

College of DuPage Theater Department

Presents

The SpongeBob Musical



Directed by Amelia Barrett

Musical Direction by Dan Brennan

Choreography by Kyle Donahue

The College Theatre Department sincerely thanks the Library for research support for classes studying the script and production, as well as for the cast, director and production team, working on the project.

Time: 18 years in the future

Place: Bikini Bottom, a city under the Pacific Ocean

Characters:

Sandy Cheeks

Eugene Krabs

Squidward Q. Tentacles

Patrick Star

Sheldon Plankton

SpongeBob SquarePants

Karen the Computer

Pearl Krabs

Mayor of Bikini Bottom

Electric Skates

Perch Perkins

Patchy the Pirate

French Narrator

Sardines

Security Guards

Old Man Jenkins

Mrs. Puff

Gary the Snail

Undersea Creatures

BFF Letters

Larry the Lobster

Haze and theatre's isles used during the show

ACT ONE

Bikini Bottom Day

by Jonathan Coulton

No Control

by David Bowie & Brian Eno

BFF

by Plain White Ts

When the Going Gets Tough

by T.I., Domani Harris & Darwin Quinn

(Just a) Simple Sponge

by Panic! At the Disco

Daddy Knows Best

by Alex Ebert of Edward Sharpe and the Magnetic Zeros

Hero Is My Middle Name

by Cyndi Lauper & Rob Hyman

Super Sea Star Savior

by Yolanda Adams

Tomorrow Is

by The Flaming Lips

ACT TWO

Poor Pirates

by Sara Bareilles

Bikini Bottom Day Reprise

by Jonathan Coulton

Bikini Bottom Boogie

by Steven Tyler & Joe Perry of Aerosmith

Chop to the Top

by Lady A

(I Guess I) Miss You

by John Legend

I'm Not a Loser

by They Might Be Giants

Bikinitevka

by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick

Simple Sponge Reprise

by Panic! At the Disco

Tomorrow Is Reprise / Best Day Ever

by Andy Paley and Tom Kenny

Finale: Bikini Bottom Day Reprise

by Jonathan Coulton

The SpongeBob Theme Song

by Derek Drymon, Mark Harrison, Stephen Hillenburg & Blaise Smith

The SpongeBob Musical Director's Note

summer 2022

In case you (like Patrick Star) live under a rock, SpongeBob is an anthropomorphic sponge who lives under the sea, in the idyllic town of Bikini Bottom. While there is an elaborate history provided from various fan sites along its unprecedented longevity, since 1999, the characters and the places are iconic. Iconic perhaps, because they are ridiculous, appeal to both young people and adults alike, contain avarice, jealousy, irony, and most importantly big, bold aspects of love and friendship.

Ultimately, the story that we present today, is about a community trying to come together in spite of their fear, differences, and impending disaster. In my view, this play appears at the most opportune time; it offers a moment when we can celebrate the people around us, see the best in all of them, and discover the strength we contain inside of ourselves. I hope you are able to see the impact each one of us can have in the world, particularly when we lift each other up. Share the joy with us and we hope you have the "Best Day Ever!" ~AB

About the Authors:

Citation: <https://www.concordtheatricals.com/a/2478/kyle-jarrow>

Kyle Jarrow is a Tony Award-nominated, Obie Award-winning writer and musician who makes work for television, film and the stage. He wrote the book for Broadway's *The SpongeBob Musical*, for which he was nominated for Tony, Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle Awards. Other theater work includes *A Very Merry Unauthorized Children's Scientology Pageant* (OBIE Award), *The Wildness* (Lortel Award nomination), *Armless* (Fringe NYC Overall Excellence Award), *Whisper House* (with Duncan Sheik, record available from RCA/Victor), *Hostage Song* (with Clay McLeod Chapman), *Love Kills*, *Trigger* and *Gorilla Man*. His plays have been seen all over the U.S., in Canada and in Europe, including The Old Globe, Steppenwolf, New York

Theatre Workshop, Ars Nova, P.S. 122, American Repertory Theatre, Williamstown Theatre Festival and London's Other Palace Theatre. In addition to his more "traditional" theater pieces, Kyle has also delved into the burgeoning field of immersive theater and developed work for Cirque Du Soleil.

