

in·gé·nue, (anjə'noo, 'änjə, noo/)

an innocent or unsophisticated young woman, especially in a play or film.

We at Music Theatre of Madison love to see what's different and changing in the world of musical theatre. Lately, we've asked ourselves: Where can we find musicals about complex women's issues: Body image, aging, abuse, motherhood, gender identity, empowerment, and more? This show gave us the rare experience of hearing voices that reflected what we as a cast and creative team had experienced. Many of us have experienced love, but we're also businesswomen, mothers, scholars, survivors of disease and abuse, warriors for women's rights, and scraping to keep up with everything the world expects of us.

Why are we lacking in realistic female portrayals, both in musical theatre and in other forms of entertainment? The answer seems to be simple and age-old: There simply are not enough women being heard. The number of women writing and directing for theatre is staunchly disproportionate to that of men. This goes for Broadway shows and regional theatres alike. Men can certainly create lively and provocative stories for and about women, and have...but it's time to let the ladies have the same number of opportunities to write about their own lives. We hope *Beyond The Ingenue* gives you a chance to see that these empowering, realistic, dynamic stories are out there and that female composers are making their mark on contemporary musicals. And we hope it encourages you to explore new works by women and support creative endeavors that put women's stories at the forefront.

Questions to consider:

- What types of issues would you like to see addressed in a musical theatre piece?
- Why do you think Broadway and regional theatres keep sticking to producing the same types of pieces, which are often written by men?
- How can audiences be persuaded to engage in stories about women and others with marginalized identities, even if they are new or not well-known?
- How can we nurture women's storytelling as audiences and community members, with the goal of closing the gap?
- What types of women's stories and creations in theatre or other forms of entertainment have made an impression on you in your lifetime?

Did you know?

According to a 2015 study by Wellesley Centers for Women, 72 percent of artistic directors and 63 percent of executive directors at leading U.S. theatres were men. 63 percent of people working just below those positions were women and people of color.

The 2018 and 2019 Broadway seasons feature revivals of beloved classics like *Kiss Me Kate*, *Carousel*, and *My Fair Lady*, as well as a new musical based on *Pretty Woman*. These musicals were all written by men (with the exception of the book for *Kiss Me Kate*), and all are helmed by male creative teams.

The first all-female creative team in Broadway history was less than two years ago with Sara Bareilles' *Waitress*.

The first all-female writing team in history to win the Tony Award for writing a musical was Jeanine Tesori and Lisa Kron, who wrote *Fun Home*. This was in 2015.

Women constitute two-thirds of Broadway audiences and 70% of regional theatre audiences.

Only about 30% of musicals currently on Broadway count a woman as part of their writing team.

"Maybe a young woman will go see a show by a woman, or starring a woman about women's issues, and that will help her get to that quiet place inside of herself where she can explore what it means to be a woman to her." -Laura Benanti

"I've worried that we still need to approach female characters as victims to accept them as heroes."

-Alexis Soloski, New York Times theater critic

Recommended musicals by all-female writing teams featuring womens' issues:

- *Waitress* by Sara Bareilles & Jessie Nelson
- *Fun Home* by Jeanine Tesori & Lisa Kron
- *The Secret Garden* by Marsha Norman & Lucy Simon
- *Dear Edwina* by Marcy Heisler & Zina Goldrich
- *I'm Getting My Act Together and Taking It On The Road* by Gretchen Cryer and Nancy Ford
- *Murder Ballad* by Julia Jordan and Julianna Nash
- *Runaways* by Elizabeth Swados
- *Quilters* by Barbara Damashek and Molly Newman
- *Don't Bother Me, I Can't Cope* by Micki Grant
- *Goblin Market* by Peggy Harmon and Polly Pen
- *The Bubbly Black Girl Sheds Her Chameleon Skin* by Kirsten Childs
- *9 to 5* by Dolly Parton and Patricia Resnick

...and there are *plenty* more where that came from! Most titles available on Spotify, iTunes, or Amazon Music, or on CD through the Madison Public Library.

Books and articles about women in theatre and music:

- "Where are all the women writing musicals?" by Mark Shenton; *The Stage*, July 6, 2017
- "Kiss Me, My Fair Carousel Woman." by Diep Tran; *American Theatre*, April 6, 2018
- "The Problem With Broadway Revivals: They Revive Gender Stereotypes Too." by Michael Paulson, *The New York Times*, February 22, 2018
- "10 Musicals by women you don't know--and should." by Jennifer Ashley Tepper, *Playbill*, October 23, 2015
- "Celebrating Women Musicals." by Andrea Lepcio. *Howlround*, May 18, 2017.
- [Women In American Musical Theatre](#). Edited by Bud Coleman and Judith A. Sebesta (Available online)
- [Audible Traces: Gender, Identity, and Music](#). Edited by Elaine Barken and Lydia Hammesley. Featuring UW-Madison Dean of Music Susan Cook's Award-winning essay, "Watching Our Step."

Websites

- [The Lilly Awards YouTube Channel](#): A series of videos honoring women-written musical theatre pieces.
- [Newmusicaltheatre.com](#): Meant for selling sheet music, this site offers the option to sort and view composers' work and song samples.



WAITRESS, by Sara Bareilles and Jessie Nelson, made history in 2016 by being the first Broadway musical with an all-female writing and creative team.



Lisa Kron (left) and Jeanine Tesori were the first all-female writing team to win the Tony Award for Best Musical for 2015's *FUN HOME*.

"For girls, you have to see it to be it. We stand on the shoulders of other women who have come before us."

-Tony Award winner Jeanine Tesori