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Cut Song Cabaret: Performing the Replaced, Rewritten, and Recycled Songs of Musical Theatre

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CUT SONG CABARET:
PERFORMING THE REPLACED, REWRITTEN, AND RECYCLED SONGS OF
MUSICAL THEATRE

A Capstone Experience/Thesis Project Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree Bachelor of Fine Arts
with Mahurin Honors College Graduate Distinction
at Western Kentucky University

By
Claire Wilson
May 2021

CE/T Committee:

Dr. Michelle Dvoskin, Chair

Dr. Amelia Rollings Bigler

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2021

ABSTRACT

In musical theatre, “cut songs” are the pieces of music that are removed from a show, whether the cut occur in the early creative stages, a pre-Broadway run, minutes before opening night, or even for a major revival years after its initial debut. These songs easily go unnoticed, as some are never made public while some are sneakily recycled for other musicals. Cut songs, though greatly varying in quality, are still works of art that at one time fulfilled their sacred duty of entertaining an audience and required just as much artistic effort to produce as the songs that survived the chopping block. By gaining an understanding of the songs themselves, theatre consumers and creators alike can deepen their base knowledge and overall appreciation of musical theatre, its history, and its construction. *Cut Song Cabaret* is a fifty-five minute, one-person show that aims to bring eleven cut songs from a century’s worth of notable musicals to light while exploring each song’s history and function through a largely comedic, and occasionally profound, lens.

I dedicate *Cut Song Cabaret* to my mother, Robin, the ultimate musical theatre nerd who was indeed kissed by Danny Burstein. I also dedicate it to my father, Tom, who enjoyed this capstone too, but not *quite* as much. Oh, and to Stephen Sondheim. Obviously.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

First and foremost, I must thank Dr. Michelle Dvoskin and Dr. Amelia Rollings, who coached me through preparing this piece since I first flagged them down in the hallways of Gordon Wilson Hall to tell them about a “really cool idea to do my senior year!” Their countless Zoom meetings, additional coachings, and numerous talking-off-the-ledge sessions with me not only made *Cut Song Cabaret* the show that it is, but also made me a better writer, performer, and theatre scholar.

Without my parents, Tom and Robin Wilson, I likely would neither have gotten into musical theatre nor had the tools to pursue it. Thanks, Mom, for planting the seeds of *The Wizard of Oz*, Mary Martin as *Peter Pan*, *Into the Woods*, and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* early on in my life, and for coordinating our many wonderful theatre trips. Thanks, Dad, ever the *theatah aficionado* (she said sarcastically) for driving me to and from hundreds of community theatre rehearsals, and for always finding something positive to say about my performances (even when you didn’t quite *get* them).

I must give extra special thanks to the crew who made this performance look and sound good: My lovely stage manager Liza Rash, co-lighting designers Michael P. Frohling and Coleton Wood, sound designer Rachael Prewitt, light board operator Destiny Latham, sound board operator Katelyn Noll, poster designer Emma McGee, videographer Ella David, and video editor Riley Greif. Three cheers for live-ish theatre!

Thanks to my roommates, Casey Hanrahan and Morgan Stevens, who let me corner them at the kitchen table to read them my first full draft (and let me rant to them when my frustrations over this project’s completion boiled over). Hailey Armstrong has

also been a *constant* force of encouragement and friendship throughout not only this project, but also my entire college career.

Additionally, I would like to thank the Mahurin Honors College for allocating me an Honors Development Grant to pay for my wonderful accompanist, Julie Pride, without whom the performance would have been a lot less entertaining. Thank you, Julie, for your fun collaboration and positivity throughout the rehearsal process.

VITA

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CONCEPTION: A BIG PROPONENT OF ALLITERATION

The semester was Spring 2020. The class was Honors Musical Theatre History, a class I had been absolutely itching to take since I learned of its existence. This course was taught by Dr. Michelle Dvoskin, who knew I would one day tether myself to the class when freshman Claire excitedly approached her about it after standing at the water fountain outside the classroom and hearing her lecture about Betty Comden and Adolph Green's additional lyrics for the 1954 Broadway rendition of *Peter Pan*, a subject on which I have fixated since childhood.

For this class, the small subsection of Honors students in the class were to design our own bonus final projects. I read this in the syllabus and assumed it would be just another research project; maybe I would dig deeper into the history of *Peter Pan*, or find some reason to write about Stephen Sondheim at length. Then, shortly before my final project proposal was due, a title I had never heard materialized in my mind: *Cut Song Cabaret*. You see, I have always been a big proponent of alliteration, which I chalk up as a vestige of my nine-year history studying Language Arts and Composition for academic team competitions in my formative years. As a result, concocting paper titles has always come rather easily to me...and this new title I *very* much liked. I had a title, but no script, no framework for helping it come to fruition, and no reason to pursue it further than doing some research. It was only upon creating this title that I truly considered the Capstone Experience/Thesis track offered by the Mahurin Honors College.

Like most other artforms, the “cabaret” has taken several hundred years to reach its current form; some consider the birth of cabarets to be troubadours entertaining the

masses in the taverns of 17th century Europe.¹ Today, cabarets are most often defined as a single musical theatre, pop, or jazz artist performing an array of songs to which they have an emotional connection in a small performance venue.² As for the musical theatre side of things, the process of getting a musical from page to stage is so multi-layered and experimental in nature that a show will almost never make it to opening night in one piece. Before a show is finalized, or “frozen,” songs are often added and removed, sometimes both in the course of a single day, hence cut songs.³ The vision behind the title fell into place quickly: *Cut Song Cabaret* would be a one-woman show featuring an array of songs cut from notable musicals and the stories behind them. This is how I pitched it to Michelle and my voice teacher, Dr. Amelia Rollings Bigler, who encouraged me to chase this new, alliterative dream. For Michelle’s honors project, I would do some preliminary research and compile a running list of potential songs I could sing for such a project.

