforms that indirectly encouraged the development and expansion of musical theater studies as an academic discipline. The Further and Higher Education Act of 1992 effectively erased the division between vocational polytechnics and universities, in the process nearly doubling the number of schools with university status across the country. A sharp increase in demand for new departments offering nontraditional courses, including many in the performing arts, followed passage of the act (Further and Higher Education Act 1992). Although the UK's oldest, most exclusive universities, including Oxford and Cambridge, continued to bestow traditional performing arts degrees, many "post-92" universities began offering degrees in musical theater (Dominic Symonds, pers. comm., April 25, 2020).

Meanwhile, major advances in the US regarding the fair use of copyrighted works resulted in a significant uptick in scholarship about the musical.¹⁸ In 1993, the Society for Cinema and Media Studies (SCMS) released a groundbreaking statement advocating the fair use of film stills in scholarly publications (Society for Cinema and Media Studies [1993] 2016). In a judgment in *Campell v. Acuff-Rose Music Inc.*, handed down in the follow-

ing year, the US Supreme Court ruled unanimously that “the fair use of a copyrighted work...for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching...scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright” (*Campbell v. Acuff-Rose Music Inc.* 1994). Oxford University Press senior editor Norm Hirschy considers this ruling on fair use, which was reinforced by the Second Circuit ruling on *Blanch v. Koons* (2006), to be of particular importance to musical theater studies since it allowed academic publishers to feel “more comfortable with the idea of [including] brief excerpts from music and lyrics” and thus to publish manuscripts they would otherwise have passed on (N. Hirschy, pers. comm., May 15, 2020).¹⁹

Finally, the late 1980s and 1990s saw the rise of programs and concert series dedicated to rarely revived or forgotten musicals in both countries. The Lost Musical project, established in the UK in 1989, offers audiences productions of lesser-known American musicals by well-known composers and lyricists. The long-running Encores! series premiered at New York City Center in 1994, and Musicals in Mufti launched in the same year at the nearby York Theatre Company. The Off-Broadway revival series Musicals Tonight! followed suit in 1998.²⁰ While projects like these have helped to broaden awareness of the history of the musical, they can also perpetuate historical blind spots—especially when they overlook Off-Broadway musicals and the vast majority of other “smaller-scale and nontraditional shows outside the established Broadway mold” (Weinert-Kendt 2013, 4). Then again, the existence of such projects allows musical theater devotees the chance to experience old or little-known works. They can thus serve as what Stacy Wolf (pers. comm., April 25, 2020) calls “performed archival projects,” which give scholars a chance to view reconstructions of productions that were never recorded or are not well represented in the archives.

These varied advances made musical theater studies more practicable, even as parts of the academy remained chilly to the developing discipline. Theater and dance studies continued to keep their distance, as did the growing field of popular music studies. The journal *Popular Music*, for example, premiered in 1981 and despite its attention to a diversity of global popular styles, has featured only a handful of articles related to musical theater, perhaps most notably by Jonathan Burston (1998).

Even as musicology initially dominated musical theater studies, with publications about the Broadway canon ending at Sondheim, many music scholars continued to dismiss musical theater studies as academic slumming. British musicologist Julian Rushton, for instance, remembers that early in his term as president of the Royal Musical Association (RMA, 1994–1999), he wrote the Bach scholar Peter Williams to let him know that his membership had lapsed. Rushton recalls Williams tersely responding that he had resigned because the RMA had organized a conference on musicals. (They had not; Rushton suspects Williams took offense at the inclusion at one meeting of one paper about Sondheim by Banfield [J. Rushton, pers. comm., May 25, 2020]).²¹

While some music departments in the US began permitting graduate students to work on musical theater topics by the mid-1990s, plenty of faculty did not bother to hide their lack of interest in or respect for the genre. Musicologist Jessica Sternfeld, who entered the graduate program in music at Princeton in the late 1990s with plans to study opera, remembers that her proposal to instead write a dissertation on megamusicals was only grudgingly accepted by a faculty that “ranged from unimpressed to openly disdainful” of musicals. Sternfeld’s advisor, whom she believes liked her well enough as a person, openly “hated musicals and spent his advising energy insisting that I prove to him why anyone should care.” Sternfeld allows that his approach was partly in keeping with old-school methods of advising, but she feels it was also the result of his clear contempt for the genre (pers. comm., May 22, 2020).²²

Nevertheless, by this point there was enough interest among graduate and undergraduate students to justify more scholarly research and writing about musicals. The 1997 publication of musicologist Geoffrey Block’s *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from “Show Boat” to Sondheim*, for example, marks an important shift in scholarly intent. Where earlier studies on the musical focused on justifying its scholarly worthiness, Block’s book was prompted instead by his own need for a textbook to use in his increasingly popular undergraduate musical theater survey course at the University of Puget Sound in Tacoma, Washington (Block 2009, xiii). Block’s book,

like Swain's (1990) and Banfield's (1993), focuses on Broadway and the canon, and draws its approach primarily from opera studies, including Kerman's (1956) *Opera as Drama*, Paul Robinson's (1985) *Opera and Ideas from Mozart to Strauss*, and Peter Kivy's (1999) *Osmin's Rage: Philosophical Reflections on Opera, Drama, and Text*. Yet *Enchanted Evenings* attempts to push beyond the boundaries of musicology by establishing new analytical and critical frameworks, which might encourage broader understandings of and appreciation for the genre (3). Because the book considers "the alleged conflict between temporal popularity and lasting value and the selling out, again alleged, not of tickets but of artistic integrity," *Enchanted Evenings* was also one of the first full-length studies to tackle Broadway's art/commerce divide (Block 2009, 5).

THE TURN OF THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

By the late 1990s, musical theater studies began to receive recognition from an increasing number of scholarly circles. In 1998, the annual meeting of the American Musicological Society (AMS) featured an entire panel on Sondheim, whom Kim Kowalke suggested was by that time "the most 'studied' living composer" (2007, 714). Musical theater studies remained musicology-heavy, but the Frankfurt School's influence on humanities departments became eclipsed as more scholars were influenced by newer, more media-savvy cultural theories expounded by the Birmingham School. Pioneering work by academics in theater, performance studies, queer and feminist theory, Jewish studies, and literary criticism also helped tip the balance away from traditional musicological approaches.

In 2001, after having experienced numerous setbacks in pursuit of a higher degree, Millie Taylor became the first scholar in the UK to earn a PhD in musical theater when she graduated from the University of Exeter. Following a long route that began in the 1980s with a search for degree programs that did not yet exist, Taylor was finally able to cobble together a group of dissertation supervisors from the drama and music departments. The arrangement was not perfect: Taylor had to frame her dissertation as an analysis of the "relationships between theatre and music" in a variety of performance genres—not specifically in musicals—since none of her instructors was well versed enough in musical theater to supervise such a dissertation. Nevertheless, after receiving her degree, Taylor was able to find a growing network of colleagues eager to "introduce musical theater as an acceptable discipline for research and teaching" in the UK (pers. comm., March 28 and June 3, 2020).

Taylor began a position as senior lecturer at the University of Winchester in the same year she earned her doctorate. At the time—less than a decade after the passage of the Further and Higher Education Act—many UK conservatories had begun partnering with universities to ensure continued financial stability. Such partnerships resulted in still more demand for arts education, and especially for history-based courses in performance-focused degree programs. Taylor remembers that partnerships between conservatories and universities worked especially well in London. Most conservatories were concentrated there anyway, but so was an ever-renewing population of performing artists who were willing to teach college courses. Because universities and conservatories at a distance from London had more difficulty finding and retaining teaching artists, many of these schools eventually shifted their focus away from the training of performing artists and toward the study of the performing arts. One result was further legitimization of musical theater studies as an accepted research area (M. Taylor, pers. comm., March 28 and June 3, 2020).

In both the UK and the US at the turn of the twenty-first century, the continued influence of cultural studies allowed for more interdisciplinarity, which in turn resulted in the dramatic rise of academic studies about musicals. As the subfield solidified, scholarship from various disciplines began to focus less on what musicals are and why they deserve scholarly attention, and more on how musicals function, what they mean, why and in what ways they matter, and to whom (R. Knapp, pers. comm., April 25, 2020).

In growing numbers, scholars from fields including theater, performance studies, history, accountancy, ethnomusicology, English, literary criticism, and American, gender, ethnic, religious, media, and communication studies began presenting work about musicals at major conferences, teaching courses devoted to or including content about musicals, and publishing books and articles that considered musicals from myriad angles. While the field remained rooted in the canon of integrated musicals (in which music, drama, and dance cohere into a *Gesamtkunstwerk*-like whole), especially as they developed on Broadway or in the West End, the field moved beyond musicological analyses of scores by golden-age composers and Sondheim to interrogate a host of other topics including the ways musicals function onscreen (Marshall and Stillwell 2000); how they resonate with gender identity (D. A. Miller 1998; Clum 1999; S. Wolf 2002; Rodosthenous 2007), with national identity (Jones 2003; R. Knapp 2005, 2006), or with religious or ethnic ethnicity (Sandoval-Sánchez 1999; Most 2004; Bial 2005); how they behave in the commercial marketplace (Rosenberg and Harburg 1992; Savran 2002; Wollman 2002; Adler 2004); and how they respond to cultural, technological, or aesthetic shifts (Burston 1998; Kirlé 2005; McMillin 2006; Sternfeld 2006; Wollman 2006).²³

Theater scholar David Savran—who established himself in comparatively “legitimate” areas of specialization, including Renaissance and Enlightenment-era theater and the plays of Tennessee Williams—remembers becoming fascinated by just how much scholarship on musical theater had begun to appear in the late 1990s and early twenty-first century. Savran was especially intrigued by work coming from scholars and institutions that had long seemed to him especially resistant to academic analyses of popular culture. He recalls feeling “frankly astonished” to come across an article on *Oklahoma!* in *PMLA* (the journal of the Modern Language Association; see Most 1998) and to see D. A. Miller—one of “the high priests of high theory”—give a paper on *Gypsy* at a major theater conference in 1995.²⁴ Savran was similarly struck when he met Stacy Wolf. “Here’s someone coming out of queer feminist work, but doing musical theater,” he remembers thinking. “How *amazing!*” The scholarship on musicals from so many corners of the academy felt to Savran like “acts of legitimation,” which prompted him to turn his own focus to the genre (pers. comm., June 4, 2020).

Such “acts of legitimation” resulted from the efforts of individual scholars who had begun to push against old-school rigidity, just as the academy around them was beginning to support new areas of investigation. Andrea Most’s (2004) pioneering work on Jewish-American identity, assimilation, and mid-twentieth-century Broadway musicals, for example, was eventually embraced warmly in the academy. But her project was initially met with doubt, and Most experienced frequent setbacks that stemmed in part from snobbery, as well as from a concrete lack of traditional support and access. When Most (2001) began work in the mid-1990s on a dissertation titled “We Know We Belong to the Land: Jews and the American Musical Theater” (which eventually became her 2004 book *Making Americans*), she remembers finding “*nothing* on Jews and musical theater, at least in the academic world.” The Jewish Studies program at Brandeis, where she earned her doctorate, was “quite conservative—mostly historians and bible scholars working on Jewish thought and ‘serious’ Jewish history. Which musical theater clearly wasn’t.” Most’s work in the archives proved daunting: she typically spent her time doing “lots of digging just to figure out who the major players were, and if they were Jewish.” This wasn’t easy: the Library of Congress held the personal collections of Oscar Hammerstein II and Irving Berlin, but both were “totally uncataloged,” which necessitated hours of sifting through random piles of papers in countless boxes. Finding readers for her dissertation was another challenge. She eventually found some musicologists to work with, but at the time Most could find no one in American studies, theater, performance studies, or Jewish studies who had enough grasp of her subject matter to comfortably supervise her work (pers. comm., June 16, 2020).

Meanwhile, Savran’s growing interest in musical theater studies prompted his 2004 article “Toward a Historiography of the Popular,” in which he urged fellow theater scholars to take musicals seriously. Savran argued that theater studies’ distance from the genre was born of anxieties about both interdisciplinarity and taxonomy. To the first point, he acknowledges that analysis of musicals “requires an implicit or explicit theorization of multiple (and often conflicting) systems of signification as well as at least passing familiarity with musicology

and dance scholarship”; to the second, he allowed that “no theatre form is as expansive and difficult to categorize generically, since it includes musical comedy, musical drama, opera, revue, musical satire, and hybrids of all these genres, incorporating a multitude of different song forms, arias, dance breaks, ballets, recitatives, book scenes, satirical sketches, soliloquies, and so on” (Savran 2004, 215). Nevertheless, given various crises facing early twenty-first-century theater scholars—including “the relentless commercialization and retrenchment of American theater...and the rise of a discipline, performance studies, that is challenging, reinvigorating, and partially displacing theatre studies”²⁵—he suggested that theater scholars reevaluate popular culture in general, and musicals in particular. A serious reassessment, he argued, might help offset restricting confines of our thinking that included Eurocentrism, cultural elitism, and “class-based prejudices about the superiority of art to entertainment” (212).

