

## **Chapter 1: Introduction.**

The following chapter will analyze a brief introduction of the evolution of American musical theatre through the decades starting from the 1880s and ending in the 2000s. The thesis aims to study American musicals through a sociological perspective; consequently a brief introduction to the sociology of music is described then the history of American musicals and the thesis aim is also defined.

### **1.1 American Musical and Sociology.**

This paper is set to be a study of the Musical, not just as an art vessel but also, as a mirror of society from political and sociological perspectives throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, up until today.

After watching the remake of 1985 musical, “Into the Woods”, directed by Rob Marshal for the big screen, I could not help but notice that even though the story is 30 years old, it is so up to date with this year's reality, that rings a bell of something beyond image, far away from music and singing, being nevertheless well performed and perfectly adjusted to the cast.

Watching the film, I realized that, as it can be noticed in today's society, all we do is wish, want, crave, it was surely declared in the film, whose narration evolve around the word “wish”.

Musical history is certainly full of these examples of shows and performances that speak to the crowd with their own voice. It is obvious that Musicals evolved throughout history, just as society evolved itself and it was a parallel road, always influencing one another. Indeed the history of music proves that in almost every case the composer of any musical bases his creations on rough guidelines that are created by his/she's predecessors (Shepherd & Devine, 2015). Consequently this implies that the sum of the historical musical development of a society forms the foundation of his musical culture and his culture is affected by his predecessors whom they were affected by their era-their culture, therefore here we can instantly see an interesting relationship between musicals and the sociological perspective.

Scholarly interest in sociology dates back thousands of years and typical examples include Plato,

and Aristotle (Bowman, 1998), US sociologist such as C.Wright Mills (Mills, 1959) understood it as a “quality of mind” that “enables us to grasp history and biography and the relations between the two within society” (Mills, 1959, p. 5-6). The phrase above helps to define the aim of the thesis in which is to denote the historical roots of American musicals and the promising future directions- this has increasingly been called the “sociological imagination” as it has been applied to musical culture.

### **1.2. American Musicals through the decades.**

It is noticeable, for example that during 1900-1920, we have the “Mistrel shows”, that mirrored the nasty issue of racism just after the First World War or even the “Vaudeville shows”, mirroring the problem of poverty.

Later, in the thirties the need was for a lighter aspect of life. People in the cities cried for a more optimistic perspective of the world, after having experienced the violence and deterioration caused by the Second World War Therefore, more comedies were composed and performed, including satirical comedies, revues of previous years that could be understood by everyone and had a more relaxed and carefree tone.

During the forties and fifties, called the “Golden period”, racism again with xenophobic aspects and the combination of nostalgic elements were strong. During that period the Musical Theater tried to establish the social issues of the various social groups, through the end of second World War.

From the Second World War through the revolution era of the Civil Rights, the period of the sixties was filled with revolutionary ideas against the government. Broadway shows of that period showed the oppression of the people and their uprising, this foolishness is still faced by our society today.

Since this time period, the beliefs of the people changed dramatically, thus therefore the seventies was an era in which society finally found a part of peace and vindication against injustice.

The seventies were also described as the "Me" generation. Everything was based on privacy, even Fragmented Musicals, included a character who reflected this "Me" generation through the shows.

The "Me" generation affected the issues of the next decades, the eighties and nineties were decades of release. The people had finally the freedom of expression and acceptance in every sector and yet that was also a cause of the division among some people during the end of the decades. Every musical of the eighties and nineties contained several issues.

Approaching the millennium, it is possible to understand that everything is a circle which repeats until today even though things may evolve repeated patterns. The first decades of the 2000s were based on the revivals of the old productions which are called jukebox musicals and are similar to musical comedies such as the times when people were suffering from the issues of the World Wars. Musical theater appears that will be a repeatable circle which will always be affected by the feelings and political problems of society.

## **Chapter 2: The Evolution of American Musical Theatre.**

The following chapter gives an introduction to musical history through the decades and chronobiologically moves from the 1900s and ends till the 2000s.

### **2.1. The 1900s and 1920s: "The Glorious Decades of Broadway and the First World War".**

It is written, that America was full of glory during the period of Musicals. According to national history, revealed in books and encyclopaedias, America, at the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century was the centre for Musical Theatre. As of 1900, there were thirty-three Broadway theatres, and many more would be built within the next decade to meet the growing audience demand.

Thanks to the number of tourists who came into the city, because of the opening of the first underground in 1904, Broadway had a growing number of audience and as a result could support more productions and longer runs than ever before, and tens of thousands of people, living miles away from the theatres, could catch a Broadway show and still not need to rent a room away from their homes to spend the night.

During the "Golden period" of musicals, the audience was ready to embrace the new and vibrant-born musicals, while the West End (London equivalent of Broadway) imports remained popular.

Several types of musicals which became most popular during the periods before and after the 1900s and 1920s according to the information given in the "Cyber Encyclopedia of Musical Theatre, Film and Television", were at first the "Minstrel Shows" musicals. It is mentioned that the most shameful chapter of the American musical history was that, during the Minstrel shows.

The "Minstrel shows" was the first 100% American-born form, which became most popular during the early and mid of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The shows were popular before slavery was abolished, and the whole concept was based on prejudices that arose from slavery. The white performers coloured their faces with burnt cork to lampoon Negroes, and used to perform songs and skits to satirise the

slave life on Southern plantations.

One of the most important people to speak about the anti-slavery and stood as a living counter-example to slave holder's arguments, was the African-American for slave social reformer, writer and statesman Frederick Douglass who described the shows and the black face performers as " the filthy scum of white society, who have stolen from the black people a complexion,"denied them by nature, in which to make money and pander to the corrupt taste of their white fellow citizens." Frederick Douglass, in " The North Star 'newspaper (founded by Douglass in October 27 in 1848) , implies that these diminishing shows project images and symbols which promote slavery rather than rejecting it. Thereby the actors as well as the people who choose to attend these shows indirectly become part of the slavery dynasty and uphold its continuation. That is why he sarcastically describes them as "fortunate" whereas in fact he condemns them for treating slavery as means of entertainment. He thus highlights that the shows in question only succeed in presenting a distorted understanding of slavery and further undermining the identity and dignity of black people.

On the one hand, the Minstrels had strong racist aspects, but on the other, it afforded white Americans a singular and broad awareness of what some whites considered significant aspects of African- American culture to be. The Minstrel shows survived as professional entertainment until about 1910s and amateur performances continued until the 1960s in high schools, and local theatres. One of the most popular Minstrel shows of the era, was that which published throughout the 1830s and 1840s, was called the "Jim Crow", by Thomas Dartmouth, who called after that show as the "father "of the minstrels. The "Jim Crow" is the only of the Minstrels which is very known even now.

Minstrel's shows were not only acted by men but during the 1890s the shows were acted also by women performers. Women became a common presence on the Minstrel stage, but the form was losing appeal. The particular shows had a different name, they were well known as the "Creole shows", and offered a female interlocutor and women in the ensembles.