Cut Song Cabaret’s concept was incredibly becoming my capstone: a comedic, constructive culmination of Claire’s college career.

¹ Sabella and Matsuki 4

² Sabella and Matsuki 39-41

³ Meffe 197

SELECTION: MENTAL ARCHIVES AND BEYOND

Undoubtedly, the most important aspect of the preparation process for this show was song selection; the title forced me to realize early on that the music would be the centerpiece of the show. I also realized that the faster I solidified my song choices, the better I could prepare them in voice lessons for the entirety of my senior year. This selection process was simultaneously easier and harder than expected.

As I touch on in the script, I have inadvertently been conducting research about cut songs since I was eleven, when I discovered (likely illegal) footage of “Boom Crunch” from the 1986 pre-Broadway production of *Into the Woods* on YouTube. This song became sixth in the final lineup. By high school, I was neck-deep in a Judy Garland phase (which is how I discovered “Mr. Monotony,” initially cut from *Easter Parade*), performing in community theatre consistently (where I first heard “Boys and Girls Like You and Me” sung by hopeful kings and queens at callback auditions for Rodgers and Hammerstein’s *Cinderella*), and making yearly theatre-based trips to New York City (after one of which I discovered “Dear Sweet Sewing Machine” as a bonus track on the cast album for the revival of *Fiddler on the Roof* I had just seen). Those who know me are aware that I am not one who enjoys forgetting things, so I kept all this information safely contained in my mental archives for a rainy day. When I began my preliminary list, these were some of the first additions.

After I included my cut song knowledge from my high school era, I dug around my mental archives for the more recent additions from my college experiences. From these years, I recalled “The Bed” from *HAIR* (which I had the, uh, “pleasure” of

performing in WKU's production my sophomore year), "Don't Go" from *Cabaret* (which I heard the first time in my best friend's collegiate performance of the 1987 revival version in Georgia), and "Flag Song" from *Assassins* (which I first saw expertly performed by the velvet-voiced Brian Stokes Mitchell during *Take Me to the World: A Sondheim 90th Birthday Celebration* on YouTube). Just by living my life, I had inadvertently assembled over half of what would become my final set list.

All of the aforementioned songs appeared on the preliminary list I submitted for Honors Musical Theatre History, along with twelve others (found via mental archives, YouTube, Google searches, etc.) that did not make the final cut. Yes: I indeed had to cut songs from a cabaret about cut songs. This round of cuts occurred the summer after Musical Theatre History when I set out to learn which songs would be most suitable for a single performer (sorry, "Oh, My Mysterious Lady" from *Peter Pan*), which ones actually had sheet music available to the public (sorry, "I Suck" from *Something Rotten!* and many others), and, of course, which ones were actually obscure enough that people wouldn't think I was cheating by including them (sorry, "There Won't Be Trumpets" from *Anyone Can Whistle*).

I knew those seven songs would not be enough to fill a whole cabaret-style show, so I lined them all up together around the beginning of the fall 2020 semester to see what gaps needed to be filled. I weighed my options and had many a conversation with myself: "I have nothing older than *Oklahoma!*? Let's look up some cut songs from *Show Boat*." "I have two Sondheim songs? Hm, I should probably balance that out with an Andrew Lloyd Webber song." "Oh, I don't have anything from this century... *Waitress* has a whole album of cut songs, doesn't it?" At this stage, I decided I would perform the songs

chronologically in order of their debut dates, as enough time periods were represented. Perhaps I am downplaying the amount of time, thought, and research put into choosing those songs, but the processes I just described are generally accurate to reality. Without a doubt, the most interesting discovery process was that for “Out for Blood/Crackerjack” from *Carrie*, the ill-fated Broadway disaster of 1988.

Jennifer Ashley Tepper is a theatre producer and historian who also happens to be an active Twitter user. (Any Twitter user with personal anecdotes about Patti LuPone and Hal Prince is a user I wish to follow.) In November, I replied to a tweet of hers asking if she had any favorite musical theatre cut songs, and to my surprise, she responded. Tepper informed me of *Broadway Recycled*, a concert series she had produced a decade prior that featured Broadway alums singing cut songs from shows to which they had personal ties. (*Broadway Recycled* did not include the heavily educational elements I envisioned for *Cut Song Cabaret*, so I did not worry about imitation.) To YouTube I went, where I found a clip of a haphazardly written song called “Crackerjack” from *Carrie*. The song was so utterly ridiculous that I had no choice but to perform it. To my surprise, a quick Google search led me to a PDF of the full, handwritten original score from before *Carrie* even made it to Broadway (in several sections, lyrics were scribbled out with replacement lyrics above the staff). The score revealed to me that “Crackerjack” actually had entire extra verses not sung in *Broadway Recycled*, turning it into “Out for Blood/Crackerjack.” The additional music and lyrics made it even more of a head-scratcher, further solidifying my burning need to do it. As a tribute to Tepper for her help with this, I used two of her books as props in the final staging of the show.

This brought my total to eleven songs. I had a cabaret set list!