In what works as a companion piece to Savran’s article, Stacy Wolf’s (2007) article “In Defense of Pleasure: Musical Theatre History in the Liberal Arts [A Manifesto]” argued further that the academy’s insistence on valuing the highbrow and dismissing popular culture was becoming increasingly ludicrous in a postmodern era that granted audiences new ways to glide through any number of “cultural categories of value and worth, both commercially and intellectually” (52). Wolf defended musical theater studies as having the potential to nurture an appropriately “multivalent, multidisciplinary approach” to history and sociocultural development. Like Savran, she urged her fellow scholars to study, teach, and normalize learning about musicals in the academy. She closed by acknowledging a frequent critique of musical theater studies: that genre fandom too often overshadowed the rigorous analysis and theorizing theater studies requires. She suggested, however, that instead of snobbishly eschewing the pleasures of popular culture, scholars might attempt to embrace pleasure “as a way in” (55).

By late in the first decade of the twenty-first century, the spike in academic activity surrounding musicals prompted the birth of new conferences as well as collectively written and edited publications devoted to musical theater studies. The first academic periodical devoted to the genre, *Studies in Musical Theatre*, debuted at this time. The international journal was devised by George Burrows and Dominic Symonds, who joined the performing arts department at the University of Portsmouth as readers in music and theater, respectively, in 2003. Burrows remembers that as new faculty members with complementary backgrounds, he and Symonds were eager to establish themselves in their fields, so they set about finding and filling an academic lacuna (pers. comm., March 6, 2020). They approached Intellect, a publishing company founded in 1984, with their idea for the journal. By the early twenty-first century, Intellect was actively expanding its offerings; Burrows and Symonds reasoned that it would be the ideal company for launching a journal that would serve a fledgling academic field.

Intellect’s founder, Masoud Yazdani, had been a professor of digital media at the University of the West of England. He left that position to start Intellect specifically because he “wanted to establish a journal in [his own] academic field—Artificial Intelligence—and, at that time, no publisher was interested.” Yazdani felt that the journals market put new academic disciplines in a “catch-22”: a new discipline could only grow if scholars had journals in which to publish their work, but presses would only start new journals in “subject areas that are already established.” Yazdani created Intellect specifically to remedy this situation (quoted in Scanlan 2014, para. 2). Nevertheless, the company expressed doubts that a journal about musical theater would attract enough readers to justify publication. Intellect’s editors asked Burrows and Symonds to gauge the level of interest in the subject, which led to the first Song, Stage and Screen conference, SSS I: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Musical Stage, convened at Portsmouth from April 28 to 30, 2006.

Serendipitously, about six weeks prior, John Graziano was in Bristol, UK, to take part in Stephen Banfield’s conference, *The American and British Musical: An International Colloquium on Preserving the Heritage and Exploiting the Sources*. Graziano remembers that during the colloquium, “a flyer came out of nowhere, saying ‘we’re having this conference in Portsmouth in six weeks and anyone who wants to submit an abstract can do so.’” Because Graziano was teaching a musical theater seminar at the CUNY Graduate Center, he decided to

bring the flyer back with him to circulate among his students. “I think four people submitted abstracts, as did I,” he recalls, “and lo and behold, we all went to the conference” (pers. comm., January 22, 2020).

Burrows, who was initially unconvinced that the conference would generate any interest at all, remembers being genuinely surprised and delighted by the presence of about seventy attendees, who had traveled to Portsmouth from other parts of the UK as well as Europe, Canada, and the US. Galvanized by the turnout, Burrows and Symonds decided that Song, Stage and Screen should become an annual event. Their decision was reinforced when professor of theater directing George Rodosthenous volunteered the University of Leeds as a conference site for the following year. Graziano offered to host a third meeting in 2008 at the CUNY Graduate Center. Symonds remembers that in moving the conference from place to place, he and Burrows hoped to encourage the growth of an international community of scholars who might develop “a sense of ownership” of the conference and journal and, by extension, the discipline (D. Symonds, pers. comm., March 6, 2020).

Held annually from 2006 until the pandemic forced cancellation of the fifteenth meeting in Cleveland, Ohio, in summer 2020, Song, Stage and Screen (SS&S) alternated between US and UK conference sites, with occasional meetings taking place in continental Europe, Canada, or, as in the case of the 2021 conference, online.²⁶ Launched in 2007, *Studies in Musical Theatre* has proved Intellect’s initial misgivings wrong by consistently appearing in the company’s top-five list of journals with the largest number of subscribers (D. Symonds, pers. comm., March 6, 2020).

While somewhat less international in scope and design, *The American Musical on Stage and Screen: An Interdisciplinary Extravaganza*, held at UCLA in October 2007, also brought musical theater scholars from various disciplines together and facilitated working relationships among them. Devised by Raymond Knapp, Stacy Wolf, and Mitchell Morris, this conference served as a jumping-off point for an edited “keywords” volume, which Wolf had suggested to Knapp. Frustrated by the lack of interdisciplinary writings on musical theater that she could assign to her undergraduate classes, Wolf approached Knapp in 2006 with the idea of collaborating on an essay collection. Intrigued, Knapp invited his UCLA colleague, musicologist Mitchell Morris, to join them. The three decided to hold the *Interdisciplinary Extravaganza* as a means of gauging interest in and vetting contributors for the subsequent edited book.

Their conference emphasized academic mentorship and collaboration, which remain strong undercurrents in the discipline. Wolf, Knapp, and Morris took pains to “aggressively recruit and mentor younger scholars,” who would not only take part in the conference but also contribute to the resulting essay collection (R. Knapp and S. Wolf, pers. comm., June 4, 2020). The conference featured no shortage of established scholars; Richard Dyer, D. A. Miller, David Savran, and the musicologist Rose Rosengard Subotnik were all in attendance. But also included were approximately forty other scholars at various stages in their careers. The conferees represented a wide range of disciplines including musicology, ethnomusicology, film studies, dramaturgy, theater, performance studies, communication studies, English, literary criticism, Jewish studies, gender studies, and dance. All invitees took part in one of eight plenary or roundtable discussions, which considered the musical, whether onstage or onscreen, from different angles and through diverse lenses, including race and ethnicity, performance practice, middlebrow culture, stage personae, vocal types, gender and sexuality, and history and historiography.