During the many decades of its popularity, minstrelsy developed a unique format, Although black face remained in use, the Minstrel shows were no longer commercially viable by 1920s.

After the "Minstrel shows", a new era had just begun in the world of the theatre. In a world where phonographs, films, radios and televisions did not exist, something new was needed to fill the gap. The new style was called " Vaudeville shows", which were "born" in the United States of America, in the early 1880s.

The word "Vaudeville" means in a simple way "the songs of the town". The shows which came about during the industrial revolution, changed the rural face of America, and were the theatrical genre which was most popular at this point, both towns and cities.

The "Vaudeville" shows were for people who wanted affordable entertainment on a regular basis. Many shows tried to bridge a social gap that had divided American audiences ever since the upper and lower classes were separated in the mid of 1800s, and to show them that all are equal and all can have fun in the same way. They were just like circus shows, which includes acrobatics, ice and roller skaters, cyclists, songs also non- talkers songs which were known as the " Dumb Acts". One of the most popular songs of "Vaudeville" shows was composed by the "Vaudeville" team, Nora Bayes and Jack Norworth, called "Shine On, Harvest ", which became popular since 1908. Some "Vaudeville" shows are performed even in our times in several theatres, on Broadway as well.

After the " Vaudeville" shows, around the early 1890s, a new movement had developed during the period of Musicals. The new form was called "Musical Comedies" or " Edwardian Musical Comedies", because of George Joseph Edward, who was called as a "father" of musicals comedies. George Joseph Edwards was an English theatre manager who brought the new era in musical theatre to the British stage and beyond. He was the person who improved the quality of the old gaiety theatre " Burlesques", that is, comedies which began in the last decade of the Victorian Era, with good humour which captured energy. Edward recognized the changing tastes among the musical theatre audiences and led the movement away from "Burlesques" and "Comic Operas" to

"Edwardians Musical Comedies". These dominated musicals since the 1870s , after the comic operas. These types of musicals had found success and showed that the audiences were ready to accept something new.

One of the first and most popular "Edwardian Musical Comedy" was the "Florodora", which opened for the first time in 1899 in London and about a year later, also in New York City, where it became even more popular than the musicals on Broadway. The "Florodora" was famous for its double sextet and its chorus line of the "Florodora Girls". It was a musical which was translated in many different languages because of its popularity, and which referred to a young woman who was seeking romance and restoration of her stolen inheritance.

The "Edwardians Musical Comedies" were those which offered to the audience the carefree atmosphere and the robust humour with their sophisticated but also catchy melodies. In a few words those were the shows which offered one taste of optimism in a combination of energy and good humour after World War I.

If we try to analyze the character of music in the musicals that existed in the 1900s and 1920s, the "Mistrels ", "Vaudevilles " and "Edwardians comedies" even though they had some differences they also have similarities. The "Mistrels" were full of comic elements and the music reflects this through bouncy tunes and upbeat rhythms. The acting was of course racist but also entertaining for the audience, the actors of "Mistrels" used the pronunciation of African-American people, the music includes Afro- American elements such as blues scales and syncopation, usually the songs included major scales because the composers wanted to bring to light the positive side of society.

The same thing happened also with the "Vaudevilles" shows and the "Edwardians Comedies". The "Vaudevilles" were shows similar to circus and as I have mentioned before were shows for poor people. The particular shows were produced for the lower class in order for them to forget the daily hardships and therefore have some fun (as much as they could) through catchy melodies and dance able rhythms, as mentioned before.

The Vaudevilles included dancers, acrobats, magicians and also actors who were singing songs with lively rhythms, with harmonies and melodies based on major scales, and with funny meaning highlighted by melodically leaping intervals. This therefore created a motivating and enjoy-full atmosphere.

The period of the first world war came to an end with the people trying to find a way to escape from their daily surviving routine. They needed low cost entertainment and something carefree to take their minds off the cruelties of war they have just lived through. They say, practice makes perfect and that was exactly what can be observed from the evolution of comedies during this period of time, with the example of the “Edwardians Musical Comedies”.

## **2.2.The 1930's: "Book Musicals and Comedies as Escapist Vehicles during the second World War".**

Right from the first world war in the 1920's, until the second world war in the 1930's, from casual singing to legitimate singing, the seasons were changing increasingly, as well as the economy and society.

So the style of the musical sound could not stay unaffected. The United States of America was suffering from a severe depression and proceeded inexorably toward the holocaust of the second world war. The war brought pain and revived the destruction, from the rising menace of Hitler, through the death of the Spanish Republic, the rape of Ethiopia, Japan's bit by bit nibbling away at the continent of Asia, the thefts of Austria and Czechoslovakia, the Nazi-soviet pact, and the invasion of Poland ("Broadway Musicals Of The 30s", Stanley Green, 1971). It seemed that the whole world was suffering from the evils of war, every corner, in any field showed, that things were so unbearably difficult, that the world could not cope.

Even the musical performances which were the most opulent escapist, extravagant and unabashedly commercial form of the theatres could not hide from what was going on in the whole world during the thirties.

On one hand they were still offering evenings of mirth and song and glamour to the audience, but on the other hand, they were confronting people with issues of the day, such as the folly of war, the municipal corruption, the political campaigns, the dangers of both the far right and the far left as well as struggle between democracy and totalitarianism. Through the songs, the acts and the shows which were different than before, the comedies, the lyrics and the dance routines could say things with even more effectiveness than most of serious dramas of the time.

People needed an escape from harsh reality, so the composers of musicals preferred to compose more comic musicals. Not all of musicals of the thirties can be claimed to be

satirical or thought provoking, but most of them wanted to send the audience out of the theatres, smiling and possibly whistling.

Because of the collapse of the United States economy that had begun in October 1929, there was a need for fresher and more contemporary themes.

The styles which prevailed in that period were numerous. To begin with, there were, the musical comedies.

The musical comedies of 1930's, were usually modern in setting, fast paced and featured at least one of the most popular buffoons. They usually emphasized political themes in a satirical way, as well as on traditional themes, such as marriages, divorces and college life. One of the most popular musical comedies of the 1930's was, "As a Thousands Cheer".

It was a musical revue by author Moss Hart's book with lyrics and music of Irving Berlin. The musical was divided into twenty one scenes. Each scene was preceded by a related newspaper headline, and the sketches poked fun at a wide variety of subjects, including the marital woes of Barbara Hutton, Gandhi, and British royalty; even the weather report was turned into a song. Other examples include President and Mrs Hoover leaving the White House, with the President giving his cabinet a Bronx cheer, an African-American woman's lament for her lynched husband, refusing to accept Radio City Music Hall as a birthday gift, commercials interrupting the singing during a Metropolitan Opera broadcast, a hotel staff member falling under the influence of Noël Coward and a Supreme Court decision that says musicals cannot end with reprises, resulting in a new number, perhaps by making light-hearted or artistic expressions of current events, it lifted people's spirits a little bit. (42<sup>nd</sup> Street Moon site, 2015).