In the world of television, Kyle created and executive-produced the series *Valor* (CW/Netflix) as well as the streaming series *Lost Generation*. He's also written on the staff of *Star Trek Discovery*. He penned the indie features *Armless* (an official selection of the Sundance Film Festival) and *Saint Janet* (starring Kelly Bishop, streaming on Amazon).

In addition to his writing work, Kyle is known as the leader of the rock band Sky-Pony, a collaboration with his wife Lauren Worsham. Their LP *Beautiful Monster* is available from Knitting Factory Records or at skyponyband.com. Kyle was also a founder of the now-retired art-rock band The Fabulous Entourage, which appeared in the Whitney Biennial and opened for such groups as Hot Chip and We Are Scientists.

Tina Landau is a writer and director whose work has been produced on Broadway and Off-, internationally and regionally, and most frequently at Steppenwolf Theatre in Chicago, where she is an ensemble member. Known for her original, large-scale musical and ensemble work, Tina has been recognized by the Tony Awards, Drama Desks, Drama League, Outer Critics, Lucille Lortel and Obies, and is a recipient of a United States Artist Fellowship, the Princess Grace Statuette, a NEA/TCG Directing Fellowship and Rockefeller and Pew grants.

On Broadway, Tina has directed *SpongeBob Squarepants: The Broadway Musical* (also conceiver; Drama Desk and Outer Critics Circle winner for Best Direction and Best Musical, 12 Tony Award noms), Tracy Lett's *Superior Donuts* and the revival of *Bells Are Ringing* (Tony nom). Her Off-Broadway productions include Bill Irwin/David Shiner's *Old Hats*, Chuck Mee's *Big Love* and *Iphigenia 2.0*, all at the Signature; Tarell McCraney's *Head of Passes* (also Steppenwolf, Berkeley Rep, Mark Taper Forum, NAACP Best Director) and *In the Red and Brown Water*, both at the Public Theater; Paula Vogel's *A Civil War Christmas* at NYTW; McCraney's *Wig Out!* and her original musical *Dream True* written with Ricky Ian Gordon, both at the Vineyard; her musical *Floyd Collins*, written with Adam Guettel, at Playwrights Horizons, the Old Globe and the Goodman (Lucille Lortel Best Musical, Obie award, Barrymore Best Direction, etc.); and En Garde Arts' site specific productions of *Orestes*, *The Trojan Women: A Love Story* and *Stonewall: Night Variations* (also writer).

Tina has created over 20 productions at Steppenwolf, which include *Ms. Blakk for President* (which she co-authored with Tarell McCraney), Matthew-Lee Erlbach's *The Doppelgänger*, McCraney's *The Brother/Sister Plays*, Zinnie Harris' *The Wheel*, Mee's *Berlin Circle* and *Time to Burn*, classics such as *The Tempest*, *Time of Your Life*, *The Cherry*

Orchard and *The Diary of Anne Frank*, and her own plays *Space* (also Mark Taper and NYC Public Theater) and *Theatrical Essays*.

Regionally, Tina has directed the musical *Dave* by Tom Kitt and Nell Benjamin (Arena Stage, Helen Hayes award for Best Director); her own play *Beauty* (Old Globe, San Diego Critics' Award for Best Play), and productions of *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Of Thee I Sing*, and many more.

She teaches regularly in the U.S. and abroad, and is the co-author, with Anne Bogart, of *The Viewpoints Book*.

History

citation: <https://www.concordtheatricals.com/p/65887/the-spongebob-musical>

Since its launch on July 17, 1999, *SpongeBob SquarePants* has reigned as the number one kids' animated series on TV for the last 17 years, while generating a universe of beloved characters, pop culture catchphrases and memes, theatrical releases, consumer products, a Tony award-winning Broadway musical and a global fan base. *SpongeBob SquarePants* is the most widely distributed property in Viacom International Media Networks history, seen in more than 170 countries, translated in 30+ languages, and averaging more than 140 million total viewers every quarter.

