

Thesis Abstract

Musical theatre is viewed by culture at large as having an intrinsic connection to homosexuality. The goal of this paper is twofold. First, to understand why a disconnect exists between this connection of musical theatre and queerness and tangible representation of queer stories and queer experiences on stage. The lack of representation is notable in that so much of the currently existing post-2000 representation exists to fill a specific comic trope. The argument for why this has happened is first laid out by contextualizing the history of the American musical within LGBT history in the United States. Subsequently, comedies and then dramas featuring queer and queer coded characters written after the year 2000 are analyzed to understand the impact of the revival of musical comedy in 2001 had on the artform at large. The second goal of the paper is to ask what effective representation currently looks like, and what a more diverse and nuanced representation of queer stories and characters could look like in the future. It looks at a handful of award winning musicals that have not seen the same level of commercial success as many of their counterparts, and analyzes why those shows are critically successful, why they lack the comparative commercial success of non-queer counterparts, and what courses of action can be taken to make queer musical theatre more accessible to different audiences than the ones the currently reach.