Norm Hirschy, then a new editor at Oxford University Press, also attended. His presence at the event impressed the organizers and felt to them like “an auspicious opportunity.” Though Knapp, Morris, and Wolf had yet to make public their idea for the collection, they decided to approach Hirschy about the possibility of developing a book for the press (R. Knapp, pers. comm., December 7, 2020). This resulted in the publication of *The Oxford Handbook of the American Musical* (R. Knapp, Morris, and S. Wolf 2011), which helped establish Oxford as an important publisher of musical theater scholarship and Hirschy as a strong champion of the field.

The Oxford Handbook turned out to be one of several books about the musical aimed at the college or graduate classroom that were published in the 2010s. Where *The Oxford Handbook* emphasizes the interdisciplinary scope of musical theater studies and organizes essays around various ways of studying the genre, Larry Stempel’s

(2010) *Showtime: A History of the Broadway Musical Theater* takes a detailed sociohistoric approach to its subject matter. James Leve's (2015) *American Musical Theater* uses case studies to demonstrate changing artistic and stylistic trends. The edited volume *Gestures of Music Theatre* (Symonds and Taylor 2013), inspired by discussions among members of the Music Theatre Working Group of the International Federation for Theatre Research (IFTR), considers the performativity of music and dance in genres including musicals, operas, and straight plays. Symonds and Taylor's subsequent text, *Studying Musical Theatre: Theory and Practice* (2014), discusses musicals and operas from various theoretical and analytical frameworks and demonstrates the many ways theater with music can resonate with spectators.

This surge of classroom-ready publications occurred during a time of unprecedented technological advancement. The so-called dot-com boom, which took root in the mid-1990s and resulted in the rapid development of the internet, exerted unparalleled international influence and rapidly reshaped twenty-first-century life. (For a history of the dot-com boom, see O'Mara [2019].) By the 2010s, these technological advances had transformed most aspects of the academy, from publishing to librarianship and beyond. What with the proliferation of new websites, along with the rise of chat groups, social media sites, digital teaching aids, and streaming services, more people had more access to more "stuff" than ever before. In musical theater studies, such stuff included databases, digital collections, repositories of recorded and written scores, photographs, video clips, and even complete audiovisual recordings of staged musicals. As computer literacy and access grew, this stuff became increasingly available to readers: publishing companies began offering digital books alongside print versions, while tech-savvy authors were newly able to design companion websites for their books.²⁷ The companion sites could incorporate material not previously accessible in print: digitized images and excerpts from songs, scenes, and scores that readers could view or listen to as they read.

In both the US and the UK, the introduction of computers into many classrooms allowed musical theater educators to bring segments of shows or even entire musicals to students enrolled in their courses. The commercial theater industry was initially resistant to the tech boom, as it had been with most previous technological advances that, it felt, threatened to dissuade spectators from paying to attend live performances. Gradually, though, the industry warmed to the internet as a means for selling tickets, advertising and marketing productions, educating consumers, building fan bases, and reaching audiences.²⁸ The subsequent rise of websites related, even tangentially, to the planning, production, consumption, reception, criticism, historiography, or preservation of musicals onstage, onscreen, on television, or on the internet also became sites for scholarly investigation.

The growth of the internet also led to the rise of digital humanities, the existence of which further transformed libraries and archives, research, and pedagogy. Doug Reside joined the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts as its first digital curator in 2011 and became curator of its Billy Rose Theater Collection in 2014. He argues that because musical theater studies and digital humanities experienced significant growth at roughly the same time, the latter helped to promote the former. The mid-1990s, Reside recalls, was when most university faculty and students first began to use web browsers to access the internet, setting off increased demand for tools that could be applied to new online platforms (pers. comm., June 16, 2020). When he joined the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, Reside not only "initiated, created, and oversaw a number of digital archive and access projects" but also "helped advance the work of the [library's digital] repository and related services, such as the metadata management system and importing data from other bibliographic tools" (Rosky 2014, para. 4).

One of the first digital archive projects that Reside worked on professionally coincided with the explosion of online musical theater texts in the first decade of the twenty-first century. With archivists at the Library of Congress, Reside helped transfer composer and playwright Jonathan Larson's personal collection from floppy disks to more readily used digital formats. While working at the University of Maryland's Maryland Institute for Technology in the Humanities in 2009, Reside secured a National Endowment for the Humanities start-up grant to develop Music Theatre Online (2009), an early online archive for musical theater preservation.²⁹

Because few scholars had worked with digital material before that time, Reside's projects generated enormous interest among archivists and librarians. When Reside joined the New York Public Library for the Performing Arts two years later, his first task was creating digital editions of musicals in the public domain, many of which he then made publicly available on the library's *Musical of the Month* blog. Reside also set about acquiring personal collections from contemporary musical theater makers and digitizing their photos, which bolstered both the research library's significant holdings and ease of access to them. His acquisitions included the collections of librettist Michael Korie, composer Michael John LaChiusa, composer and lyricist Michael Friedman, and playwright, composer, and director Elizabeth Swados. Finally, Reside worked to build a following on various then-new email discussion lists, chat rooms, and social media sites; his frequent posts there helped connect the library's archival collections to musical theater fans and scholars around the world.

Technology has continued to increase access to research materials and has also created new opportunities for analysis. At the time of this writing, a number of digital humanities projects in musical theater are ongoing. These include musicologist Todd Decker's interactive map of racial casting practices in every musical to run in midtown Manhattan from 1894 to the present (T. Decker, pers. comm., December 16, 2020);³⁰ musicologist Arianne Johnson Quinn's efforts to digitize the archival materials of the Noël Coward Archive Trust (2021) and develop a searchable catalog of its contents (A. Johnson Quinn, pers. comm., December 15, 2020); work by music director Sean Mayes and theater scholar Sarah Whitfield to create a dataset that documents Black British performers and the musicals they have appeared in across the UK (S. Whitfield, pers. comm., December 14, 2020);³¹ and Derek Miller's *Visualizing Broadway* (2020) website project, which takes a quantitative and historical approach to documenting and analyzing the commercial theater industry. Miller is using this data to inform a book he is writing on Broadway as a site of cultural production (D. Miller, pers. comm., December 15, 2020).

Digital humanities projects such as these help scholars expand and move beyond the field's traditional focus on critically or commercially successful productions from Broadway or the West End, hit Hollywood films, the occasional television musical, or the many famous producers, directors, and choreographers (mostly White and male) who created them and the biggest stars who appeared in them. By making understudied, underused, or inaccessible archival materials available at the click of a mouse, digital archive projects can help challenge the canon that has long been central to musical theater studies.