RESEARCH, WRITING, AND REHEARSAL: PUTTING IT TOGETHER

If my prior explanations as to how I move through life as a theatre consumer were any indication, I not only was consistently gathering research while I compiled my set list, but I was also having little trouble doing so. (If you are the type of person who stays glued to IMDb every time you watch a new film, try to imagine the musical theatre equivalent to this, and you will get me.) However, this could not just be a sung research paper. It was the composition of the show's spoken dialogue—or, rather, thirty-plus-minute monologue—and the vocal preparation that I was utterly *convinced* would be lurking in the metaphorical onstage bushes, waiting to jump out and spite me. They did not do this. I knew it would behoove me to set deadlines for myself and get frequent feedback from Michelle, who became my capstone advisor, and Amelia, my voice teacher turned second reader.

A constant caveat ringing in my ear while writing was, “*Don't* make it too encyclopedic!!!” I joke in the final script that had I not found an academic outlet for all the cut song information, the cabaret would have just been me encyclopedically spouting off facts to my friends. This concept did not materialize from thin air; this is another constant theme in my life (ask anyone I know about my “*Shuffle Along* spiel”). Likewise, it became a theme in my writing. In several sections, I had to steer myself from “HereareallthefactsIcancraminbeforeI sing!” to “Here are the key points in a conversational yet engaging tone! Oh, and take this quirky anecdote about my relationship with this show.” The former approach can be seen in this early draft of my pre-song introduction to “The Heart is Slow to Learn” from *Love Never Dies*:

Alright, now that I've sung two Sondheim songs, it's probably time I balance it out with some Andrew Lloyd Webber. (You can't do a whole musical theatre variety show without some Webber snuck in there.) This song has a very interesting history. *Love Never Dies* is a sequel to his *Phantom of the Opera* set ten years into the future, and this song, which is called "The Heart is Slow to Learn," was the first melody he wrote when he thought of doing a sequel. There seem to be two schools of thought surrounding this show: either you love *Phantom* and hate *Love Never Dies*, or you hate *Phantom* and think *Love Never Dies* is a stroke of genius. Really interesting dichotomy. Anyway, it took another decade or so for the whole show to get off the ground so he actually used the chorus in another show in the meantime. So, showtime for *Love Never Dies* finally rolls around, and this melody has become the titular song, "Love Never Dies," and sung by Christine Daaé, with entirely different lyrics than the first time it was recorded in late '90s. Let's take a look.

Now, for the latter approach, which is what appears in the final script:

Alright, now that I've sung two Sondheim songs, it's probably time I balance it out with some Andrew Lloyd Webber. (You can't do a whole musical theatre variety show without some Webber snuck in there.) This song also has a very interesting history. *Love Never Dies* is a sequel to his *Phantom of the Opera* set ten years later, and this song, which is called "The Heart is Slow to Learn," was the first melody he wrote when he thought of doing a sequel. *Love Never Dies* gets kind of wild. Christine has a son, and Raoul is a jerk, and it's at Coney Island, and there's a gun—anyway, there seem to be two schools of thought surrounding this show: either you love *Phantom* and hate *Love Never Dies*, or you hate *Phantom* and think *Love Never Dies* is a stroke of genius. Really interesting dichotomy. It took a decade or so after this song was written for the whole show to get off the ground so he actually used the chorus in another show in the meantime. (*The Beautiful Game*, if you've ever heard of it.) So, showtime for *Love Never Dies* finally rolls around, and this melody, now with *totally* different lyrics, has become the titular song, "Love Never Dies," and it's sung by Christine. I can say with certainty that I will never play Christine again in my life, so my 8th grade self who thought she was a soprano is going to have to savor this moment.

Michelle helped me find this storytelling rather than fact-spouting rhythm with each updated draft I sent her, always pushing for more personal touches and flagging the clunkiest informational passages. Michelle was also instrumental in helping me come up with the visual aide of Playbills for each show that I could toss to the floor with each "cut." (My first concept was to have large show posters strung up across the back of the

stage that I pull down after each song, but the lack of an actual props designer coupled with the idea of having to run the entire length of the stage and back every five minutes made the novelty of this idea quickly fade.)

The eleven songs became my entire workload for my senior year voice lessons, which was to be expected. Amelia insisted I form a game plan: I would make a calendar of all of my lessons and predetermine what I needed to cover each week. Here is my self-assigned calendar for my final month of voice lessons before filming.

<p>FEBRUARY 23 -“The Heart is Slow to Learn” —>review “Boys and Girls Like You and Me” —>address finale of “Mr. Monotony” —>quickly revisit C# in “Door Number Three”</p> <p>MARCH 2 -“Flag Song” —>review “Boom Crunch” —>quickly run “The Bed”</p> <p>MARCH 9 (already rehearsing with Julie) -review whatever sections are still freaking me out</p> <p>MARCH 16 (dress rehearsal week) -review whatever sections are still freaking me out</p>

This system of getting specific with my goals worked. With almost daily practice for nearly seven months, I prepared my pitches and rhythms thoroughly and reached a level of technical proficiency with each song. Thankfully, I also got to perform about half the songs for classmates throughout the year to see how they would fare with an audience.

I mentioned earlier that I was expecting the eleven songs to take my vocal attention for the length of my senior year. However, what I was *not* expecting was that I

would also have an existential realization about myself as a performer. If it were up to me, how one sounds while singing would be dependent only on the mechanics of the body and the musical elements. However, being a member of Amelia's voice studio has taught me that this has never been *and never will be* the case. A performer's mental state can make or break a performance. In the past, when I have been performing and think to myself, "Uh oh...that note is coming up that always sounds gripped because my larynx is too high," guess which direction my larynx goes because I just put that exact thought in my mind? Your mind *has* to be working with you, not against you. Sabotaging thoughts will live up to their name every time. This is what I frequently had to remind myself when I started full rehearsals—and when inner fears about my ability to sing all eleven songs in succession surfaced.

