A Brief History of Musical Theater

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Musical Theater uses music, acting, and dance to TELL A STORY.

Stories and characters are specific to each musical, but their deeper messages and themes highlight THE HUMAN EXPERIENCE.
Studying MUSICAL STYLE over time allows us to understand:

1. **HOW** these stories are told

2. **WHY** music in musical theater can portray the human experience in a way no other media can
Origins

1850
-European Front: Operetta (Gilbert and Sullivan)
-American Front: Vaudeville

1927
-Showboat
-Oscar Hammerstein II and Jerome Kern
Golden Age

1940’s-1960’s
-Rodgers and Hammerstein
“If I Loved You”
Carousel (1945)
Oscar Hammerstein II and Richard Rogers
Stephen Sondheim

- Composing 1954-Present
- Transition and blending of vocal styles
- Storytelling becomes central to songs
“Moments in the Woods”

Into the Woods

Stephen Sondheim
Rock Musicals and More

1970’s
-Andrew Lloyd Webber, Stephen Schwartz

1990’s
-Jason Robert Brown, Alan Menken (Disney)
Broadway Today and Beyond

- All musical styles
- Revivals, adaptations, jukebox musicals
- Benj Pasek & Justin Paul, Lin Manuel Miranda
“Rather Be Me”

Mean Girls

Jeff Richmond and Nell Benjamin
“The purpose of theatre is to put the audience in a better position to understand the world around them.”

-Mark Fortier
Citations (Dates and Eras)


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Images

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