The Thirties was the time period which also offered book musicals. Book musicals were shows which were based on several stories from books. Book musicals tended to be light, breezy entertainments, which were designed to take the audience's mind out of their troubles for a few hours. Usually the plots of the performances contained people like stowaways, gangsters, society

matrons, American ex-patriots and French ambassadors who spoke the language of everyday people, no matter their social classes.

By offering characters, whose problems were more or less the same as the troubles of people in real life, they were helping the audience to forget them for a few hours. Book musicals of the 1930's were divided in two categories, the escapist entertainment book musicals and the comedies or satirical book musicals. One of the most popular and well known book musical was called "Show Boat". "Show Boat" according to the information of book named, "American's Musical Life" by Richard Crawford(2001), was performed on Broadway on December 1927, in Florenz Ziegfeld's theatre who was one of the most famous and well known producers in the history of musicals regarding his "Follies" shows. "Show Boat" was written by Oscar Hammerstein's book which was based on Edna Ferber's novel "Show Boat" (1926), with lyrics also from Hammerstein and music by Jerome Kern. The plot of the musical was divided in two acts, and presented a serious drama based on American themes incorporating music that was derived from American folk melodies and spirituals. The musical is based on the real life, feelings and weaknesses of people, and it narrates the love story of two young people, an actor's and the daughter's of the owner of boat.

A taste of romance prevails in the whole musical, the acting, the topic and especially the music and the songs include romantic and nostalgic elements. If we try to analyze for example the song "Can't help lovin that man" from the first act of the musical we could recognize that even the lyrics and music of the song provide some romantic, nostalgic but also afro-american elements particularly the use of the blues scale, which prevailed in the whole atmosphere of the musical. Watching the "Show Boat" musical according to historical moments of musicals, "Revues" were also a dominant species of the thirties. These types of musicals were usually based on stories in newspapers, in which did not follow a particular order of storyline. There were a varied collection of songs, sketches and dance routines which were different from the "Vaudeville shows" that used stories.

The most popular revues of the period was the "Ziegfeld's Follies" revues. The "Follies" revues was something between the later Broadway shows and a more elaborate high class "Vaudeville" shows. The shows were a series of productions on Broadway from 1907 through the 1931, with renewals in 1934 and 1936 and as a radio programs during the 1932 through 1936. Because of the high production costs, it was made impossible for the show to turn into a profit ending, legendary series. The limited budgets and the changing tastes demanded a fresh approach. As the decade rolled by, the more inventive revues, the more likely it succeed. One of the best revues of "Follies" shows in 1930's was staged by the groundbreaking director and choreographer Hassard Short, working with producer Max Gordon.

The "Follies" became famous also for their beautiful chorus girls, commonly known as "Ziegfeld's girls" who were usually wearing expensive costumes. These particular shows are still in production with slight alterations (in the form of reviews) and are well known.

The stage of the musical theatres of the thirties has always has been optimistic form of the theatrical entertainment. The thirties, tried to back up people's spirits, by telling them that they have to look fine around the corner, because just around the corner there's rainbow in the sky. The only thing they have to do, is to forget their troubles and move on to reach happiness.

### **2.3. The 1940's and 1950's: "The Strong Nostalgic Elements in Musicals As a Reflection of the Political Issues".**

The Society as a whole in the 1940's was not fundamentally different than before the "hard times" of the war. It was just another decade within which people wanted to escape from their troubles due to the war. Everything had changed, even preferences of the audience. At first, it was the comedies, then the movies which became more popular with the addition of sound. Then, the new type of dramas in theatres, the radio which was offering many kinds of programs and of course the musical theatre. All these were the main reason why people were still craving for life.

According to the historical information of the book "Our Musicals Ourselves"(John Bush Jones, 2003) , the decade of 1940's brought a great destruction in musical theatre. The war had the responsibility of that destruction, because the conditions brought the higher prices on Broadway and the people who suffered, were not able to attend other several shows. The audience no longer had interest in Broadway's shows, and they started to follow the theatre shows which were cheaper than the shows in Broadway. Gerald Bordman, who was an American theatre historian and well known regarding his "The American Musical Theatre", analysed the war's enormous influence on musicals as " the initial reaction which has changed the emphasis of the librettos". Bordman said that the real war was the topic of the day, and real war was no joking matter for the most part the new offerings, the political economic, and social implications in the headlines." The musicals of 1940's performed for one and only reason, to entertain the people who were suffering from the evils of the war.

According to some information of the book "Our Musicals Ourselves"(John Bush Jones, 2003) in 1940s, there was an organization which was called, the "Selective Training and Service Act of 1940", built by Franklin Roosevelt and became the first peacetime conscription in United States' history. That organization stated that "every musical show featured the national anthem as curtain-raiser or

finale".

The type of musical which was the most popular in the forties was at first, the "Black musicals". Most black performances were created and directed by European American actors and directed in both, European American were in the position of power, with African American people executing their ideas and orders, as usually. African American audience were not as welcome to the shows or sometimes they were not allowed to have the best seats in the theatres.

The first black musical of the forties was called "Swingin the Dream", which opened in 29<sup>th</sup> of November in 1939. The musical was a swing version of Shakespeare's "A midsummer nights dream", as adopted in the book written by Gilbert Solders and Erik Charrell, with music by Jimmy Van Heusen. The plot of the musical was set in Louisiana in 1890 and used the white people as the upper-class characters and black people, as the artisans and wood fairies characters. The revels are staged for the benefit of the governor of Louisiana and some lovers were wandering in a voodoo forest, placed under the spell of black puck. According to the " Big band jazz and the rebirth of American culture " book by Lewis A. Erenberg report that in thirties, swing bands combined jazz and popular music to create large-scale dreams for the depression generation, capturing the imagination of American's young people, music critics, and the music business. The musical "Swingin the dream" explores that world, looking at the racial mixing-up and musical swinging-out that shook the nation and has kept the people dancing ever since. If we will try to analyse the music of the musical we can see that it was influenced by the afro-Americans culture. The rhythms were syncopated, the blues scales were influenced the melodies as well as harmonies and jazz melodic inflections were employed. The music, the dialogues between the actors, but also the combination of European Americans as the upper classes people and African- Americans as the lower classes people shows also the racist aspects of the period.

In 1943 another musical became to the surface one of the hits of black musicals, called "Carmen". The musical opened for the first time on December 2, in 1943 on Broadway and became famous

within 503 performances. It was an updated version of Carmen's opera from George Bizet, but in this case was placed on present time in Southern town and Chicago, and played by African America people. It was another one of the successful productions of Oscar Hammerstein's book and lyrics, librettos by Henri Neilhac and Ludovic Habased and using George Bizet's music.

Reaching 1943, the coming decades were called as the decades of "Hammersteins and Rodgers years". Richard Rodger and Oscar Hammerstein as I mentioned before, formed one of the most successful teams in American musical theatre's history which produced some of the most popular musicals in Broadway during the 1940s and 1950s. Rodger's and Hammerstein's ideology was that , musicals could help audience escape from their problems through entertainment.

