HARMONIZING WITH THE COSMOS:
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF COSMIC SYMBOLISM IN MUSICAL
THEATRE

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This dissertation is dedicated to Kathryn Holley and Kate Holley. I could not have done this without your unwavering support and belief in me.

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ABSTRACT

Humankind has long possessed a fascination with the cosmos and the cosmic bodies they can see from their earthly home. Overtime humans began to associate deities with the cosmic bodies, and religions developed to explain the cosmos and humans' place within it. Early humans created artifacts, using the imagery of cosmic bodies to mark the passage of time and to symbolize their relationship to the cosmos. When they began writing, this use of the cosmic bodies appeared in their literary works and in the works of Ancient Greek and Roman playwrights, William Shakespeare, Arthur Miller, and Thornton Wilder, among many others. Musical theatre, integrated into a unique theatre genre in the mid-twentieth century, similarly followed this impulse to use cosmic bodies to elucidate character and themes. The relationship of these instances, however, to the long traditional symbolic use of cosmic symbolism in Western thought and the ways in which the cosmic symbolism reveals character traits has been largely overlooked in musical theatre scholarship. This analysis contributes the first book-length study investigating cosmic symbolism in selected, representative musicals that span the time period from the American Golden Age through the present. Aided by available scholarship from the fields of astrology, anthropology, psychology, semiotics, religious studies, and philosophy this study aims to increase understanding of how cosmic symbolism functions within representative musical theatre works and what that symbolism reveals about humans' interactions with the cosmos.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Stars in your multitudes,
 Scarce to be counted,
 Filling the darkness
 With order and light.
 You are the sentinels
 Silent and sure.
 Keeping watch in the night.
 - Alain Boublil and Herbert Kretzmer, *Les Misérables*

In 2017 freelance reporter Zachariah Bryan proposed that “[t]here’s something real and yet hard to describe to be gained from looking at a truly dark sky uninhibited by light pollution.”¹ At roughly the same time, turn-out at locations along the path of the totality of the August 21, 2017 solar eclipse (some claim upwards of one million people traveling to single locations in the path), confirmed human fascination with the cosmos.² Anyone who has ever stood in a remote setting and looked up at the night sky brimming with stars has probably felt the mixed sense of awe and mystery that looking into the depths of a star-studded night can generate. According to Carl Sagan and Nicholas Campion, this fascination with bodies in outer space has been with humans since the dawn of human consciousness.³ Humans turned to the skies for answers to the big questions of life: why are we here, what is our purpose, what is the meaning of mortality, what happens to us after we die? To early humans the earth was simultaneously harsh and sustaining, and the ability to read the seasons in the sky was often a matter of life and

¹ Zachariah Bryan, “When We Can’t See the Stars,” *High Country News*, May 1, 2017, 26.

² In Columbia, MO, and Nashville, TN, libraries and businesses closed for the time around totality (whether for 60 minutes or 20 minutes) and citizens walked out to view the cosmic event. For more information see Bob Bryan, “I traveled to Nashville where almost a million people poured in to see the solar eclipse in the 93% ‘path of totality’ — and here’s what it was like,” *Business Insider*, August 22, 2017, accessed September 19, 2017, <http://www.businessinsider.com/solar-eclipse-2017-what-was-it-like-on-the-ground-2017-8>.

³ Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 12.

death.⁴ It was not long before humans' storytelling instinct led them to create tales that incorporated the heavenly bodies they saw. These stories imbued heavenly bodies with superhuman attributes, and humankind developed mythologies and rituals to interpret, to appease, and to develop relationships with the extra-terrestrial deities.⁵ Carl Sagan insists that "[w]e seek a connection with the Cosmos. We want to count in the grand scale of things."⁶ In keeping with that impulse these myths and rituals tended to situate humans as actors in the mysteries of the cosmos.