SpongeBob SquarePants is created by Stephen Hillenburg and produced by Nickelodeon in Burbank, Calif. The character-driven cartoon chronicles the nautical and sometimes nonsensical adventures of SpongeBob, an incurably optimist and earnest sea sponge, and his undersea friends. The Broadway production of *The SpongeBob Musical* earned its place on 2017's "Best of Broadway" lists including Broadway.com, BuzzFeed, *The Chicago Tribune*, *The Daily Beast*, Deadline, ET Online, *Forbes*, *Time Out New York* and *Variety*. *The SpongeBob Musical* was named Best Musical by the Drama Desk Awards and Outer Critics Circle and earned 12 Tony Award nominations – the most nominated musical of the 2017-2018 theatre season – winning for Best Scenic Design of a Musical (David Zinn).

Synopsis

citation: <https://stageagent.com/shows/musical/10753/spongebob-squarepants>

SpongeBob SquarePants is the musical adaptation of Nickelodeon's long-running animated children's sitcom of the same name. We find ourselves in the undersea city of Bikini Bottom, inhabited by happy-go-lucky and ever-optimistic yellow sea sponge SpongeBob SquarePants and

his equally quirky circle of friends and neighbors. SpongeBob's pleasant existence is abruptly interrupted when it is discovered that Mt. Humongous, a nearby volcano, will erupt within the next 48 hours and completely obliterate Bikini Bottom. SpongeBob, trying to prove to himself and the world that he is not "just a simple sponge," resolves to save the day when everybody else has given up all hope.

Though *SpongeBob SquarePants* is incredibly fun and family-friendly, its timeless story of identity, crisis, and community is also a witty allegory that examines and critiques the politics of the modern era, and it does so in such a way where children will appreciate and understand the plot line, while adults can read between the lines and extract even more from the musical's message. *SpongeBob SquarePants* features an eclectic score of music, each song having been written by a different musical artist with the purposes of recreating the type of musical hodgepodge exhibited by the original television series

21 Fun Facts About SpongeBob Square Pants

citation: <https://www.thefactsite.com/random-spongebob-squarepants-facts/>

Who lives in a pineapple under the sea? SpongeBob SquarePants!

SpongeBob SquarePants premiered on Nickelodeon on May 1, 1999, and became the most recognizable sponge in the world shortly after.

If you love the show, check out these cool facts about your favorite sponge!

1. The creator of *SpongeBob SquarePants* is Steve Hillenburg.
2. SpongeBob's original name was Sponge Boy but the name was already taken, so the creators went with SpongeBob.
3. Patrick Star is SpongeBob's best friend.
4. He owns a pet snail called Garry.
5. SpongeBob and Patrick enjoy going jelly fishing and blowing bubbles!
6. SpongeBob works at the KrustyKrab.
7. His job title is Fry cook.
8. SpongeBob is just an average sink sponge.
9. SpongeBob is yellow – just in case you didn't know!

10. He is always cheerful.
11. He can never pass his driving test no matter how many times he tries!
12. He is ambidextrous.
13. SpongeBob owns a KrustyKrab play set with action figures and accessories.
14. He is afraid of the dark.
15. Even though SpongeBob lives in the sea, he can't swim!
16. The creators of *SpongeBob SquarePants* tries to make you think of dolphins when SpongeBob laughs.
17. Nickelodeon television premiered *SpongeBob SquarePants* in 1999.
18. The creator of *SpongeBob SquarePants* was once a marine biologist and science teacher whom once worked as a fry cook at a seafood restaurant.
19. The reason Hillenburg put SpongeBob in a pineapple home is because he thought he'd like the smell; smell is a very important sense for sea animals and sea life.
20. SpongeBob has 27 holes.
24. There is *SpongeBob SquarePants* Lego!
25. Also, if you want to know the *SpongeBob SquarePants* theme tune, this is how it goes:

