

Writing an Original Musical in the 21st Century

The first American musical is generally attributed to ‘The Black Crook’ in 1866, including drama, music and dance. Now, 159 years later, musicals appear both on stage and on the screen. In a musical it is important to create a story the audience can follow, as well as engaging music to carry the story along. The process to writing a musical in the 21st century can be formulaic, depending on the author’s approach and past hits on Broadway, yet it has its challenges, especially for someone with limited knowledge on the subject. The main difficulty during the process was envisioning the final project on stage before putting it to paper. Musicals are important because they take music, which evokes emotion, and implement it into a story, increasing the potency of both to take the audience on a journey.

The musical I’m writing is titled ‘Phronzie The Musical’. It centers around a young American spy attempting to expose a traitor in the agency and her transformation into adulthood throughout. It is an adaptation of my first novel, ‘Phronzie’, written and published while I was in high school, figuratively based on experiences in my past. The musical choices I’m using center around the typical musical sound, such as Broadway’s Anastasia, as well as the classic 1970’s sound, when the musical is based. Throughout this process I have learned quite a bit about refining a story plot, and utilizing voices and ideas from others to create something relatable to the audience. Having been an author and songwriter for over five years, this has been a stretch to combine the two skills to make a coherent whole, but both skills have made this project possible.