One of the nine most popular musicals of Rodger and Hammerstein was "Oklahoma!". The musical was the first of the musicals of Rodger and Hammerstein, which opened for the first time on March 31, 1943 on Broadway. The plot of it was based on two romances. The first one, was about a cowboy and a farm girl and the second narrated the story of a cowboy and his fiancée, the whole story is placed in Oklahoma outside of the town Claremore. Musically the show is full of major and cheerful melodies, at first if we look at the first song of the musical and we try to understand the lyrics and also the music of it we will see that most of the shows in forties and fifties wanted to show to the audience that they could hope for a better tomorrow, that is the way for example if we will choose the song from "Oklahoma!", " Oh What A Beautiful Morning" we will see that the recapitulated lyrics is that " Oh, what a beautiful morning, oh what a beautiful day, I have got a beautiful feeling everything is going my way", with those lyrics and the combination of joyful music of the musical the audience made positive thoughts which helped them escape from their problems of real life. Because it included legitimate, almost operatic style songs for the two leading roles as well as large choral works, it was nicknamed at the time, "the opera of the prairies".

According to the book "Our Musicals, Ourselves"(John Bush Jones,2003), the whole plot of "Oklahoma" symbolized the reconciliation of differences, in both cowmen marriages to farm

women through the barbed wire animosity between cattlemen and farmers(John Brush Jones,2003)stated that these materials showed unions of opposites and signal led old rivalries, prejudices and animosities that were stripped away followed by the birth of a new harmonious society.

The second of the most popular musicals of Rodger and Hammerstein was called "Carousel". Carousel was a musical which was actually based on Ferenc Molnar's Hungarian language drama, "Lilliom",which opened for the first time in Broadway on March 22, in 1945. The plot of it was split in two acts, just like "Oklahoma".

Carousel is therefore about the romance of a carousel barker, with a mill worker woman. A romance that finally comes at the price of their jobs, the second act speaks about a romance with a mill worker woman and her fisherman.

Hammerstein transformed the story from Budapest to Maine in New England, and he wants again to infuse social advocacy into a story that hasn't existed before.

Briefly two additional musicals that Rodger and Hammerstein wrote address powerful social issues. "South Pacific" which addressed racism and the "King and I" which produced in 1951, and addressed classicism and sexism. These were both courageous and original works with social commentary, especially for that time.

When the decade of 1940s passed and the second World War finished with a lot of people issues, the lights were drawn on the new decade of the 1950s, well known as the "Golden Age of Musicals".

On the one hand it was called, the "Golden" age of musicals but on the other hand, it would have never been the same as before for the people.

The second World War finished, but another war began to upset the country, the "Cold War". This time, the war brought dramatic changes in the economy, the media and also in culture. According to the historical recourse, the war did not take long to bring the destruction of the dichotomy of American government and American people. The people experienced big problems, such as the

fear of the international communism, paranoia and xenophobic sentiments, which didn't exist ever before.

The same situation affected the musical theatre as well. On one hand, the decade brought the richness and the high quality of the shows. More shows were having big orchestras, rich costumes and large acts which had an impact on the cost of the musicals, meaning also higher prices of the tickets. But on the other hand, there were less than before because of the extremely high prices of tickets. That was not the only reason why the shows became fewer but also, because of the new type of Rock & Roll music that had started to change the music as taste of younger people. But the final blow was that, with television which became more prevalent in 1957, people preferred to watch the Broadway shows on television at home rather than in theatres.

The few musicals which were produced on Broadway were rich in social meaning. The psychology and the pulse of society at the time affected all means of communication, as well as the musicals themselves, which began to cope with up to date issues, such as xenophobia, racism and nostalgia.

One of the most popular musicals was "Brigadoon", which opened for the first time on Broadway in 1947. "Brigadoon" was based on the book and lyrics of Alan Jay Lerner and music by Frederic Loewe. The story was about two American tourists who stumble upon Brigadoon, a mysterious Scottish village, which appears for only one day every hundred years.

When the village appears, one of the tourists falls in love with a young woman from Brigadoon . The musical wants to demonstrate the contrast between the empty city life and the warmth and the simplicity of the country, focusing on love.

Another musical which became popular also as a film was "South Pacific", which opened for the first time in 1949 on Broadway. "South Pacific" was a musical created by Rodger and Hammerstein, based on the nineteen short stories of James Michener's "Tales of South Pacific" which spoke about the men and women of the U.S. Armed forces in the Pacific during the second world war. This

musical addressed ethnic and racial prejudices. The "King and I" was produced in 1951, addressed classicism and sexism. These were both courageous and original works with social commentary, especially for that time.

In the mid fifties and later, the dramas started to become very popular. One of them was "The Diary of Annie Frank" which was an adaptation by Frances Goodrich and Albert Hackett based on the "Diary of a Young Girl" by Annie Frank. The plot of the musical talks about the events which were based on the diary and has the purpose to send a message of hope to the audience via Annie's expression of faith in the human race. The musical opened for the first time on the 5<sup>th</sup> of October in 1955, at the Cort theatre, on Broadway.

This decade finishes with two performances that marked, in a way, the musical era of the fifties. Both were performed in the same period but they differ in months. The musicals were the "West side Story" and the "The Music Man".

"West Side Story" was a musical based on William Shakespeare's play "Romeo and Juliet". The book was by Arthur Sondheim, the lyrics by Stephen Sondheim and music by Leonard Bernstein. The first time the musical was played was on the 26<sup>th</sup> of September in 1957, on Broadway. The story was set in the upper West side of New York, speaking about two teenage street gangs of different ethnic backgrounds. The "Sharks" was Puerto Rican gang and the "Jets" was a Caucasian American gang. During their street fights, the story twists when a former member of the "Jets" falls in love with the sister of the leader of the "Sharks".

This musical is based on a dark theme and is enhanced by sophisticated music which focus on social problems during the end of the period of fifties.

"The Music Man" was set during the second World War. It reopened as well in 1957 on Broadway and is based on the book by Meredith Willson who also wrote the lyrics and music. The story speaks about a con man, who poses as a band organizer and leader without actually being a musician. He sells band instruments and uniforms to the people of the town with the promise to

train them to be members of the band. No one knows that he is not a trained musician, and that, he plans to skip town without giving any music lessons. The local librarian eventually realize he is a imposter, but she had begun to fall in love with him. The conman falls in love with her as well and he tries to win her hand. In the musical "West side story" the music has Caribbean musical elements and specifically from Puerto-Rico, as reflected in Latin rhythms such as in the song "America" (123, 123, 12, 12,12/ 123, 123, 12, 12, 12). It also contains romantic and nostalgic elements for a better tomorrow.

On the other hand "The music man" contains more jazzy elements in the music which show the setting of the musical is in a different era; as we can see "The music man" is set in the period of thirties, were jazz music became more popular. Additionally, the plot is about a brass band, so naturally brass instruments as well as the harmonic and rhythmic elements of jazz will be included.

Generally the musicals of forties and fifties contained a lot of those nostalgic elements with a taste of happiness in their music employed through the use of major modes and catchy rhythms; the producers wanted to mirror the life of the audience through the shows and give them the opportunity to become stronger and believe that some day their dreams will become true.