David Savran acknowledges that the scholarly focus on canonized musicals, which helped to legitimize the field in its early years, can today feel more like a straitjacket than a beacon (pers. comm., June 4, 2020). Of course, plenty of scholars continue to research and write about well-known musicals and people closely associated with Broadway or the West End. Archival holdings in these areas have long been far more accessible than materials from beyond the canon, but the availability of source materials for canonical works has grown so significantly in such a short period of time that even well-known topics have yet to be fully explored. And since Broadway and the West End remain important nodes in what has now grown into a global entertainment industry, a focus on the canon continues to shape the field in many ways.

Nevertheless, many scholars have begun to push against practices that have become established, even in a field so young, and in so doing, to question the canon's hold on scholars and unpack its relationship to late capitalism and structural racism. The discipline has thus begun to grow beyond its established purviews. As musical theater studies expands, so do ways of analyzing how musicals function in and engage with broader social, political, economic, and historical currents. Recent studies interrogate canonized works while shedding new light on productions, places, and people who have been relatively ignored. In the process, scholars have stepped up efforts to challenge, complicate, and explain the musical's relationship not only to the canon but also to White supremacy and capitalist hierarchies. Some recent works, then, focus entirely on mediatized musicals (Stilwell 2011; Kessler 2020), or on live ones produced in places beyond either the American or British commercial nexus (Lee 2012; Kim 2016; Boffone 2019; Galella 2019; Postigo 2019; Ealey 2020; Jung 2020; S. Wolf

2020; Johnson 2021). Others analyze the ways musicals relate to various aspects of human identity (Hecht 2011; Cantu 2015; Herrera 2015; Eng 2018; Galella 2018b; Forsgren 2019; Johnson 2019b). Some scholars have written books focused entirely on the history and cultural influence of a single composer or musical (Magee 2012; McHugh 2012; Lovensheimer 2013; Solomon 2013; Oja 2014; Foulkes 2016; Lindberg 2020; Peck 2020; Graber 2021). Others have applied an ever-growing number of methods and disciplinary or analytical lenses to musicals, ranging from music theory (Lambert 2011), psychoanalysis (Grinenko 2016), cartography (Symonds 2017), ethnography (Cohen and Johnson 2020), and autoethnography (Cayari 2019) to quantitative digital analysis (D. Miller 2016). Still others have crossed into related interdisciplinary fields, such as disability studies (Fox 2015; R. Knapp 2015; Sternfeld 2015; Yates 2019a, 2019b; Donovan, forthcoming) and voice studies (Johnson 2019a; Macpherson 2020a, 2020b; Meizel 2020; Asare 2021).

Jake Johnson and Masi Asare, both scholars and practitioners with expertise in the voice, point out that from the practitioner side, voice studies and musical theater studies have long overlapped. Asare adds, however, that musical theater studies seems to her “reluctant to engage literature by practitioners in general,” or to collaborate with them on research projects, including practitioners from voice studies and other interdisciplinary fields like pedagogy. However, Johnson points out that the overlap between musical theater and voice studies, which are both young and enormously interdisciplinary fields, is growing quickly. Asare adds that research and teaching about vocal techniques in musical theater is currently more advanced in the UK than it is in the US (M. Asare and J. Johnson, pers. comm., May 5, 2021).

Various lenses have also been applied to musical theater’s spectators (Simonoff and Ma 2003; Sáez 2016; Sedgman 2018; Robbins 2019), even as the industry’s secrecy about audience demographics, tastes, and spending habits remains a serious and often frustrating hindrance for the field. A growing number of scholars, too, examine unseen aspects of the industry and its production processes in an attempt to illuminate the ways commerce and labor contribute to canon formation, commercial success or failure, and international reception (Craft 2011; White 2014; D. Miller 2016; Westover 2016; S. Browne 2017; MacDonald and Everett 2017; Rua 2017; Wollman 2020; Essin 2021).

A vitally important contribution to musical theater studies that arose in the 2010s comes from dance studies, a division of the Western academy that has long treated musical theater as unworthy of scholarly attention. In their introduction to a special issue devoted to musical theater dance for *Studies in Musical Theatre*, Joanna Dee Das and Ryan Donovan (2019) point out that even though the musical is frequently defined as a performing arts genre that blends music, dialogue, and dance, the long-standing emphasis in the academy on textual analysis has resulted in major neglect of dance and movement. They argue that the slow shift from strictly text-based analysis to performance analysis—especially in arts-related fields like music and theater studies—has led to new attempts to understand the importance of bodies in motion (Das and Donovan 2019, 4). Since the 2010s, scholars such as Liza Gennaro (2011, 2021), Donovan (2012), Mary Jo Lodge (2014), Kara Gardner (2016), Dustyn Martincich (2018), Das (2019), Phoebe Rumsey (2019a, 2019b), and Ariel Nereson (forthcoming) have begun to fill this sizable gap by examining the ways dance and movement can function and signify in musicals.

Finally, the extraordinary commercial and critical success of the 2015 musical *Hamilton* has resulted in new attention to the ways contemporary musicals relate to popular culture and the scholarly field that studies them. Interest in that show’s creators, stars, history, politics, semiotics, symbolism, reception, place in the canon, role as an outlier, and influence on subsequent productions has resulted in a veritable avalanche of books, articles, and book chapters (Craft 2018; Galella 2018a; Harbert 2018; Herrera 2018; S. Wolf 2018; Rumsey 2019a; Laird and Lodge 2021). *Hamilton*’s monumental impact has resulted in something of a sub-field for musical theater studies, providing greater public and scholarly exposure to our discipline.