*Are you ready kids?
 Aye aye captain!
 I can't hear you!
 AYE AYE CAPTAIN!!!
 Ohhhhhhh! Who lives in a pineapple under the sea?
 SpongeBob SquarePants!
 Absorbent and yellow and porous is he!
 SpongeBob SquarePants!
 If nautical nonsense be something you wish!
 SpongeBob SquarePants!
 Then drop on a deck and flop like a fish!
 SpongeBob SquarePants!
 Ready?
 SpongeBob SquarePants
 SpongeBob SquarePants*

SpongeBob SquarePants
SpongeBob... SquarePants
Ahhha, ha, ha!

Core Values Contained Within the Play

Citation: The SpongeBob Musical Show Guide. https://www.ppacri.org/assets/doc/TheSpongeBobMusical_-ShowGuide_-Tour-SV-0906fddf5f.pdf. 24 June, 2022.

“I WILL always vow and pledge allegiance to this town that I hold dear for all are welcome here... yes, I’ll stay true to the Bikini Bottom way...” ~*Bikini Bottom Day*

Civics and Ethics

President Theodore Roosevelt once said, ‘The first requisite of a good citizen is that he shall be able and willing to pull his weight.’ Being a good citizen means being actively involved in your community and working for the benefit of your fellow citizens. Like the residents of Bikini Bottom, good citizens take pride in where they live and strive to make it a better place. Part of being a good citizen also means that you do your best to live your life as a good person by following a moral and ethical code. While morals can be subjective based on your own personal belief systems, ethical behavior is generally defined by what society-at-large has deemed to be good values; demonstrating key principles that include: honesty, fairness, equality, dignity, empathy, and respect.

While we strive to be good people and good citizens, in times of crisis it can sometimes be difficult to keep sight of the ethical way to behave. When our own personal welfare is threatened, fear may cause us to act irrationally or even immorally. In some cases the “right” answer will not always be clear. We may face ethical dilemmas, where we are forced to choose between options, none of which would resolve the situation in an ethically acceptable way. For the citizens of Bikini Bottom, the fear inspired by the threat of Mt. Humongous, causes some of them to respond in ways that go against the principals of ethical behavior, as they attempt to blame, follow, exploit, or control their fellow citizens.

Blame

One of the first reactions people often have when something goes wrong is to look for someone to blame. This reaction sometimes stem from a fear that we ourselves may be held responsible if we don’t first point the finger at someone else. Often times the easiest person to “scapegoat” is someone who is an outsider to the community or someone who is different in some way. In THE SPONGEBOB MUSICAL, the residents of Bikini Bottom choose to blame Sandy Cheeks

because she is as a land animal and a foreigner in their town. This kind of discrimination is called Xenophobia, which is an intense and irrational dislike or fear of people from other countries. If the residents of Bikini Bottom had been able to look past their differences, they would have realized that Sandy had actually created a great solution to their problem. In the end, it doesn't really matter whether the person who is blamed is at fault or not, placing blame does nothing to help move towards finding a solution to the problem at hand. Instead of focusing on placing the blame, the citizens of Bikini Bottom should have focused on working together so that they could have solved their problem as a team.

Follow

In times of crisis, when the answers are not obvious, we might find it easier just to step back and hope that someone else will solve the problem for us. However, as the saying goes, "you either have to be part of the solution, or you're going to be part of the problem" While it is good to trust others and to follow the example of worthy leaders, by allowing someone else to make our decisions for us, we are not taking responsibility to help solve the problem ourselves. What is worse, if you follow a leader blindly without questioning their actions, you may find that your leader is making choices on your behalf that you do not believe to be morally or ethically acceptable. The concept of "mob mentality" is the tendency for people's behavior or beliefs to conform to those of the group to which they belong. In *THE SPONGEBOB MUSICAL*, we see an example of this in the way the Sardines follow Patrick. While Patrick very obviously does not have a solution to the problem, the Sardines choose the easy way out by placing all of their hope in their leader and following him blindly. While Patrick should have been honest with the Sardines that he was not the savior they believed him to be, as citizens of Bikini Bottom, the Sardines also have a responsibility to help in this time of crisis and not just expect that someone else will step in to save the day. It can be hard to go against the pack or question the leadership of those in charge, but just like SpongeBob, you should always follow your heart in making choices that you know are right.