According to an article from the Harvard University website (2015), the "West side story" and "The Music Man" are characterised as "a window on the complexity of America in the late of 1950s" and says, that these two musicals are the combination of racism and nostalgia, which were two of the issues of the people in the decade of fifties.

#### **2.4. The 1960's: "The Sixties as a Revolution Era in Each Sector".**

The decade of 1960s was called the "revolution era" or the "Civil Rights era"(John Bush Jones,2003). With the coming of the sixties the people began to wake up from the slumber of the previous decades and thus begun to rebel against discrimination of all sorts, whether it be classism, racism and sexism.

That revolution resulted in the severance of many young people from society, the severance brought the first demonstrations which were originally from a group of people called "Gangs". The "Gangs" were groups of individuals or close friends or families who felt they needed to gain control over territory in a community with violent or illegal behaviour.

Between these demonstrations there was also the uprising of the African-American people. In 1965 young people labeled as "Hippies"preached against the war and abuse of power, consequently creating a movement that advocated peace, liberation, the creation of a united-state and church rules and ultimately equality.(John Bush Jones,2003)

In 1964 a new movement came to the surface, which was called the "Feminism Movement". It was the movement which woman began to seek their rights. Feminism was a collection of social theories, political movements and moral philosophies, largely motivated by or based upon women's experiences, particularly in relation to the social, political and economic situation. As a social movement, feminism eliminated racial inequality and promoted the rights, interests and issues of women in society.

Consequently the "Civil Rights"movement resulted to the break down of society, but thanks to Lyndon Johnson, who became the 36<sup>th</sup> president of the U.S. In the 1960s, everything became better than ever before. According to an article of "Lyndon Johnson in the 1960s"(Shmoop website,2007), Lyndon was an activist who pushed the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 through congress; the whole country became active again after that.

Inevitably the "Civil Rights" affected all aspects of life. It goes without saying that musical theatre was changed radically as well; now every musical was based on the revolution of people. According to information of the book, "Our musicals, Ourselves"(Jones,2003), the "Issue-Driven musicals" came to the decade, not only to describe a story with a theme, issue or polemical point of view but also to describe any musical in which a social or political agenda shares the centre stage with the plot and is absolutely inseparable from the story, songs and sketches. Some of the most popular musicals of the decade were, "The Fantasticks" which opened in Off-Broadway theatre for the first time in May 3<sup>rd</sup> 1960, with a plot based on book and the lyrics by Tom Jones based was based on the play "The Romancers" by Edmond Rostand and music by Harvey Schimidt.

The musical described the story of two neighbour lovers whose fathers conspired against their love by building a wall between their houses. "The Fantasticks" was a musical which combined both funny and romantic elements.

One of the most popular and well known musicals was created in 1966 called "Cabaret". "Cabaret" opened for the first time on November 10<sup>th</sup> in 1966 on Broadway. The musical was based on the book by Joe Masteroff which was influenced by the play of John's Van Duten's "I am a Camera", with lyrics by Fred Ebb and music by John Kander. The show contain many traditional aspects, the plot was divided in two acts. The first act describes the romance between a cabaret singer and a writer, and the second describes the romance between a German landlady and her Jewish vendor.

The whole story takes place in Berlin of 1931, and is trying to combine the romance and the social background of the sixties.

After two years of "Cabaret" musical, the first rock musical of the sixties took place in the Broadway theatre. The name of the musical was "Hair". According to the historical moments of music it is said that by the sixties started the "golden age" of rock music. The rock music combined now with the American folk music having as a result the "folk rock" music. The "Hair" was one of

those musicals which combined that kind of music with the issues of the society during the sixties. A musical with rock elements trying to describe the movement of Hippies against the Vietnam War. It was narrates the story which based on the book and lyrics by James Rado and music by Galt Mac Demot, including the sexual revolution and the hippies counter culture elements which introduced an inside on the story of a group of politically active, long-haired hippies who lived in New York City and fought against the Vietnam War. Everything was based on the events of the decade, the people in every corner of the city tried to warn their fellow citizens in every way, to show them that they have to be against the government's decision.

Every musical of the sixties had their own revolution, for example in the "Fantastics" which features two lovers. Their fathers built a wall between them but because of their love they made their own revolution and met each other hidden from their fathers. The second example comes from the musical called "Cabaret" in which narrates the stories of four lovers, at first the romance between a cabaret singer with a writer, that was something unauthorized for the period, also the romance between the German landlady and the Jewish vendor, that we can describe it as a revolution too because German society at that time did not accepted Jewish people, but thanks to their love they made their revolution with their ways. Finally the musical "Hair" which came to be the strongest example of the period, narrating the story of a group of long-haired hippies who wanted to be against the society. Having long hair, and having a particular stance against the society, the music and lyrics therefore proved to be revolutionary, using popular rock & roll style music which before was not used for musicals. This rock music is by itself revolutionary and thus it went against the status-quo (the existing state of affairs) of the era. For example the song "I got life" from the musical "Hair" was sung by one of the actors who was a hippy. He is trying to show his ideology and thus his whole existence in the world through his actions and; the way he dresses. This modern personification is shown through modern rock songs. As a result he goes against what the society is expecting of him and creates a revolutionary character that brings new ideas and new

representations in society while at the same time preaching that he is the same as them-He is not to be pictured as a threat but as a new carefree and unrestricted future that is better for all. The following abstract of the song in question perfectly depicts all that was discussed above:

“.....Got my leg, I got my feet, I got my toes, I got my liver, Got my blood, I got my guts (I got my guts)

I got my muscles (muscles), I got life (life) [...] (And you got a lot of nerve baby) And I'm going to spread it around the world, mother, I'm going to spread it around the world, sister, I'm going to spread it around the world, my brother, So everybody knows what I got...”  
(<http://www.allmusicals.com/lyrics/hair/igotlife.htm>, 2015)

In essence this is what has become to be known as the bohemian culture that was created approximately during that era as a result of protesting the Vietnam War and promoting peace, love and freedom of expression. Consequently the decade of the sixties came to an end with most of the people being happy with the results of the revolution!.

### **2.5. The 1970's: "The Me, Myself and I, as a Generation".**

The 1970s found the Americans, finally trusting the government and believing that every problem could be solved after the revolution era.

In contrast with the sixties, the anti-war position became more fashionable as it combined the strong nostalgic element. The people started to turn their attention from public to private. Due to the depressing sixties decade, they decided to explore their own feelings and psyches all alone. The code "Let's talk about me!" was the motto of the day in the seventies, everyone spoke about themselves and their own feelings and beliefs; it was not coincidence that the decade was called the "ME" generation.

The "ME" generation was also applicable to all sectors of the seventies, and this also affected the musical theatre. The new productions of musicals were called "Fragmented musicals". According to the book "Our Musicals Ourselves"(Jones,2003) the "Fragmented Musicals" were the new form which was used inside several shows of the seventies. These shows did not contain a man concept; there were musicals in which the characters spoke about their selves and spoke directly to the audience. As a result, there was a strong element of narcissism since they enjoyed watching themselves.