Turns out, juggling an hour of self-penned dialogue and pages upon pages of sheet music while delivering jokes *and* eleven separate characters exactly how you want all of it to go is hard. Who knew? I had four runs of the show (working with dialogue, music, staging, and props) with my accompanist, Julie Pride, before filming. This was a treat, as it had been a full calendar year since I performed with a live accompanist due to COVID-19 concerns. Our excitement to be back in the same room led to the formation of a few comic bits, one of which became a favorite moment of mine. The following moment (beginning with "***Julie interjects***") from the final script was only added after being completely improvised by the two of us during an early rehearsal:

This song eventually did have its heyday in two other Rodgers and Hammerstein shows later, so if that song sounded familiar to you...that probably means your high school didn't choose very good shows. *cough Cinderella*. I would tell you the other show it got shoehorned into, but I know approximately two people who care about *State Fair*. ***Julie interjects*** Fine, three. ***Julie plays a snippet of the State Fair score*** Is that from *State Fair*? ***Julie ad libs an explanation that what she just played was the titular song*** ...See, I wouldn't have even known that, because I'm not one of my three people! Anyway, moving on.

During only one of our four runs did we go straight through the show without stopping (as it would be filmed). Memorizing my own words ended up not quite being the insurmountable beast I expected it to be. Rather, it was my own dissatisfaction that wore this badge of dishonor. If a certain pitch refused to sound how I wanted it to sound, I insisted we try it again one, two, three times. If I forgot or jumbled a line, I refused to press on unless my wording was correct. If I started feeling vocally insufficient, I wore it on my sleeve, letting it seep across my increasingly disengaged physique (hence why “The Heart is Slow to Learn” and “Boom Crunch” were filmed right before the rest of the cabaret—they required my voice and mind to be in a prime state). The first two of these three things are not necessarily terrible rehearsal practices for a solo show, but I let them all nearly drive me to destruction. It was by additional personal preparation during the final week and the miracle of allowing myself only one filming take of everything that I snapped into performer mode; I gave myself no choice but to be good enough the first go round. If anything, that final week showed me the importance of giving myself grace while simultaneously plowing through.

...And plow through I did. *Cut Song Cabaret* was finally filmed in its entirety with full production elements on March 21, 2021 (incidentally, my father's 64th birthday), at 2pm in the Gordon Wilson Hall Lab Theatre. I had a show.

REFLECTION: THAT'S SHOWBIZ

On March 29, 2021, I got to watch my solo performance of *Cut Song Cabaret* streamed live on YouTube, where in just two days, the video garnered enough views to equal two sold-out houses in the theatre where it was filmed. The only two things in life that are certain are a.) death and b.) that I will always write at least a *little* bit when I watch myself sing. Nevertheless, I felt a wave of comfort wash over me as I sat in my living room; I had made something cool that people were enjoying. It was over, and...it was pretty good...!

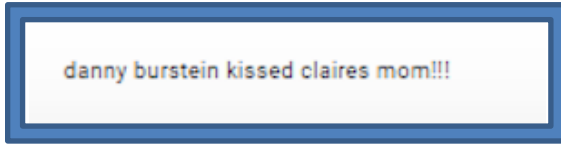
I got some very positive feedback from students in the current section of Musical Theatre History, some of whom have limited experience with musical theatre, who viewed the performance for extra credit points. (In a full circle moment, yes, I got to be the teaching assistant of the class that inspired my whole project the same semester it came to fruition!) Some had never seen a cabaret-style performance before, so *Cut Song Cabaret* was their introduction to this medium that is a staple for performers across so many arts scenes. Here are some photos of their actual takeaways:

The point is the show the infinite possibility of theatre. Just one song can have such a huge impact on a show. It can influence how the audience perceives certain characters and can completely change the course of the show.

That living in an alternate universe *ding* can be fun. Exploration of another world isn't always pretty or perfect, but it can be rewarding!

i love a good cabaret. i feel like they only ever happen in big cities, but cabarets should be more widespread. they're self indulgent in all the best ways.

And, perhaps most importantly:



Though I certainly met my performance goals of entertaining and educating and had a very positive overall reaction when all was said and done, I did *not* immediately anticipate it, nor did I echo that same positivity.

When I left Gordon Wilson Hall after filming the final version of *Cut Song Cabaret* with no second takes, I was ~~justly devastated~~ being overly dramatic. Another adage of Amelia's voice studio is that your performances will never be as good as your practice sessions. I *knew* this. Why did I act so surprised when that exact thing happened? Of course, there is another adage that cancels this out: You will always sound worse to yourself than you sound to other people. I had been singing these songs for two semesters' worth of voice lessons, so of course, I could recognize when I had a vocal glitch (e.g. keeping a straight tone for the fifth-to-last note of "Boys and Girls Like You and Me" instead of adding vibrato, which I now realize sounds like an incredibly trivial issue because it absolutely *was*). Meanwhile, for most of the people on the other side of the screen, they had never even *heard* these songs (which was the whole point!), and much less cared that I took an extra breath here and there. They were just there to learn and enjoy. Not every song was perfect, but *no one cared* except me. How...oddly comforting. Michelle and Amelia and even Julie had been telling me throughout the

process that everything was going to be okay, but I really do not think I had never truly believed them. *Something* had to give and reveal me to be a sham, right? Turns out, the only thing that had to give all along was my own perfectionism.