Exploit

It is clearly against the ethical code of good citizenship to exploit or take advantage of other people. However, just as fear can be a negative influence on our behavior in times of crisis, greed can also play a dangerous part in shaping the decisions we make when our ambitions grow out of control. Ambition, or the desire and determination to achieve success, is generally a positive force in the work of good citizens as it helps to ensure the growth of the corporate economy, which provides jobs, goods, and services to the people in our community. However it can sometimes be difficult to see the line that separates healthy ambition from selfish greed. In *THE SPONGEBOB MUSICAL*, Mr. Krabs plays a vital role in the economy of Bikini Bottom. As a business owner, he provides jobs and sustenance to the residents of his town. However, when disaster strikes, Mr. Krab's selfish desire for money takes over, as he greedily exploits the unfortunate situation in order to sell more burgers. Sheldon Plankton goes even further to exploit the residents of Bikini Bottom with his diabolical plan to hypnotize everyone and take

control of the town. We see in these two examples the importance of not allowing our desires to turn into greed. Being a good citizen means putting the needs of our community and fellow citizens above our own ambitions.

Control

The desire to gain control is a natural and often useful reaction to crisis. When we feel that a situation has grown out of control, we may seek to assert our influence to help guide others to safety, or to take steps to resolve the problem; however, there is an important difference between “leadership” and “control.” When we lead, we show other people the way and allow them to choose whether or not they wish to follow. On the other hand, when we dictate people’s actions, we may force them to make decisions that could go against their moral beliefs or personal opinions. Dictators are leaders who rule with absolute power and who often use fear as a way to control and manipulate people. At the start of *THE SPONGEBOB MUSICAL*, the Mayor begins by governing her citizens through the democratic process, allowing them to vote on how to best respond to the crisis. However, as the situation becomes dire, the fear of losing control starts to influence the Mayor’s decisions, and she begins to assume more and more authority in making choices without input from the citizens of the town. The Mayor also makes attempts to control the residents of Bikini Bottom through misinformation in the media to keep the truth of the situation a secret. While it is understandable for leaders not to want to cause panic, a good leader should allow people to make informed decisions based on a clear understanding of the situation at hand. In the end, the Mayor acknowledges her attempts to control the citizens of Bikini Bottom, and while it was wrong of her to abuse the power of her position, by admitting to her mistakes, the Mayor demonstrates another important quality of good leadership.

Courage

“When the going gets tough that means it’s time to get lost, let’s be gone.” ~When the Going Gets Tough

When crisis hits, sometimes it seems like the easiest thing to do would be to just run away. But when we run away from our problems they don’t disappear, in fact, problems can oftentimes grow bigger in our absence and eventually we will need to return to face them. With the threat of Mt. Humongous looming, the citizens of Bikini Bottom made the decision to run away and abandon their beloved hometown rather than fight to save it. But there was one good citizen who found the courage to remain optimistic in the threat of great danger: SpongeBob didn’t give up even when the going got tough; he pushed through his fear and saved the day! SpongeBob is an example of the ultimate good citizen: he is loyal, hardworking, optimistic, and constantly striving to better himself and his fellow citizens. While times of crisis can cause us to react in ways we otherwise know to be wrong, they also offer us the opportunity to rise to the occasion, letting our positivity and the principles of good citizenship shine through.

The History of the American Musical

Citation: Maslon, Laurence. "Elements of the Musical." PBS.org. <https://www.pbs.org/wnet/broadway/essays/elements-of-the-musical/>. 24 June, 2022.

No one person created the musical. It evolved over time and incorporates a variety of influences and elements. First of all, of course, there is the music. Minstrel songs and the cakewalk; Irish ballads and patriotic jingles; ragtime marches and stirring blues; poignant torch songs and jazz ditties; totemic anthems and rock opera — the musical has captured every idiom of American expression. There is definitely a "Broadway" sound, often referred to as "Tin Pan Alley," a musical structure pioneered by songwriters like Irving Berlin and Richard Rodgers. However, this is by no means the only kind of music to appear on Broadway.

Then, there are the lyrics, the words that go with the music. They can be rhapsodic, witty, risqué, or patriotic. Broadway lyrics have become another form of native poetry — words, catchphrases, sentiments, and stanzas that have entered the American lexicon. The lyrics of Cole Porter, Ira Gershwin, and Irving Berlin — to name but three — are routinely quoted in poetry anthologies around the world.

In the early days of the musical, what mattered most were the songs, and it was essential that they were catchy enough to amuse the audience or provide material for dancers or comedians. But, beginning in the 1930s, the situation, the book or libretto, of the musical started to achieve primary importance. A story or narrative became more frequently the spine of the musical, and in the 1940s, mostly due to the narrative sophistication of the shows of Rodgers and Hammerstein, the songs followed the plot and the characters, rather than the other way around. This narrative spine has made the musical quite influential as a cultural and artistic force; from the epic Kern-Hammerstein "Show Boat" and its view of race relations (1927) to "Oklahoma!" (1943) through "West Side Story" (1957), "Hair" and its antiwar sentiments (1967), "Company" (1970), and "Rent" (1996), the themes of prominent Broadway musicals reflected the controversial, revolutionary, and nostalgic issues of an evolving American culture. As the musical got more complex, it required a director to shape the production and its design and concept. Strong musical directors like George S. Kaufman and George Abbott emerged in the '30s; currently major artists like Harold Prince, Jerry Zaks, and Julie Taymor are key to shaping a musical's success. Choreographers were next to emerge as major artists; in the teens and '20s, they were simply "dance directors," but influential choreographers like George Balanchine and Agnes de Mille brought visionary ideas to the stage. With gifted choreographers like Jerome Robbins and Bob Fosse broadening their range in the '50s, it was only matter of

time before they took on the job of director in addition to their dance duties. The director/choreographer became a major visionary force on the stage, guiding every visual and physical moment of a musical. Robbins and Fosse were joined by such talents as Gower Champion, Michael Bennett, and Tommy Tune.

Performers have also been the cornerstone of the musical. They could be comedians like Bert Lahr or Bert Williams; singers like Ethel Merman or Ethel Waters; dancers like Ray Bolger or Marilyn Miller. With the stronger demands of the narrative musical, performers had to become actors as well; indeed, after the success of non-singing actor Rex Harrison in “My Fair Lady,” actors with minimal singing ability — Richard Burton, Lauren Bacall — became major musical stars. Of course, what Broadway values most these days is the “triple threat” — performers who can sing, dance, and act. In fact, in the past, there were separate dancing and singing choruses; now everyone is expected to do it all. Star performers like Bernadette Peters, Brian Stokes Mitchell, and Nathan Lane appear to have limitless talents.

None of these elements would come together without the producer. The idea for a new musical can come from a writer, composer, or performer, but it can only be realized by a producer. He or she must raise the money for the production; the amount required is called the capitalization. This amount must not only cover getting the show to opening night but also create a financial cushion for several weeks or months until the show catches on with audiences. The producer will rarely spend his own money; he raises it from investors — usually called backers or “angels,” for obvious reasons — and pays himself a salary. If the show is a success and makes back its initial expenditure (recoupment), investors get whatever percentage of their contributed amount back in profits. For example, if you invested \$1,000 in “Oklahoma!” in 1943 and it cost \$100,000 to produce, you would get 1 percent of the profits after recoupment (distributed weekly). If “Oklahoma!” had flopped, you would have lost all your money; luckily, the show was a big hit: anyone who did invest \$1,000 received \$2.5 million!

