A 16 Bar Cut: The History Of American Musical Theatrean Original Script And Monograph Document

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Musical Theatre, comedy, History of American Musical Theatre

Abstract
A final thesis for my Master of Fine Arts degree should encompass every aspect of the past few years spent in the classroom. Therefore, as a perfect capstone to my degree, I have decided to conceive, write, and perform a new musical with my classmate Rockford Sansom entitled The History of Musical Theatre: A 16 Bar Cut. The History of Musical Theatre: A 16 Bar Cut will be a two-man musical that will encapsulate all of musical theatre history in a single evening. Starting with the Greeks and finishing in the present, the show will comedically inform the audience, while paying homage to, the astonishing art form called musical theatre, using several outrageous conventions such as a game show, spoof, mimicry, and most importantly, drag. The show will also pose the question to everyone: with all the great literature already created, where is musical theatre headed, and who is going to bring us there? Writing A 16 Bar Cut will test the training I have received and my mastery of musical theatre as an art form. The show will demonstrate my understanding and passion for several components used by authors and actors alike to create a musical. Being that the show is a capsulation of all musical theatre, A 16 Bar Cut will show my true mastery of the history and literature of musical theatre. I will be forced to hone my skills of the collaborative process at a new level, as never having to truly execute them with such intensity before. The challenges that lay ahead will be seen not only in the performance aspect, but also in the creation of A 16 Bar Cut. Since musical theatre has an immense range in genre and style, the ability to technically master these styles and genres will prove to challenge me as a performer, as well as a writer. In the performance, there will be three main challenges: vocal qualities, dance techniques, and my acting craft. The vocal styles used in A 16 Bar Cut will test my capabilities as a singer to meet the demands needed to convey the original material used as it was initially intended. As a dancer, the specific movements and "signatures" of the many choreographers will challenge me to understand and be able to re-create these "specifics" for an audience. The character building will test me as an actor, starting with one through-lined character—a heightened half-brained juvenile form of myself—along with building approximately fifty auxiliary characters throughout the show. As a writer, there are two major challenges that I foresee. The first challenge is the arc of the show—needing to keep a steady through-line that will let the audience understand what is happening and follow the history. The second obstacle is making sure the audience understands the show. I may be finishing an M.F.A. in Musical Theatre, but not everyone will be. In fact, some audience members may not know anything about musical theatre. This challenge arises trying to make the show funny to everyone, not just musical theatre dorks. The Research and Analysis portion of my monograph document will follow the course of action laid out in the M.F.A. Thesis Guidelines. The (A) Research section will include the biographical information pertaining to the composers and lyricists involved in the selected materials. Librettists of specific book shows that we choose to utilize as it pertains to our show will also be included in this section. I will also include a brief subsection of each composer, lyricist, and librettist's significance to musical theatre history. The (B) Structural Analysis section will discuss the structure and dramatic organization of how we choose to create A 16 Bar Cut. The (C) Analysis of the Role section will reveal how we employ the stock characters/ comedic duo of the straight man and funny man (i.e., Laurel & Hardy and Abbot & Costello). All other components outlined in the M.F.A. Thesis Guidelines will be included in my document.

Notes
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Musical theatre is a form of theatrical performance that combines songs, spoken dialogue, acting and dance. The story and emotional content of a musical – humor, pathos, love, anger – are communicated through the words, music, movement and technical aspects of the entertainment as an integrated whole. Although musical theatre overlaps with other theatrical forms like opera and dance, it may be distinguished by the equal importance given to the music as compared with the dialogue.