A more noteworthy complaint would be my acting preparation for the songs, for which there was little. I almost always wait till the last minute to add on layers of acting choices and gestures when I have an upcoming song performance. Again, I *knew* this. However, I let myself become overwhelmed in the final weeks of rehearsals, and it is apparent in the final recording: I use repetitive gestures, my eyeline focus trails, my body is under-energized, and my face too often remains more stoic than I realized. (Though Michelle and Amelia disagree with some of this assessment, I hold my ground on it.) This is certainly something I would need to fix and solidify before performing this show again.

Speaking of performing this show again, what do I envision as being the future of *Cut Song Cabaret*? I definitely am not finished with this show. In theory, I could just keep performing it for the rest of my life and add in a new cut song with every passing decade or so. As proven by *Broadway Recycled*, this cabaret would not be out of place in a smaller venue in New York City. Other performers could even eventually adapt it for themselves. Of course, this is all speculative, but fun to imagine—and, feasible.

Equally feasible, however, is the possibility that *Cut Song Cabaret* was just a theatrical moment in time that will never be mounted again, leaving it to join an invisible realm of other extinct theatre pieces aching to be rediscovered and spoken by human mouths again. This, too, is the magic of theatre. One minute, it's here, electrifying and

seemingly everlasting, and the next minute, it's gone, having "disappeared, like the fine morning mist."⁴

And that's showbiz, baby.

⁴ Sondheim and Lapine 47

CUT SONG CABARET: THE FULL SCRIPT

Run time: 55 minutes

Claire enters ceremoniously as the Carol Burnett Show theme plays. Julie sits at the piano upstage. The large red armchair sits downstage left with a black stool nearby Welcome, welcome, everyone. How we doin'?' *Claire gestures as if listening for an audience response* Come on, I know you can do bet—I'm just kidding, I hate that. For those of you who don't know me, you're about to. I'm Claire. Hey. We all know this school year has been...less than desirable, and that's certainly putting it nicely. And I know we shouldn't dwell on "What If's, but it's human nature to wonder what it would be like if just a few things had happened differently, you know? I mean, what would it be like right now in...an alternate universe? *Bell dinging sound effect as Claire looks to the camera*

There's an alternate universe where the song "Over the Rainbow" isn't in *The Wizard of Oz*. Yeah, one of the most iconic songs of all time from one of the most iconic films of all time was almost never introduced to the world because executives were afraid it was too slow.⁵

There's another alternate universe out there where the opening sequence of *West Side Story* isn't that iconic choreographed, stylized standoff that changed musical theatre forever, but is instead a song set in the Jets' clubhouse.⁶ What would that world even be like? So, *walking offstage* I decided to do some light reading. *returns with huge stack of theatre books and puts them down with a thud* And I found some really interesting stuff. When you get into it, there are endless alternate universes with totally different versions of all of our favorite musicals. *Something Rotten!* cycled through 54 songs until settling on a final 18.⁷ Okay, maybe I talk about musicals a lot. Sue me. *picks up mug, sips from it, turns it to the camera nonchalantly to reveal that it reads "That Musical Theatre History B*tch"* My point being, there probably isn't a single show out there that has kept the same song list from conception to performance because it's all about what works and what doesn't.

So many factors go into what stays and what gets axed: Is a song necessary or is it superfluous? Is it too dark? Too fluffy? Would this work better as dialogue? Does the style fit with the other songs we're working with?...Or should it stand out even more? Of course, reasonings vary from composer to composer, lyricist to lyricist, and all the way up the production ladder, even. This is only the tip of the *Titanic: A New Musical* iceberg.

Another question: why dwell on the past versions of these shows that creators deemed inferior? So, the way I see it, these songs at one time fulfilled their sacred duty of entertaining an audience and required just as much work to produce as the songs that maybe replaced them. Though these cut songs are no longer attached to the musicals that

gave them life, they are still works of art. Mostly. (You'll see what I mean by that later.) They deserve to be heard, and we deserve an extra dose of escapism to the alternate universes where they continued to charm audiences eight times a week. Herein lies the mission of *Cut Song Cabaret*. So, what are some of the songs I'm talking about? I'm so glad you asked. *a la Susan Blackwell in [title of show]* Here's a few of them.

We're throwing it back all the way to 1927 with this first song, from what is considered by many to be the earliest example of the contemporary musical comedy: Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II's *Show Boat*. This is a comedy duet that was written for the show within the show.

["I MIGHT FALL BACK ON YOU" cut from *SHOW BOAT*]⁸

Picking up a Show Boat Playbill Now, I didn't realize this about *Show Boat*, but it has had such a revolving door of songs—I'm talkin' songs written for other shows then used for *Show Boat*, songs written for *Show Boat* then cut, new songs added for *Show Boat* in later productions of *Show Boat*—so many, that there are only three songs that have appeared in every major production of *Show Boat*.⁹ Also, I just said *Show Boat* way too many times. Anyway, that fun little song has not always stood the test of time. Oh, well. ***Claire tosses the Playbill to the floor, a trope which is to be repeated with each show***

Moving on to 1943: Rodgers and Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* shook up the musical theatre scene with its revolutionary improvements to the musical theatre book. This next love song paled in comparison to the idea of a triumphant reprise of "People Will Say We're in Love," so it got the chop.¹⁰

["BOYS AND GIRLS LIKE YOU AND ME" cut from *OKLAHOMA!*, *MEET ME IN ST. LOUIS*, and *TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME*]