One of the most popular rock musical of the seventies was called "The Me Nobody Knows", which opened for the first time on Broadway in the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 1970. The musical was a production of the book by Robert H. Livingston, Herb Schapiro and Stephen M. Joseph based on the anthologized writings of inner city youths, music by Gary William Friedman and lyrics by Will Holt. As a fragmented musical, it did not contain a specific plot, it just described the life of poor children who lived in neighbourhoods in New York City. The musical introduced the children as self-assertive people in the face of difficult livelihoods.

The productions of the seventies goes on with the musical show "Pippin". "Pippin" was a musical

which everything contained hedonism, the revolution and the persecution of the war. The musical was produced by music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz and book by Roger O. Hirson which was based on the story of the Pippins the Hunchback the son of King Charlemagne. According to "Broadway. Com"site, the musical was divided in to two acts and speaks about a young prince who yearns to find passion and adventure in his life by proving his loyalty to his delirious father. While he is trying to prove his loyalty, something goes wrong and he kills his father, and then he becomes a king. Realizing his mistake, Pippin begs the Leading Player to bring his father back to life, and she obliges him. The prince then falls in love with a widow with a young son and he struggles to decide whether he should settle down and pursue a peaceful life or continue to make magic with the dazzling troupe of performers. Pippin was a musical which written on pop music score and sometimes using songs bases on fancy jazz music in which even the lyrics contains self-reflecting elements which were the main characteristics of the era. The main character providing as a young man who trying to find the meaning of life. Generally the musical as we can see combined the tragedy from the scene in which Pippin kills his father with the scene in which he wants to bring him back in life with magic as anti-war message.

The next fragmented musical which is considered as one of the most characteristic and longest running shows of all time from the seventies is called "A Chorus Line" and it opened for the first time on Broadway in 1975. It was a fragmented musical with jazz elements and managed to show playgoers a non-plot musical, which was consequently embraced. Based on the book by James Kirkwood and Nicholas Dante, lyrics by Edward Kleban and music by Marvin Hamlisch, the musical refers to a group of twenty four young dancers who perform an audition for a musical on the Broadway theatre.

According to the information of "Tams- Witmark Music Library,INC"(1925)the musical provides a glimpse into the personalities of the performers and the choreographer as they describe the events that have shaped their lives, their feelings and reasons why they decided to become dancers. The "A

"Chorus Line" musical was and will be continued to be one of the most popular musicals for many decades.

One of the musicals which was also a big success in the seventies was called "Chicago". "Chicago" opened the Broadway's curtains for the first time in 1975. The main story is a satire on corruption in the administration of criminal justice and the concept of the "celebrity criminal." The musical was produced from the book and lyrics of Fred Ebb (based on a play called "Chicago", by Maurine Dallas Watkins) and music by John Kander. The plot takes place in the 1920s, based on real murders, specifically on a story of a young woman who murders her lover and then is arrested. In jail (for women) she meets her "hero", a woman who was a night club performer and who also committed a doubled murder. Both of them were sentenced to the death penalty for the murders they committed. The musical wants to show the effort of the two woman fighting for the glory that will keep them away from their conviction. The writer of "Chicago" wants to combine different nostalgic elements of the women who want to live their life free; he achieves this by composing and writing sexy, funny and intelligent aspects in the music and lyrics.

As we can see the three examples of musicals which I have chosen to emphasise have one main thing in common; the characters of each musical wanted one thing; a reason to live a better life. The shows have differences in style of music and in the time period which each musical is set. For example the "Pippin" it is set in medieval period in contrast with the music of it which is set in modern period, by using more jazzy rhythms and melodies which sung by the narrator.

The same happens also in "Chicago" musical, the plot it is set during the period of 1920's in contrast with "Pippin" which set in medieval period, both have jazzy, join full and rich melodies. The musicals of seventies were usually set into another decade because; as we can see the previous decades offered to the audience musicals that spoken about the war the problems but also the issues of people; the seventies was not the period which wanted to offered the same kinds of shows; by setting the plots of the shows in the past decades and combined them with the music which provide

the decade of seventies wanted to prove that except the messages which offered the previous decades through the musicals which speaking about the war and the problems of people; now it is possible to speak more personally about the life and feelings of the main characters.

That was the seventies, an era which combined the anti-war and nostalgic elements with major modes and beautiful melodies. Yet it also selfishness of people through dissonances and perhaps the electric guitar at times revealed a little bit of inner and social conflict. The seventies was an era of monologues which intended to show a person's inner character and self-reflection; that is why it was referred to as "Me" generation.

## **2.6. The 1980's and 1990's: "The Eighties and Nineties As Decades of Release".**

As the seventies decade was coming to an end, a new eras were coming to the surface. An era without issues, were offered exaggerations on plots concerning drugs and homosexuality. These were the decades of the 1980s and 1990s in which many people talked and sung openly about sex and drugs.

While the years passed, people were becoming increasingly careful about themselves because drugs and sex were recognized as being potentially dead. The new disease of "AIDS" which appeared in these decades scared people at an extend to decide into taking actions to protect themselves.

Everywhere were sounds of the social problems and issues of people such as, homosexuality, women, African-Americans and others. In the last quarter of the century the strong nostalgic elements were presented in each sector. The signs and symptoms of nostalgia were everywhere in the eighties and nineties including books, music, radio, films and also in musical theatres.

The musicals of the 1980s and 1990s contained more socially serious themes concerning than before. While the previous shows of the seventies gave the opportunity to the audience to understand clearly the message of the show, in the eighties and the nineties the producer wanted to let the audience think and discover the message of the show by their own conclusions.

They shows begin to be produced in "Off-Broadway" theatres, which were theatres that produced unique musicals and revues, that might be too risky for commercial success on Broadway. There also adhered to related trade union and other contracts.

Some of the most popular musicals of the eighties and nineties were, at first the " March of Falsettos", a musical with comedy aspects based on homosexuality which talked about the story of how gays where falling in love.

The musical was a synthesis of trilogy in one act, and opened in three different years. The first time

it opened was on May of 1981 in an Off-Broadway theatre. Based on a book of William Finn and James Lapin, music and lyrics also by William Finn.

According to "Stage Agent"(2015) information, the "March of falsettos" contains another two acts, the "Falsettoland" which was produced in 1990 and the "Falsettos" which was produced in 1992. All of the chapters speak about the same story, which is about an eccentric and dysfunctional but loving Jewish family who lived in New York City during the end of the seventies. The main character "Marvin" was blessed with the perfect family, he has a caring wife and a young son. However the family is soon being broken apart, when Marvin finds out that he is bisexual, and leaves his wife and son for a man. In the meanwhile, his wife ends up romantically involved with the family psychiatrist. And then while Marvin's lover is diagnosed with AIDS, the entire family must put aside their issues and come together again.

The producer wants to show the combination of the "tragedy" of the situation through comic elements, thereby he is trying to get the message across and warn the audience about the events that prevailed during the period of eighties and nineties.