THE CURRENT STATE OF THE FIELD

Musical theater studies is no longer a “burgeoning” field in the US or the UK: it is a thriving, interdisciplinary one that is developing so rapidly and in so many directions that, while researching and writing this article, I confess to having spent an inordinate amount of time fretting over the many scholars, publications, and directions I have had to leave out. Despite the absence of live musical theater during the COVID-19 pandemic, musical theater studies continues to flourish. Course offerings on various aspects of the genre, at both undergraduate and graduate levels, are offered at colleges and universities across the US and the UK. Many major scholarly societies in music, theater, and performance studies have large, active musical theater interest groups. International conferences in various disciplines commonly offer at least a few papers, panels, or roundtables, not to mention special interest groups, on the subject. Articles about musicals appear regularly in journals devoted to music, theater, performance studies, voice studies, gender studies, cultural studies, literature, Jewish studies, Asian studies, Black and Latinx studies, American studies, and other fields. Graduate students and junior faculty members who show an interest in musicals are no longer strenuously dissuaded by mentors or departments. And focusing as it does on the growth of musical theater studies in only two countries, this article does not scratch the surface of how the field has developed beyond the US and the UK. As the transnational musical theater historian Laura MacDonald notes, many of the international scholars she has met—from countries as diverse as Poland, Japan, Korea, France, Germany, and China—“have been researching and teaching their national musical theater industries and [those of the US and UK] since the early 2000s at least, and they don’t consider musical theater [studies] new in their countries.” She adds that while it may seem, to British and American scholars, that “the megamusical was the thing that unlocked musicals and scholarship everywhere else,” every country has its own unique “trajectory for research development” (MacDonald, pers. comm., July 2, 2020 and August 30, 2021), as well as scholarship on different kinds of musicals the world over, in as many different languages.

At least as it continues to exist in the US and UK, musical theater studies remains a small enough field to have fostered a strong sense of community among its scholars. Results from a questionnaire circulated during the research stage of this article indicate that scholars in both countries find the field’s warmth and emphasis on mentorship to be particular assets. While the field is occasionally criticized as insular or cliquey, most scholars describe it as welcoming and supportive. This is likely due as much to its small size as to the fact that scholars eager to focus on musicals feel somewhat isolated in their home institutions and experience a sense of relief when they have the opportunity to connect with fellow travelers. Collaboration and mentorship pervade the discipline, even in the absence of live theater. Through the second half of 2020 and the first half of 2021, for example, Laura MacDonald, Trevor Boffone, and Bryan Vandevender, recently joined by Jordan Ealey, developed and moderated “Telephone Hour,” a weekly Zoom videoconference session devised under the rubric of the Music Theatre/Dance focus group of the Association for Theatre in Higher Education (ATHE). “Telephone Hour” gave homebound scholars in a number of countries and time zones the chance to gather, share their work in an informal setting, and connect with one another absent the kind of networking that happens at in-person conferences.

While many musical theater scholars express hope that the field will remain small and supportive, many also seek change as well. For example, a significant number of its adherents hope the field will develop greater scholarly rigor and focus more attention on forms of musical theater beyond the West End and Broadway. There remains a real need for more scholarship on musical theater dance, on musicals beyond urban centers, on musicals that have run in such centers but have not been canonized, on lesser-known creators who have been excluded from the canon, on the mechanics of production and how they influence aesthetics and reception, and on the relationship of musical theater not only to gender, race, place, and ethnicity but also to class. Accurate information on audiences at professional productions in the US and UK remains seriously hindered by industry

resistance; theater marketers, too, jealously guard the increasingly sophisticated data they collect on spectators, so obtaining such data for research purposes remains virtually impossible. And the field, like others across the humanities, would benefit enormously from more ethnic, racial, regional, and class diversity, in terms of both subject matter and scholars working in it; translations of books and articles by international scholars, which remain limited, would aid in building the field across borders.

While a collective interest in interrogating and moving beyond the Western canon will surely extend the field's coverage of its subject matter, it remains challenging at present to access materials from lesser-known productions. It is very easy, for example, to find recordings—multiple ones, at that—of just about any Sondheim, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lloyd Webber, Larson, or Miranda musical on most available streaming sites. It remains harder, at least in the US and UK, to access recordings—or, in some cases, any materials at all—from comparatively obscure shows, flops, regional productions, and those produced beyond commercial centers. Because many digital archives were built from materials that were readily available, many continue to perpetuate the narrow focus on canonized productions. Rarer musicals and their makers may attract less online traffic, but access to them will help grow the field.

CONCLUSIONS

Musical theater studies continues to embody complicated contradictions. Because the musical lends itself so well to so many different scholarly approaches, methodologies, and lenses, assessing the boundaries of the field, defining who does or does not count as a musical theater scholar, and determining how (or even if) the field could be more clearly delineated can be difficult.³² The field's oft-celebrated camaraderie and cohesiveness has arguably resulted in its continued ghettoization from, on the one hand, other interdisciplinary fields devoted to mass and popular culture (all of which struggle with their own cohesiveness and self-definitions; see Wright, Coddington, and Mall 2021) and, on the other hand, older, more established, "serious" fields. Marginalization from both directions remains a challenge, especially for scholars who are eager to establish themselves and be taken seriously beyond their home discipline.

Some of these contradictions stem from the structure of higher education in the US and the UK. Despite the significant growth in books, articles, chapters, courses, conferences, symposia, and colloquia about musical theater, in the US there exist no MA or PhD programs in musical theater studies. Nor are there any departments specifically for musical theater studies, though many BFA programs in musical theater exist. Further, the divide between scholarship and practice in the US results in many musical theater faculty who never teach performance-based courses and others who spend all of their time doing so and none teaching musical theater history, criticism, dramaturgy, or theory.

While the UK has long combined study with praxis, it seems to be shifting back toward conservatory-style courses in which "traditional 'desk' study is being replaced by more practical classes to meet market demands"; as a result, students have less time to engage with history and theory (Dom O'Hanlon, pers. comm., December 10, 2020). Such differences in pedagogical approach can put scholars at odds with practitioners. Finally, while musical theater working groups currently exist in many larger scholarly societies—including ASTR, ATHE, IFTR and SAM (if still not the AMS)—they do not always overlap or interact, which reduces the cohesion of musical theater studies and also makes it difficult for researchers to get a clear sense of the amount and nature of scholarly work being done in the field. Like musical theater itself (and like many other academic disciplines), musical theater studies is at a crossroads: in this period, in which both the US and the UK grapple with a global health crisis and their own histories of systemic racism, scholars have been mulling their fields' glaring oversights and omissions, and committing to the eradication of—or, at least, the long process of dismantling—numerous generations-old cultural assumptions, prejudices, and hierarchies.

Ridding any field of ingrained elitism and bias is not easy. For all its development in recent decades, musical theater studies remains stubbornly defensive. This is surely born in part of condescension about the genre itself, both within and beyond the academy (Savran 2004). After all, what other genre of popular entertainment so regularly evokes loudly blurted condemnations like “Musicals!? I *hate* musicals!” from fellow academics, members of the general public, or even some of its creators?³³ Savran warns that such deeply rooted condescension will inevitably find ways “of reconfiguring and reasserting itself” in the academy (2004, 216).