A Broadway musical is both a risky and an exciting proposition. It is the most costly business venture in the theater. Typically, a musical will now cost at least \$10 million to produce; to put this in context, 30 years ago, a musical cost one tenth that amount. (Tickets also cost about one eighth as much in 1974.) As hard as it is to raise that money, the rewards can be enormous. Cameron Mackintosh’s four shows (“Cats,” “Les Misérables,” “The Phantom of the Opera,” and “Miss Saigon”) have run on Broadway for more than 62 years total and, internationally, have made more money than these four movies — STAR WARS, RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK, JURASSIC PARK, and TITANIC — put together. But the rising costs of originating a show have driven away more independent individual producers and opened the field for corporations like the Walt Disney Co. For example, “The Lion King” may well be the most expensive show ever — rumored at above \$20 million — and took about four years to turn a profit, but a big company can afford to wait that long for a return on their investment. That’s why there’s no business like show business!

As if these weren't enough, the story of the musical is also the story of its creators and performers, men and women from every aspect of American — and foreign — society, who came together, often under the most invidious circumstances, to create something that transcended their differences. Refugees came together with native sons and daughters; task masters worked with dissipated alcoholics; white producers championed black performers — and black performers turned right around and made fortunes for those producers; artists fled financial failure for the blandishments of the lucrative worlds of film and television — then fled right back to the stage; gay artists created enduring models of heterosexual romance and heterosexual artists became icons within the gay world; songwriters lost fortunes in the Depression, only to regain them by writing about the Depression itself — the list of ironies and strong compelling biography is endless, each story replete with illuminations about our culture.

Yet, still, the elements that constitute the musical don't end there. The production of the musical is an art form itself. Complicated and often inflammatory, the craft of producing a Broadway show involves knowing the public's tastes (and usually challenging it), raising capital, battling societal trends — all on the most expensive real estate in the most fractious city in the world. And, finally, there is the dissemination of the musical, which encompasses a vast narrative of communications and the media. Through sheet music, over the radio, in movies, on television, on gramophones, hi-fis, and CDs, through word-of-mouth, through visiting tourists, servicemen, grandmothers and their grandchildren, the world of the Broadway musical has been brought to every corner of this country and, by extension, the world. The musical is as powerful an image-maker of America as Hollywood has been and the shaping and shifting of that image is another cultural marker.

Social Commentary and Musical Theater

From *The Beggar's Opera* to *Avenue Q*, musicals have commented on social issues for as long as there has been musical theater in America.

People have always gone to the theater expecting to be entertained. What do you find interesting about theater which talks about social and political issues as entertainment? Why do you think we have such a long history of doing this? How does this relate to our first amendment right of freedom of speech?

Avenue Q broke many barriers in terms of subject matter for musical theater. Can you think of a subject matter that has not yet been addressed by musical theater that now could be? Do you think there is a subject that might still present challenges as a tale for a musical venue or that would still be considered taboo for musical theater? How do you think we benefit by examining these difficult subjects through the lens of story, song and dance?

There will always be issues of huge social importance to face; wars, poverty, injustice to name a few. At the community level there are also always topics of contention between people or groups like budget issues, environmental concerns, bullying and the like. What do you think might happen if your school, or community (or family) got together to put on a musical to deal with pressing issues you are facing? Could this be a way to learn about and talk about a difficult topic in a creative and maybe even a humorous or light hearted way?

Where is Musical Theater Headed?

As the rock musical gave way to the spectacle musical, shows like *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Starlight Express* came to rely less on story and more on technology. Heather Nathans talks about the changes in musical theater in the last forty years and where musical theater appears to be headed.

Looking back at the history of musical theater in America, there was a period of relative stability followed by some pivotal points of change in the way musicals were presented. Describe when how the musical changed over the course of the last hundred years.