This impulse to connect extra-terrestrial entities with life on earth was not unique to any one specific culture; looking to the cosmos for guidance was a global phenomenon. Cultures in Ancient Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Rome, among others looked to the stars for guidance and for understanding of the world around them, relating their gods to cosmic bodies (Apollo and Ra with the Sun, Artemis with the moon) and defining relationships among humans, the earth, and the stars, sun, moon, and planets. Each culture had its own nuances in incorporating cosmic bodies into its philosophy, theology, and daily lives.⁷ Jewish and Christian believers similarly endowed cosmic bodies (the Star of David, the star that heralded the birth of Jesus) with special significance.⁸ In several ancient cultures the positioning of tombs, megaliths, and structures relative to specific positions of the stars, moon, and sun suggests the existence

⁴ Nicholas Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology: A Cultural History of Western Astrology* (London; New York: Continuum, 2008), 4; Sagan, 34.

⁵ Sagan, 1.

⁶ Sagan, 37.

⁷ John Ferguson, *The Religions of the Roman Empire* (Cornell University Press, 1985), 44–46.

⁸ St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, trans. Maria Boulding (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 2001), 39, 79; Philip Thompson and Peter Davenport, *The Dictionary of Graphic Images* (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1980), 218; Kevin J. Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism* (Berkley Publishing Group, 1995), 243–44; Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, 281–82.

of religions that were connected to the cosmos.⁹ According to Mark Edmonds, the specific position of the tombs in Neolithic Britain “would have offered a sense of almost direct contact with the sky” and would have been “places where personal loss could be acknowledged and where a sense of kinship and community could be grounded in an ancestral and cosmological order.”¹⁰ Here the personal and cosmic wove together in powerful and beautiful ritualistic ways, creating community among people, and also between humans and the cosmos.

Eventually, humans incorporated their interactions with the cosmos into their other cultural expressions, including the visual arts (sculpture, painting, architecture), music, performance, and finally literature. The integration of cosmic symbolism and the visual arts began as early as 70,000 BCE.¹¹ In ancient Greece Delphi, home of Apollo’s temple, was the center of the cosmos, and visual representations of the goddess of love and beauty, Aphrodite, sometimes included the goddess “appearing as a star in the sky, riding a goose or a goat.”¹² The Roman emperor, Nero (1st century AD) related his authority to the “brilliance of the sun” in the design of the coins he minted, which featured the emperor “wearing a gold crown from which emanated sunbeams.”¹³ In the eleventh century Matilda and the ladies of William the Conqueror’s house included a comet in the Tapestry of Bayeux as a harbinger of good fortune for William’s

⁹ Emma Stafford, *Life, Myth, and Art in Ancient Greece*, 1st edition (Los Angeles, CA: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2004), 131; Nikolaus Himmelmann, Hugo Meyer, and William A. P. Childs, *Reading Greek Art* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1998), 119.

¹⁰ Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, 18; M. R. Edmonds, *Ancestral Geographies of the Neolithic: Landscapes, Monuments, and Memory* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999), 62–63.

¹¹ Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, 5, 7–11, 31.

¹² Stafford, *Life, Myth, and Art in Ancient Greece*, 131; Himmelmann, Meyer, and Childs, *Reading Greek Art*, 119.

¹³ Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, 259.

campaign.¹⁴ Christian artists of the Middle Ages and Renaissance regularly included cosmic objects in their artwork: the sun and moon appear in several artistic renderings of the crucifixion; the halos surrounding saints often resemble suns; and in Giotto di Bondone's *The Adoration of the Magi* (ca 1320) Halley's Comet resides over the manger, marking the birth of Jesus Christ.¹⁵

Once the written word was introduced, cosmic symbolism was employed with gusto, including within dramatic texts. At the dawn of Western theatre, an art form that incorporated poetry, music, song, dance, and the visual arts, the Ancient Greek playwrights included representations of the cosmos in their plays to comment on or to highlight aspects of the characters and the narrative.¹⁶ Theatre in the Middle Ages included visually spectacular images of heaven and hell as two opposing entities; and during the Elizabethan Renaissance audiences viewed plays in open-air theatres underneath the natural canopy of sun or clouds, while the underside of their roofed stages was painted with images of stars and other heavenly bodies.¹⁷ Like the theatres in which they were performed Shakespeare's plays abound with imagery of stars, moon, sun, and the firmament to communicate human emotions, desires, and fears.¹⁸ In the eighteenth

¹⁴ Matilde Battistini and J. Paul Getty Museum, *Astrology, Magic, and Alchemy in Art*, (A Guide to Imagery) (Los Angeles: J. