

Public Abstract

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Title:KISS TODAY GOODBYE, AND POINT ME TOWARD TOMORROW: REVIVING THE TIME-BOUND MUSICAL, 1968-1975

As musical theatre scholars Stacy Wolf, Sheldon Patinkin, and John Bush Jones have argued, American musicals are among our country's most valuable social documents as they depict the dominant discourses and reigning values of the cultural moment from which they first emerged through song, dance, and story. Consequently, all works are innately tied to the era that produced them. Some musicals, however, feature ties to the past are stronger and markedly more visible than others. When the vestiges of the past are so numerous that a given musical says more about the prevailing paradigms of art and thought at a specific moment in American history than it does about the universality of the human condition, then the work might be identified as time-bound. A musical's propensity for time-boundedness is perhaps never more evident than when it is revived years after its original production. When the era that occasioned the piece has passed and the attitudes that it first espoused have changed, a musical that was once fresh and timely can appear quaint, absurd, impolitic, or even myopic to a contemporary audience. Moreover, if the forms of song and dance first employed by that musical are outmoded, and not altered or updated in some way, then the work may read aesthetically as well as socially obsolete. This study offers a systematic investigation of the ways in which theatre artists—directors, designers, composers, librettists, and choreographers—have approached the task of reviving significantly time-bound musicals on Broadway. Through an examination of three representative case studies—*Hair* (1968), *Company* (1970), and *A Chorus Line* (1975)—this project identifies the various ways in which the musicals are anchored to their original era, how those bonds have been negotiated in revivals, and to what effect.