In the 1970's and 1980's musical theater hit a slump after about 60 years of relative stability. During this time the creative energy behind the musical was spent on creating extravagant special effects. Why do you think this change happened? Do you think this change was driven by audience demand or by creative inspiration or by the technology itself? Did we lose our interest in story? Did technology give us a sense of wonder, power, control? What else was happening in the world of art, politics, and culture at this time? How might that have had anything to do with this change?

As you can see, the history of musical theater is an art form that has gone through many changes and continues to thrive and be important to our cultural experience. Can you draw a comparison between musical theater and a living organism or as something that has a natural life cycle of its own? What can studying the history of musical theater reveal about our society that say the history of politics or science or legislation might not tell us?

Things to think about prior to performance:

- Are you familiar with the SpongeBob Square Pants television series? If you are familiar, think about those adventures and story telling and how this might be translated into a musical.
- The original creators of the musical created a study guide for their production. In it, they mention the core themes contained within the musical: Optimism in the Face of Adversity, and Civics and Ethics. Think about those ideas and what they mean to you before you see the production.

- Have you ever seen a musical or, for that matter, a play? What do you think the difference between a musical theater piece and what we call a “straight” play might be?
- Notice the set, before you watch the production. What do you see on the stage?

Things to watch for in performance:

- How would you describe the main characters in the play? Do you identify with any of them and why?
- This set design is an example of what is called a unit set, which is a scenic design made up of pieces (or units) which can be used to produce more than one setting (or rearranged to do so). Was this set design helpful to the production? Why or why not?
- How is the passage of time and locale conveyed in lighting, sound, use of the set, costume pieces and in character action?
- Notice the different style of music for the many songs that are contained within the play. What is the effect of the different styles and those characters who sing in that style?
- How do the songs communicate the journey of the characters, as well as the story of play?
- Notice the different styles of dance within the play. What are the effects of these styles and the characters who move in them?
- Observe how the actors establish their relationship with one another. How do we “meet” each character? Does their circumstance affect how we empathize with them?
- Notice the costume design and the properties design. What do the visual cues tell you about the play?
- Listen to the sound design. What does the sound-scape communicate to you?
- Notice how the actors use the isles of the theatre and break the “4th wall” by speaking directly to the audience. How does this affect the audience?

Things to think about the performance:

- What do you notice about this play? What stands out to you about the language, characters, setting and conflict? Does it remind you of anything else you have seen or read before?
- Since this story is based on a cartoon, do you feel as if you need to know the cartoon in order to enjoy the play? Or can it stand on its own?
- While looking at each of the characters, can you name one quality each of them may represent? Can you find which character might be an optimist and which might be a pessimist, for example?
- What lessons or messages have you taken away experiencing this play?

Other Analysis Tools:

- What happens in the very last moments of the play? Certainly, the last few minutes, but, more importantly, the last thirty seconds? In that time, WHAT happens or is said, and what does that say about what the play is 'about?' In a nutshell, how does the playwright drive his point(s) home?
- And what is the significance of the title? Why did the playwrights decide that this was the most quintessential title for their work?

The running time for this production is approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes, and includes a 15 min. intermission. We do not hold pre or post show discussions for our summer productions. But, please join us during the year for more entertainment and education!

In addition, you may wish to visit College Theater's touring production this summer of **Ocean 9-1-1 (Big Blue Rescue)**

July 16 and 17 (free) at the MAC's Lakeside Pavilion

Beyond the performances at MAC Lakeside Pavilion, Ocean 9-1-1 is touring the show throughout DuPage County.

Tuesday, June 28 at 10am: Indian Boundary YMCA, Downers Grove

Tuesday, June 28 at 6pm: Cantigny Park, Wheaton

Wednesday, June 29 at 7pm: Oak Brook Public Library, Oak Brook

Friday, July 8 at 7pm: La Grange Public Library, La Grange

Monday, July 11 at 7pm: Helen Plum Library, Lombard

Tuesday, July 12 at 10 am: Winfield Public Library, Winfield

Wednesday, July 13 at 7pm: Wheaton Public Library, Wheaton

Please join us!