

## Introduction to Musical Theatre

### What is Musical Theatre?

- *Definition:* A stage production utilizing popular-style songs – dialogue optional – to either tell a story (book musicals) or showcase the talents of the writers and/or performers (revues.)
- How is Musical Theatre different from Opera?
  - In Opera, the story is driven forward by the *music*.
  - In Musical Theatre, the story is driven forward by the *characters*, which means the book and the lyrics are more important.

### The 3 Elements of Musical Theatre performance (otherwise referred to by Ms. D as the Emotional Hierarchy of Musical Theatre!):

- To properly express how we feel, we use **WORDS (ACTING)**
- When **WORDS (ACTING)** is no longer enough, we **SING**.
- When **SINGING** is no longer enough, we **DANCE**.

### Musical Theatre is divided up into 2 major periods:

- Traditional Musical Theatre (early 1900s-1960s)
- Contemporary Musical Theatre (1960s-present)

## Common Types of Musicals:

- Operetta
  - *Definition:* This is basically a less serious form of opera. It contains spoken dialogue. Operettas are usually romantic comedies.
- Musical Comedy
  - *Definition:* Musicals that are light in theme and spiced with comedy. The most important feature of Musical Comedy is that the songs are woven into the story.
- Musical Play
  - *Definition:* Musicals that contain heavier themes and plotlines.
- Concept Musical
  - *Definition:* Musicals that are based around a central theme or idea instead of a plot.
- Jukebox Musical
  - *Definition:* Musicals that are specifically written to use the music of one particular pop/rock music artist.
- Revue
  - *Definition:* Musicals that are put together to highlight the work of a particular songwriter, choreographer; etc.

## Essential Musical Theatre Vocabulary

- Composer
  - *Definition:* An individual who writes music.
- Lyricist
  - *Definition:* An individual who writes lyrics for a song.
- Libretto/Book
  - *Definition:* The storyline, or script, of a musical. An individual who writes the libretto or book is called a *librettist*.
- Score
  - *Definition:* The complete collection of songs included in a particular musical.