Popular culture is “first and foremost a product of the marketplace in which the aesthetic is always—and unpredictably—overdetermined by economic relations and interest” (Savran 2004, 213). Musicals are no more or less worthy of scholarly attention—or more or less important as mirrors of and agents in their place, time, or culture—than any other form of popular entertainment. Aggressively middlebrow and the butt of particularly aggressive condescension, musicals are nevertheless not inherently better or worse than other popular culture forms, nor are they more or less contradictory, compelling, complex, or dangerous to the populace. They are certainly not unique in relying, as often as they do, on the kinds of conventional messages, familiar tropes, and traditional cultural ideals that make popular culture so appealing. Their very predictability (or at least, their *seeming* predictability) arguably helps contribute to the pleasure people find in them. Even those who most loudly profess a hatred of all musicals will inevitably confess their love for at least one they grew up listening to, delighted in seeing with their family, or performed in or worked on behind the scenes as a teen. The mass appeal of musicals helps explain why they can so regularly delight and frustrate—even at the same time.

Given the power that Savran and Wolf give to pleasure in their essays about embracing musicals as a topic for scholarly inquiry, perhaps I too should circle back to its importance in the face of such challenges. Not long ago, a main criticism of musical theater studies was that “accolades and fandom” too often stood in for the kinds of real “analysis, historicization and theorizing” expected in the academy (S. Wolf 2007, 55). Musical theater studies can still fall prey to hagiography, for sure; all scholarship on the arts can. Then again, working to deny or negate the enormous pleasure that people—including those of us in the field—derive from musicals seems like a sad and ultimately inadequate redress for such tendencies. As scholars of this hugely pleasurable, enormously frustrating popular entertainment form, our job is not to force the genre to fit our own world views or to reshape it, through selection or emphasis, to align more fully with our desires, priorities, or ideals. To do so is again to resort to snobbish partisanship, resulting in the same kinds of “violent” scholarly hierarchies that occur when scholars insist on neatly separating what “we admire from that which we scorn” (Savran 2004, 216–217).

Because musicals allow for a multitude of pleasures, an embrace of pleasure need not serve solely “as a way in” to the topic (S. Wolf 2007, 55). Pleasure surely helped pioneering scholars of past generations build this thriving field, even in the face of frequent disdain and dissuasion born of countless real and imagined obstacles, hierarchies, and assumptions. Newly triumphant over some of these obstacles and keenly aware of others we have yet to conquer, musical theater scholars might hold fast to pleasure as we shed our own defensiveness about the myriad imperfections of a genre we nevertheless care enough about to document. Wolf points out, after all, that “pleasure motivates” (55). Pleasure, then, will surely help us dig ever deeper into musical theater’s complex multivocality (Monteiro 2017), its middlebrowness, its perennial low position in the pop-culture hierarchy, its adoring spectators on the one hand and the people it needs to work harder to include on the other. In keeping with our subject, we would do well to retain pleasure as we confront the unknown, much the way Dorothy and her friends did while following the Yellow Brick Road (see Birkett and McHugh 2018). Now that we are all here together in this strange, scary, thrilling new world, where next shall we go?

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I spoke with many people, a few of them multiple times, while researching and writing this article. I am very grateful for the candid input and patience of Masi Asare, Stephen Banfield, George Burrows, Amy Coddington, Joanna Dee Das, Todd Decker, Ryan Donovan, Liza Gennaro, John Graziano, Norm Hirschy, Mark Eden Horowitz, Jake Johnson, Arianne Johnson Quinn, Kelly Kessler, Ray Knapp, Kim Kowalke, Laura MacDonald, Jeff Magee, Derek Miller, Andrea Most, Dom O'Hanlon, Doug Reside, Julian Rushton, David Savran, Jessica Sternfeld, Dominic Symonds, Millie Taylor, Sarah Whitfield, Stacy Wolf, and Tamsen Wolff. Thanks go as well to the many scholars who took the time to answer my questionnaire about the field and their experiences in it, whether openly or anonymously. I would like to express enormous appreciation to Stacy Wolf for inviting me to write this article and for encouraging me and offering guidance throughout the process. Thanks as well go to two peer readers for their comments and to Jocelyne Guilbault and Harris Berger for their helpful suggestions, for their sharp and insightful editing, and for allowing me the time and space to develop and grow this article. Finally, the biggest thank-you of all goes to members of my scholarly community, which I am forever grateful to have found. I hope I have done justice to them. All mistakes and elisions are mine.

NOTES

1. The theater cultures in both countries are large and dispersed, but their industries are concentrated in specific geographical areas. In the US, the industry is centered in the Times Square neighborhood of midtown Manhattan, which is bisected by Broadway (hence "Broadway" theaters); in the UK, the industry is concentrated in London's West End.

2. Live productions are still not accessible or affordable for many academics, especially those who live at a distance from places where musicals are made, are unable to attain travel or research funding, cannot travel far from their families or dependents for extensive periods, or work as contingent faculty with limited or no benefits or research support.

3. Support from within the academy matters too. For example, the comparatively rapid acceptance of popular music studies in the American and British academies can be partially explained by the fact that scholars at the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham found pop and rock music to be relevant to their interests in the larger topics of culture and power.

4. Authors whose research and writing on the musical continues to inform contemporary musical theater scholars include Engel (1975), Ewen (1975), Green (1975), Laufe (1977), Gottfried (1979), Smith and Litton (1981), Mates (1985), Morley (1987), Mordden (1988), Seeley and Bunnett (1989), Mast (1990), Gänzl (1997), Lamb (2001), S. Miller (2007), and Bordman (2010).

5. Taylor also emphasized to me that the program at Birmingham, which began in 1978 and was very much ahead of its time, closed in 1988 due to a lack of enrollment.

6. Knapp adds that the Frankfurt School's philosophies reinforced the centrality of the European art tradition so central to the field of musicology (pers. comm., April 25, 2020).

7. The V&A collection may be found here: <https://www.vam.ac.uk/collections/theatre-performance>. In the 1980s and 1990s, popular music studies grew more quickly than musical theater studies; one reason for this might have been easier access to sources. During this period, scholars had relatively straightforward access to audio recordings of pop music, while videos of musicals and other musical theater materials were much more difficult to acquire.

8. The RSC archives may be found here: <https://www.rsc.org.uk/about-us/collections-and-archives>. The National Theatre Archive may be found here: <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/about-the-national-theatre/archive>.

9. Campbell adds that much of the library's collection of early American sheet music went uncataloged and was not preserved on microfilm until the late 1970s.