About a year after that song was cut from *Oklahoma!*, good ol' R&H thought they'd offer this to their buddies at MGM who were working on the latest Judy Garland movie called *Meet Me in St. Louis*, where the song was cut a *second time*. MGM decided to try it again after that in *Take Me Out to the Ball Game*, which starred Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly, because third time is the charm, right? Nope, because it was cut again. (You can still find Judy and Frank's recordings of the song on YouTube though.^{11 12}) Oscar Hammerstein II, the lyricist to "Boys and Girls Like You and Me," is quoted as saying, "There are few things in life of which I am certain, but I am sure of this one thing, that the song is the servant of the play, that it is wrong to write first what you think is an attractive song and then try to wedge it into a story."¹³ That makes sense when you look at the two MGM movies, right? So, what better way to honor his wishes than by shoving it into TWO more shows??? This song eventually did have its heyday in two other Rodgers and Hammerstein shows later, so if that song sounded familiar to you...that probably means your high school didn't choose very good shows. ***cough Cinderella***. I would tell you the other show it got shoehorned into, but I know approximately two people who care about *State Fair*. ***Julie interjects*** Fine, three. ***Julie plays a snippet of the State Fair score*** Is that from *State Fair*? ***Julie ad libs an explanation that what she just played was the***

titular song ...See, I wouldn't have even known that, because I'm not one of my three people! Anyway, moving on.

Let's get some *jazz* in here. I love me some jazz.

[“MR. MONOTONY” cut from *EASTER PARADE*, *MISS LIBERTY*, and *CALL ME MADAM*, *GLEE*]

I mentioned Judy Garland earlier, who is in fact the love of my life. (Was I dressed as her for my first ever college party? Irrelevant.) She gave this song its debut when it was cut from *Easter Parade*, which was a showbusiness movie set at the turn of the century and also starred Fred Astaire. It got axed because it didn't match the time period, so Irving Berlin, who wrote it, tried it out in a few more of his shows, like *Miss Liberty*, where it was chopped again, and *Call Me Madam*, where it was chopped a third time because why? According to what I'm sure is an indisputably reputable source called oldhollywoodfilms.com, Ethel Merman just didn't like it. It was not until 1989 that “Mr. Monotony” *finally* made its professional debut in a Broadway revue after *forty years* of being shuffled around different cutting room floors.¹⁴ I mean, it was even cut from an episode of *Glee*.

Let's jump forward in time again a few years, this time to 1964, when *Fiddler on the Roof* had just opened at the Imperial Theatre.

[“DEAR SWEET SEWING MACHINE” cut from *FIDDLER ON THE ROOF*]

Referring to silence Do you hear that? **looks around** This is what the *Fiddler on the Roof* actors heard every night after singing this song. No applause. I mean, it's a lovely song, but you'd probably cut a song if that happened too, let's be real. Ouch. And the sad thing is, according to this book about *Fiddler*, they thought it would be a hit. The producers had all loved it.¹⁵ **shakes head** Nope. Crickets for you, renowned Broadway actors Austin Pendleton and Joanna Merlin.¹⁶ Crickets. At least for the most recent revival, “Dear Sweet Sewing Machine” finally got its due as a bonus track on their cast album (which is a very good recording, by the way).¹⁷ Yeah, just when the world thought *Fiddler* shouldn't be revived a fifth time...it...was. But, it was a very good, *interesting* production. This was the production with Danny Burstein as Tevye. When I saw that revival, you'd actually think this song was kept in because about midway through Act 2, someone seated in the orchestra section started snoring so loudly that it actually echoed around the theatre. Remember that time Danny Burstein kissed my mom? Now that I think about it, it was that same night. We lost “Dear Sweet Sewing Machine,” but we got Danny Burstein kissing my mom. **long pause, nodding** Anyway.

We cut to 1967, when *HAIR*, the American tribal love rock musical, made some noise off-Broadway at the Public Theatre before moving to Broadway the next year. According to this book about the Public Theatre, the cast came to rehearsal high all the time, and the composer dressed like he worked in a bank.¹⁸ Let's hear my least favorite song of the evening.

[“THE BED” cut from some versions of *HAIR*]

Stop, no, I hate this song so much. Oh, man. There’s another cut song from *HAIR* called “Exanaplanetooch” about a planet where the sky is green...and I still hate “The Bed” more. It’s very much a “list song,” but unlike earlier list songs like the ones by Cole Porter where he makes a bunch of witty double entendres about animals or pop culture, “The Bed” just lists things you can do while in a bed. Lucky for me, when I was in this show here, our version kept “The Bed.” Yeah, we threw all the couch cushions and bean bag chairs in the middle of the stage and just piled on top of each other. Julie over here actually played for that show! You can find both “Exanaplanetooch” and “The Bed” on an album of cut songs from *HAIR* that was released the same year they competed at the Tony Awards. The name of the album was...*DisinHAIRited*.¹⁹ **acts dumbfounded**

To cleanse myself from that unwanted blast from the past, let’s skip forward in time about twenty years to what is quite possibly my favorite musical of all time: Stephen Sondheim and James Lapine’s *Into the Woods*. I’m about to expose myself here. I have a distinct memory of dream casting my class in *Into the Woods* when I was in kindergarten. This love runs deep. So, when I got my first iPod touch in sixth grade, I quickly downloaded the deluxe cast album and fell into a months-long YouTube rabbit hole of *Into the Woods* clips. I’m dead serious when I tell you that I have probably seen at least a little bit of every single amateur and professional production of *Into the Woods* that you can find on YouTube. I’m only semi-ashamed to admit it. Like, if you want any recommendations of good productions to find on there, I have names. All that to say though, 11-year-old me discovered this song as a bonus track on the deluxe album AND found bootleg footage of it from the 1986 pre-Broadway production in San Diego.²⁰ And just now, eleven years later, is it becoming of use to me.