The next musicals I will describe is based on the issues that envisaged the woman in the period of eighties and nineties. Around 1981 and 1984 musicals started again to be specific about women's issues and rights as well as in the period of the sixties. Decades later the women continued to fight for their rights, the movement of Feminism was still there, in the books, music and musicals as well. One of the most popular musical show of the 1984 with strong elements on woman issues was called "Quilters".

Looking at the political movements of the decade, this particular play was named after the so called "Queers" which was a movement that evolved in the USA with a particular taste in performance space. Furthermore the particular group also supported and indeed included within their ideology equality of gender whether it was for homosexuality and or feminism; consequently this aspects are strongly evident within the Quilters musical.

The "Quilters" was a musical which opened for the first time on Broadway in 1984, directed by Molly Newman and Barbara Damashek, music and lyrics by Barbara Damashek and based on the book, "The Quilters: Women and Domestic Arts" by Patricia Cooper and Norma Bradley Allen. The musical narrates the story of an American West woman who was a pioneer and also about six other women who are called her daughters who faced frontier life together. The show contained a line of short stories, each presenting an aspect in frontier life otherwise, the womanhood. The musical takes place in a village that is the why the music it is full of folk elements. Major and dramatic elements are noticeable in the whole musical, in acts but also in the music. Below is a section adapted from the song called "Pieces of lives": "Pieces of women's (pieces of women's) lives, Pieces of lives, Swatches and notions, All the unspoken emotion, devotion of our lives (devotion of our lives) ,Pieces of lives, Stitches and secrets ,Pieces of (Pieces of) women's lives!" (<http://www.thebroadwaymusicals.com/lyrics/quilters/piecesoflives.htm>,2015)

Reading upon the lyrics and listening to the melody of the song one can understand that it clearly underlines and describes the elements of the specific era and the movement (the Queer movement). The melody and the particular high tonality that is sang by the actors is done specifically in order to evoke a particular tone that represents the uniqueness of the woman's voice. The lyrics on the other hand are in plural form in which brings to light the community spirit.

After this musical which based on the woman's issue, something different was coming to change musical theatre's life.

In 1987 another style of musical was coming to the surface to change the feeling of the decades. The musical was called "Into The Woods" and it was different from the other styles of musicals of this time period. "Into The Woods" was based on the book by James Lapine which was affected by "The uses of Enchantment" by Bruno Bettelheim, music and lyrics by Stephen Sonheim.

The musical wove together the stories of famous fairy tale characters. It tells about the story of a baker and his wife which when they learn that they have been cursed with childlessness by the

witch next door, they go on a quest to find special objects in the woods, finding and gatherings these would break the spell of the witch. Every character of the story had wishes, but toward the end their actions returned to haunt them with disastrous results.

The musical "Into The Woods" take place in the "woods" wanting to show to the audience the chaos which was prevailed in the world, combining fantasy with a lesson about community responsibility and sending out nostalgic sentiments of the decade inside the words of characters saying "I WISH"! . Sondheim used a unique style that included a recitative, talking style conducive to drama. The musical included emotional climax songs; we can see that music serves to amplify specific emotions in characters to a level above mere words this specifically occurs when characters reach a point in the drama where they can not help but explode with feelings or love or success or simply the joy of live, music. The specific songs are particularly energetic in which allow the audience to feel and understand the characters passion and enthusiasm as well as feelings.

The composer used a specific technique that used four types of songs (a) Exposition songs: "Because songs take up time reserved for dialogue in the play, musicals must move quickly to establish the dramatic situation, introduce the main characters, and give audiences some reason to care about them. Exposition songs inform an audience what has happened and what may have brought the characters to this point in the action." (Source: Spurrier, James. The Integration of music and lyrics with the book in the American Musical. Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois U, 1979) (b) Conflict songs (c) Narration songs (d) Summary songs. In addition to enrich his musicals he also used a variety of other types of songs in which include (a) Comment songs: A character not in the dramatic scene may step to one side and sing about events on stage. (b) Musical metaphors: Much of "Into the Woods" acts metaphorically as I mentioned before the forest is being used as a metaphor for the chaos that prevails in the world, (c) Cameo songs: Cameo songs feature a minor character, someone who otherwise might be forgotten, giving a performer in a small role time in the spotlight (d) Parodies: These rely on an audience's familiarity with music that is not in the show

they are watching, but is used to evoke an appropriate mood. (Source: Spurrier, James. *The Integration of Music and Lyrics with the Book in the American Musical*. Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Illinois U, 1979).

As we can see from the main song called "I Wish" all of the techniques that are mentioned above are clearly represented from the recitative used between the narrator, Cinderella, her step mum and her step sisters, the baker and his wife, the little red riding hood, the witch, jack and his mum.

According to the book "Our musicals Ourselves" (2003), during the end of the commercial musicals decades, the shows tried to address various ills currently in American society. These were the ills that divided not just one person from the other, but whole societies, poor from rich, African Americans from European Americans, homosexual from homophobic.

The end of the decade came with an element that discussed racism and classism. Most musicals in that decade were based on the situations which prevailed in the world, that meaning that the musicals contain many contradictions and divisions among the people.

One of the most popular musicals which had strong divisions among the people was the musical "Metropolis". "Metropolis" was produced for the first time in 1989 in West End theatre. The musical was a production with the lyrics of Joy Brooks and Ousty Hughes, music by Joe Brooks and it was based on the film "Metropolis" in 1927. According to the "Stage Agent"(2015) information, the musical is a gothic horror story combining science fiction and romance. It takes place in the city called Metropolis around 2000, which presents a grim view of a futuristic city dominated by machines. Keeping this city alive, the leader of Metropolis exploits the poor people who want to work to take some money and he locks them beneath the earth's surface working for ten hours ceaselessly.

But a revolutionary and dreamy girl, who is called Maria decides to escape from this situation by risking her life. While Maria is tries to escape from the underground she meets Steven who was the son of the cruel leader of the city. Trouble ensues when the son of the leader tries to help the

workers, angering his father.

In the end Steven and Maria lead a successful revolt and the workers make it into the light as they make it out on the city.

This musical has a strong sense of divisiveness among the characters and among society itself as it separates the poor from the rich. Promoting the revolution of the poor, Maria's character is enriched with nostalgic elements. She shows to the audience that it is wrong to separate people by nation, economic class or sexual preferences. She also leaves the audience with the romantic idea of kindness and strong will, as winning material in battle with evil. Even the "March of Falsettos", the "Quilters", the "Into the woods" but also the "Metropolis" were "instructive" musicals, besides that was the main characteristic of the musicals of the eighties and nineties; to let the audience to think and to see their own conclusions through their imagination. The changes of that period were not only based on the structure and style of the music; as we can see the music in that musicals became more uniquely characteristic, I mean that; if we will choose one musical from the previous decades, for example "Pippin" which produced during the period of seventies, and "Into the woods" which produced during the period of eighties, we will understand that "Pippin" has more festive music in contrast with "Into the woods" which has more descriptive music, for example if we will choose the main song from "Pippin"; "Magic to do", we will understand that differences through the rhythm and also through the melody and lyrics which repeats the words "Join Us", that clearly prove the festive character of musical. From the other hand if we will choose the the main song from "Into the woods", "I wish"; which includes more descriptive music, and it is possible to understand that through the melody, and the way that Sondheim presents each character through the music; we will see that as I have said before; the music in eighties and nineties became more characteristic.

