INTRO TO MUSICAL THEATRE

An overview of the genre
The purpose of this overview

- What is musical theatre?
- What makes it different from other types of theatre?
- What are some things I need to know to be able to talk about musical theater intelligently?
What, exactly, is musical theatre?

- Musical theatre is a theatre genre that contains music, spoken dialogue, and dance.
- Musicals often use popular styles of music, as opposed to art music meant for the concert hall.
- The story of a musical is told through all aspects of the performance.
What makes musical theatre different from other forms of theatre?

- Differences from opera
  - Focus on spoken dialogue
  - Dance is much more important
  - Generally amplifies the singer
  - Uses popular styles
  - Almost always in the same language as the audience

- Differences from “straight” plays that have music
  - Music drives the plot and characters
  - Songs are usually outside the normal action
Types of musicals

- **Book Musical**
  - Traditional musical with a strong story that drives the music and characters

- **Revue**
  - A collection of songs, generally with some common element. May or may not have a plot

- **Concept Musical**
  - A musical where the message or metaphor is just as, if not more important, than the actual story

- **Jukebox musical**
  - Musical using only songs from an artist or group

- **Rock (or Pop) Musical**
  - Musical that uses rock music (or pop music) as the main style of music. If there is little spoken dialogue, it could be called a rock opera or pop opera
What do I need to know to talk about musicals intelligently

- Every musical has three components: music, lyrics, and book
- The *book* is the story of the show- generally refers to the spoken dialogue
- The book and the lyrics combined are sometimes called the *libretto*
- The lyrics and the music combined are called the *score*
What do I need to know to talk about musicals intelligently

- Every musical production generally has five “major” positions
  - Director
  - Musical Director
  - Choreographer
  - Producer
  - Stage Manager
What do I need to know to talk about musicals intelligently

- **Other terms to know:**
  - Lead role
  - Featured role
  - Ensemble
  - Swing
  - Pit
  - Understudy
  - Standby
Basic Structure of most musicals

- Overture- Orchestral introduction previewing from the show
- Act I
- Intermission (10-20 minutes)
- Act II
- Curtain Call
- Exit music
List of eras

- Origins of Musical Theatre
- The Follies Years
- The Roaring Twenties
- Pre WWII
- The 1940’s and 1950’s
- The 1960’s
- The 1970’s
- Contemporary Theatre