[“BOOM CRUNCH” cut from *INTO THE WOODS*]

If you’re familiar with the show, then it probably didn’t take you very long to realize that “Boom Crunch” was replaced by the witch’s big 11 o’clock number “Last Midnight.” There was a rumor it was replaced by “Last Midnight” to give Bernadette Peters a showstopper, but Sondheim says that actually wasn’t the case. Both of the songs are definitely worthy of the drama of the witch cursing the remaining cast and disappearing through a smoky trap door, I think, but Sondheim decided “Boom Crunch” repeated too much information that the audience already knew.²¹ I must admit that I prefer the direction the final version that that song and the show in general ended up taking. In the pre-Broadway bootleg clips, you can see that the show started off a lot more gimmicky, with even more fairy tale elements. I mean, the Baker’s Wife dies from eating a poison apple in the first version, and it’s a *laugh line*.²² To make matters even worse, at the end, Cinderella and the Baker are clearly already in love, as if his wife didn’t die **checks invisible watch** THAT SAME NIGHT.²³ And for those of you still hung up on the “kindergarten dream cast” thing, don’t worry, I *did* cast myself as the Witch. **goes to toss Playbill, but can’t bring herself to do it, so she gingerly places it back on the chair**

This next song is “Don’t Go” from *Cabaret*. Some of you might be hearing this title and thinking, “Wait, no, this wasn’t cut! I was in *Cabaret* and this was in it! And why are you singing it right now when it debuted before *HAIR*?” And you are right about all of that! But, this song was only included in the 1987 revival, which most people don’t put on these days in favor of the edgier 1998 revival version. Now, John Kander, the composer, fought for this song to be kept in later versions.²⁴ At first glance, this is just another tenor love song, which there are approximately, mmm, a million of in musical theatre. But, if you look at it within in the context of the show, it’s actually...devastating. In the scene that leads into this song, Sally Bowles, who is in a messy relationship with Cliff, has found out that Cliff is bisexual. And she’s about to leave. This is set in 1929, when the world was even less kind to anyone who wasn’t straight, so this song isn’t just romantic. It’s also a man’s *desperate* last attempt at having a “normal” life to present to the world.

[“DON’T GO” cut from *CABARET*]

...You know, I’m actually really sad that one had to go.

Alright, now the best way I can explain just how horrific this next song is by quoting this book by Ken Mandelbaum, who describes it as “a nightmare from which no show could ever recover.”²⁵ This book is called *Not Since Carrie: Forty Years of Broadway Musical Flops*. Can you imagine your show being so poorly received that *the* book about flops is named after you??? Now, I really wanna make this a special evening for you, so I’m going to do my best to recreate what the audience saw when this song was still included in previews, okay? Let me set the scene: a group of goonish teenagers is at a pig farm on prom night. There’s also a big strip of fire right across the stage. Because that’s practical. Here we go.

[“OUT FOR BLOOD/CRACKERJACK” cut from *CARRIE*]

Claire includes several moves from the original Broadway choreography. Near the end of the song, Claire “slits” a pig’s throat and smears the blood on her chest, again in an effort to mimic the original Broadway staging²⁶

This song was eventually cut from the version of the show we know today. Actually, the whole show was cut from Broadway after a week. After the song ended, half the audience sat in stunned silence while the other half were just seemingly excited to have witnessed whatever it was they just saw.²⁷ Some of the melody was kept in a later part of the show, but the rest of it was axed. Who could’ve expected that the theme of the crackerjack snack food didn’t match the bloodthirsty, murderous tone of the rest of the song?

Hey, actually...speaking of murder...*Assassins* is the next show on our list. It’s one of Sondheim’s smaller scale shows about nine assassins (or attempted assassins) of U.S. presidents. If you’ve never seen the show, you might be thinking, “...why?” But trust me. It works. Actually, when *Assassins* finally made it to Broadway in 2004, a WKU alum played Sara Jane Moore.²⁸ It was Becky Ann Baker! ***holding up a picture of Becky Ann Baker talking at WKU with Claire in the background*** Look, here we are together. Besties. ***noticing the Carrie Playbill*** Oh, yeah, *Carrie*. ***tossing it*** Anyway, the show has

a shooting gallery carnival game-themed opening number that frames the rest of the show. “Come here and kill a president!...You wanna shoot a president?”—that kind of deal.²⁹ But, before they came up with this, the original concept was that the show would open on a parade where a bunch of onlookers were waiting to see the president, and one by one, they’d slowly be replaced by the assassins.³⁰ It’s not really a surprise that heavy themes are explored in *Assassins*, like the sensationalism of violence in American culture, the idealism of the “American dream” versus its actual achievability...Here’s a quote about that from the show’s bookwriter, John Weidman: “we live in a country whose most cherished national myths...encourage us to believe that in America our dreams not only *can* come true, but *should* come true, and that if they don’t someone or something is to blame.”³¹ And, evidently, each of these assassins had their own way of handling their dreams not quite coming true. Let’s check it out.