The period of the eighties and the nineties came to an end with the producers wanting to understand the audience. They were trying to introduce the feelings and the warnings of the decade through innumerous shows.

### **2.7. The 2000's: "The Millennium As a Revival Era".**

According to the historical moments being referred in the book "A History of the American Musical Theatre: No Business Like It" (Hurwitz,2014) the coming of the 2000s found the Americans in need of fun moments.

New York's economy was based primarily on tourism, particularly related Broadway.

In 2001 terrorists commandeered commercial airlines and destroyed the World Trade Center towers on September 11<sup>th</sup>. That horrible event brought a decline in New York's economy and tourism in dust ( Hurwitz,2014). New York City was in the dark for many days. Programmes on television, movie productions, and also Broadway were mourning for the death of 2,996 innocent people.

People were shaken from the destruction of the terrorist attack, that's why a few days later when Broadway Theatres reopened, they preferred to open several shows, especially musical comedies because that helped them to escape from the stressful feeling of death, abuse and terrorism.

Broadway theatre offered to the people the opportunity to feel good again, like the old times. Several shows on Broadway became a form for audiences, ever since the World War years.

The revival of musical comedies became the most popular shows in the period of 2000s. The millennium was a "flashback"era, which combined new fresh ideas in musical shows. That combination resulted in "Jukebox shows" which were shows based on films, movies with strong elements of humour and includes popular songs. Jukebox musicals were usually strong on a dramatic plot and nostalgic elements, often referring to the biographical story of the performer whose music was featured.

One of the most popular shows with big audiences in the 21<sup>st</sup> century were, "Hairspray".

"Hairspray" was a jukebox musical with strong comic and anti-racism elements, based on "Hairspray" film of 1988, directed by Mark O'Donnell's and Thomas Meehan's book, music by Marc Shaiman and lyrics by Scott Wittman and Marc Shaiman. The first time this musical opened

on Broadway was on August 15<sup>th</sup> in 2002.

The musical takes place in Baltimore of 1962, and speaks about the plus-sized teenage girl who had one dream, to dance in the television show called, "Corny Collins Show". When she is in detention with the African-American students in the school, they teach her some of their dance moves. Overnight she transforms from a unknown girl into a star of the show, and uses her new found influence to advocate for racial integration on the television show. The "Hairspray" musical combined the bright and energetic story of a plus-sized European-American girl and her African-American schoolmates, to demonstrate the notion of difference. It did not matter if someone had different skin colour or different body weight, all people should be treated the same and have the same equal rights(Stage Agent,2015).

In 2006 one of the most popular jukebox musicals had reappeared on the surface. The name of it was "Mary Poppins". The musical was an adaptation of Walt Disney's film of 1964 and "Mary Poppins" book series by P.L Travers, and was directed by Julian Fellowe, with music by Robert B, Sherman, Richard M. Sherman and George Stiles with lyrics by Robert B. Sherman, Richard M. Sherman and Anthony Drewe. The story talks about a family who lived in a big house in London. Things are not going well with the family, because the children are out of control and are in need of a new nanny.

One day a mysterious young woman named Mary Poppins appears at their doorstep, the family finds, that she is the answer to their problems, but in the most particular way Mary Poppins takes the children on many magical and memorable adventures effect upon. Even grown-ups can learn a lesson from nanny who advises that "anything can happen if you let it". The musical tried to pass the message to the audience, especially to children that their dreams can become true only if they want them strongly enough. (Broadway.com, site 2015).

Another musical which became popular in 2006 was the "Spring Awakening". The "Spring Awakening " was the rock musical production from book and lyrics by Steven Sater and music by

Duncan Sheik based on Frank Wedekind's play "Spring Awakening" in 1891. The musical reopened on Broadway at 10<sup>th</sup> of December, 2006 and tells the story of two teenagers who discover themselves and the inner and outer tumult of sexuality (Stage Agent, 2015). The "Spring Awakening" explored the topic of sexuality which is often a taboo subject in America.

The years were passing and the jukebox musical were as well becoming more and more popular. One of the musicals which were produced to bring the different taste in the jukebox "era" was called "Rock of Ages". The "Rock of Ages" was the first rock jukebox show which was built around rock and metal hits of the eighties and made a huge fuss in the year of 2009. The musical was based on music and lyrics of various creators and the book was by Chris D'Arienzo.

The show is set in Hollywood of the eighties, when it was all about big chords, big dreams and big hair! "Rock of Ages" tells the story of dreams of people through hits from iconic groups and rockers of the 1980s. (Broadway.com site, 2015)

The decade of jukebox musicals, revivals and comedies was not ended in the previous years, these kind of musicals have continued until today. One of the best examples of the jukebox style in 2014 is that of the "Bullets Over Broadway" musical, which was a musical produced during the periods of 2013 and 2014. The "Bullets Over Broadway" which holds a story based on Woody Allen's book, music and lyrics by various creators, opened for the first time on April of 10<sup>th</sup>, 2014 and became one of the hit musicals of 2014. It is about the story of an aspiring young playwright who lived in the 1920s and was forced to cast a mobster's talented girlfriend in his latest drama in order to get it produced. The musical combines the strong elements of jazz music and popular standards of the years between World War I and about the 1930s by various songwriters.

The Millennium was the time of all kind of choices, as far as entertainment is concerned. Within this decade, as it seems, anything can happen. So, in terms of the Musical industry, there are more productions based on the movies and vice versa.

Musicals become more colorful and fresh while the jukebox musical make their appearance.

Millennium's musicals offered to the audience the flexibility to choose the shows through their preferences around the musicals sounds; because of the multi-sectional musical styles, by the plots depending their issues and feelings and also by the style of each show. It is an era of reviving old stories through a different perspective and thus of recharging the creative ideas that will some day reinforce the notion of musical entertainment.

### **Chapter 3: Conclusion**

Having strolled through the 20<sup>th</sup> Century when it comes to musical theater, this paper has managed to gather the information needed, for a closer look at the political and social issues that affected the whole existence of musical theater performances.

It was made clear that Musical shows have always been side by side with American History in both political and social terms.

It is easy to observe that heartbreaking events for humankind fed the musical shows with creativity and voice, loud enough to be heard as a cultural bell all across America and thus the rest of the Western World.

It seems that, what Musical shows initially wanted to do was to give people a guiding path so that they could avoid the misery caused by war, a bad economy or xenophobia for example. It has been their “mission” in a way, to prevent chaos from taking place by promoting optimism, love and culture.

It is a fact that music and theater have the power to unite, to enforce ideas, to travel the mind and intrigue the imagination, but it can also—as was shown in this paper—create a common state of mind, not just to individuals, but also to big crowds and societies. It is a musical performance that can lead the audience to conclusions, it can teach and explain in a way, their surrounding reality.

I believe that musicals are really like fairy tales with meaningful endings, a set up ideal example of an ethical and politically correct way of living according to the contemporary society.