10. The Rodgers and Hammerstein Archives was made possible through a \$150,000 grant from the Rodgers and Hammerstein Foundation following discussions with Richard Rodgers, who recognized the importance of preserving popular music for future generations of scholars and for the general public.

11. For a more detailed history of the archive, including information about the complexities involved in clearing rights and permissions for the recording of live productions for preservation, see Criscitiello (2020).

12. Following Robbins's death in 1998, the entire dance division was renamed for him.

13. Conferences on popular entertainment began to take place in England at roughly the same time; see, for example, the proceedings published by Bradby, James, and Sharratt (1980).

14. Concerns about how “crass commercialism” was destroying Broadway’s noble art tradition have been aired more or less since commercial theater began in the US. For earlier commentary, see Bernheim (1932). For a broader overview of the rivalry between the British and American theater industries, see Dickson (2015).

15. Crawford, who initially focused on early American sacred music before shifting to twentieth-century jazz and American popular music, was the first Americanist to serve as president of the AMS (1982–1984) and was a founding member of the Sonneck Society (now SAM).

16. Susan Porter’s (1991) *With an Air Debonair* won the Lowens Award in 1991, but this book does not touch on musical theater as it currently exists. It focuses instead on popular musical entertainments from the Federalist Era, including “‘Ballad opera and pastiche,’ ‘The one-composer comic opera,’ ‘The musical romance,’ ‘Pantomime and ballet’ [and] ‘Melodrama’” (Root 1994).

17. The George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism, for example, was given to Raymond Knapp in 2004–2005 and to Scott McMillin in 2006–2007 for their books on musicals.

18. The UK passed legislation regarding “fair dealing” as part of the Copyright, Designs, and Patents Act of 1988, but the rules are less clear-cut in the US. Dom O’Hanlon, senior commissioning editor for plays and musical theater studies for the Methuen Drama imprint of Bloomsbury Academic, explained that in the UK, “it remains incredibly difficult to secure formal permissions for lyric/text use in academic books[,] and this is one of the most common problems we have.... [P]ublishers err on the side of caution, but it is deeply frustrating for authors and editors” (pers. comm., December 10, 2020).

19. In the years following the ACMS’s statement on fair use, other scholarly societies have issued their own. See, for example, the list of fair use best practices issued by the AMS in 2010 (AMS Council Ad Hoc Committee 2010).

20. Encores! and Musicals in Mufti remain active at the time of this writing. Musicals Tonight! ceased operations in 2018.

21. Thanks also to Stephen Banfield for his own recollections about this episode, which mirror Rushton’s.

22. As an ethnomusicologist and Sternfeld’s contemporary, I experienced less institutional resistance at the comparatively interdisciplinary CUNY Graduate Center. I certainly encountered similar kinds of condescension, however, from peers and faculty members in ethnomusicology. Despite significant changes that had begun to occur in that discipline at the time, there remained a tendency to prioritize research on the music of Others, broadly defined, while dismissing work on American middlebrow culture as frivolous and unimportant.

23. Of course, the field remains highly responsive to the many excellent studies written or edited by musicologists. Yale University Press’s Broadway Masters Series launched in 2003 and resulted in several book-length studies of well-known Broadway composers by leading musicologists. Other books and articles by musicologists to appear at this time include those by Everett and Laird (2002), Swayne (2005), Carter (2007), McClung (2007), and Leve (2009).

24. Queer Theatre: A Conference with Performances was held in New York City in April 1995. Co-organized by the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (CLAGS) and the theatre program at the CUNY Graduate Center, the conference drew scholars and practitioners from across the country and had additional sponsorship from Judson Memorial Church, La MaMa, the New York Theatre Workshop, and the New York Public Theater. Three years later, Miller would publish *Place for Us: Essay on the Broadway Musical* (1998), his deeply personal treatise on the cultural connections between Broadway musicals and gay men.

25. Performance studies is interdisciplinary by design. It uses performance, broadly defined, as a lens for inquiry into any aspect of human culture. The field is much newer than theater studies. The first US program in performance studies was established at NYU in 1980, and the field has since developed internationally.

26. SS&S VII was held in July 2012 at the University of Groningen, the Netherlands. SS&S IX convened at Sheridan College, Ontario, in 2014. SS&S XV, originally to be held in Salzburg, Austria, was held online in summer 2021.

27. Knapp (2005) wrote one of the first books in the field to include an accompanying website, which he designed with approval from Princeton University Press. He explains that the many websites he has designed for educational purposes “have never been password-protected, partly because they were funded by UCLA Instructional Learning sources, who stipulated that.” He notes that UCLA (especially its Music Department) was quick to adopt the use of websites for pedagogical purposes and to ground such sites in “fair use, as an extension of the classroom.” He also stated that other presses that picked up this practice, including Oxford University Press, have been more cautious and prefer to password-protect the sites that authors design to accompany their books (R. Knapp, pers. comm., April 28, 2021).

28. While it would be impossible to list the many musical theater–related websites that now exist, some of the larger ones to appear since the early twenty-first century include Broadway.com, Broadway World, Internet Broadway Database (IBDB), New UK Musicals, Playbill.com, The Stage, and WhatsOnStage.

29. The site features texts, images, clips, and other material related to the early musicals *The Black Crook*, *Sally*, and *Dorothy*. Materials related to the 2008 Nick Blaemire and James Gardiner musical *Glory Days* are also available on the site.

30. For the link to Decker’s project, see Washington University in St. Louis (2020); both username and password are “nala” (shared with permission).

31. According to Whitfield, the dataset grew so quickly that she and Mayes decided to propose a book to complement it. The book, *An Inconvenient Black History of British Musical Theatre, 1900–1950*, was published in August 2021 by Bloomsbury under its Methuen Drama imprint.

32. My thanks to Brian Herrera for making this point via questionnaire.

33. Rock musicians, especially, who cross into musical theater circles—among them Stew (*Passing Strange*), Paul Simon, and Bono and the Edge (*Spider-Man: Turn Off the Dark*)—seem compelled to insist on their distaste for the form and draw clear distinctions between their work in musical theater and the rest of the genre. For Paul Simon, see Considine (1997); for Bono and the Edge, see Leith (2009). Stew mentions his hatred of musicals repeatedly; he stated it several times during the Sidney Harman Writer-in-Residence lecture he delivered at Baruch last spring; the event was titled Art Speaks Justice: “Art Now—Luxury or Necessity” and was held over Zoom on April 8, 2021, though a recording does not seem to be available.

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