[“FLAG SONG” cut from *ASSASSINS*]

If you’re fan of *Assassins*, you might recognize that melody as being similar to “Another National Anthem,” which comes later in the show and has very similar themes. But, Sondheim also used “Flag Song” for his most recent musical, *Road Show*, even though he kind of considers it cheating to reuse an older song.³² The tune was too good to go to waste, so it got some new lyrics to make it about a dying father telling his sons that the world is in their hands now. Huh...almost like he’s telling them to chase their own American dream... *knowingly looks to camera*

Alright, now that I’ve sung two Sondheim songs, it’s probably time I balance it out with some Andrew Lloyd Webber. (You can’t do a whole musical theatre variety show without some Webber snuck in there.) This song also has a very interesting history. *Love Never Dies* is a sequel to his *Phantom of the Opera* set ten years later, and this song, which is called “The Heart is Slow to Learn,” was the first melody he wrote when he thought of doing a sequel.³³ *Love Never Dies* gets kind of wild. Christine has a son, and Raoul is a jerk, and it’s at Coney Island, and there’s a gun—anyway, there seem to be two schools of thought surrounding this show: either you love *Phantom* and hate *Love Never Dies*, or you hate *Phantom* and think *Love Never Dies* is a stroke of genius. Really interesting dichotomy. It took a decade or so after this song was written for the whole show to get off the ground so he actually used the chorus in another show in the meantime. (*The Beautiful Game*, if you’ve ever heard of it.) So, showtime for *Love Never Dies* finally rolls around, and this melody, now with *totally* different lyrics, has become the titular song, “Love Never Dies,” and it’s sung by Christine. I can say with certainty that I will never play Christine again in my life, so my 8th grade self who thought she was a soprano is going to have to savor this moment.

[“THE HEART IS SLOW TO LEARN” reworked for *LOVE NEVER DIES*]

Alright, Sara Bareilles fans, I’ve got a surprise for you! That’s right, it’s a *Waitress* song! Because what else would it be? So, turns out *HAIR* isn’t the only show that released a whole album of songs that got the chop. This next song is included on that album for *Waitress*, which is called *What’s Not Inside: The Lost Songs from Waitress*.³⁴ Sara

Bareilles sings all of the songs herself, which is really cool. This song is called “Door Number Three” and it was replaced by “What Baking Can Do.” If you’ve ever heard that song, you’ll be able to hear a lot of musical similarities between the two, kind of like “Boom Crunch” and “Last Midnight” have. Here we go.

[“DOOR NUMBER THREE” cut from *WAITRESS*]

Hey, I’m noticing something...To leave you with something poetic this evening, let’s rethink the meaning behind some of those *Waitress* lyrics. In the context of the show, the character who sings this is daring to consider what life would be like without her horrible husband. But, don’t these lyrics also kind of fit what we’re doing with this cabaret? For example...“Boom Crunch” was Door Number Two, and “Last Midnight” was Door Number Three. “Crackerjack” was Door Number Two, and...nothing was Door Number Three (thank God). The songs we explored tonight are all the “road less traveled” to put it Frostily. *Pause*

You know, there have been times where it’s felt like I’ve had to choose between paths or doors or whatever. It’s easy to think that being a musical theatre historian isn’t really compatible with being a full time musical theatre performer, which really isn’t compatible with pursuing sketch-writing and improv. But, miraculously, I was kind of able to do all of those things with this. *Cut Song Cabaret* has been my Door Number Three. If I didn’t find an academic outlet like this, what you saw here would just be me encyclopedically spouting off facts to my friends. That’s what it would be like right now in, ya know...an alternate universe. *bell dinging sound effect goes off while Claire coyly sips from her mug* But hey, I found a way to be all of those things. That’s my actual universe now. And, the cut songs and the stories behind them are now part of it, and they’re part of yours too. I think there’s another life lesson to be gleaned here. The writers poured hours of brainpower into composing all these songs, tried them, and for one reason or another, they just didn’t work. And that’s okay. Because the shows ended up what they needed to be, we ended up who we needed to be, and theatre people have these wonderful hidden gems that we can rediscover from time to time and live out the answer to the question of what might’ve been. And that’s showbiz, baby. *toasts and sips from mug*

⁵ Robey n.p.

⁶ Sondheim, *Finishing the Hat* 31

⁷ “Something Really Rotten! @ Feinstein’s 54 Below (4/25/16)-Entire Show,” *YouTube*

⁸ For copyright reasons, the sheet music for this show’s songs could not be included here.

⁹ “History | Show Boat Musical,” showboatmusical.co.uk/history/.

¹⁰ Carter 159

¹¹ “Boys And Girls Like You and Me (Outtake),” *YouTube*

¹² “Frank Sinatra – ‘Boys and Girls Like You and Me’ Outtake from Take Me Out To
The Ball Game (1949),” *YouTube*

¹³ Carter 179

¹⁴ “Debbie Gravitte Mr Monotony Jerome Robbins Broadway,” *YouTube*

¹⁵ Solomon 190-191

¹⁶ “Fiddler on the Roof – Broadway Musical – Original,” *IBDB*

¹⁷ Gordon n.p.

¹⁸ Turan and Papp 185-189

¹⁹ “Exanaplanetooch,” castalbums.org/songs/Exanaplanetooch/2173/

²⁰ “Into the Woods – Pre Broadway – Boom! Crunch!” *YouTube*

²¹ Sondheim, *The Almost Unknown Stephen Sondheim* xvi-xvii

²² “Into the Woods – Pre Broadway – Boom! Crunch!” *YouTube*

²³ “Into The Woods Finale 1986,” *YouTube*

²⁴ Garebian 187

²⁵ 8

²⁶ “Carrie The Musical-Crackerjack (Out for blood),” *YouTube*

²⁷ Mandelbaum 9

²⁸ “Assassins—Broadway Musical—Original,” *IBDB*

²⁹ Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat* 114

³⁰ @RaulEEsparza *Twitter*

³¹ Levy n.p.

³² Sondheim, *Look, I Made a Hat* 117

³³ “‘Love Never Dies’ premieres at The South Bank Show Awards,”

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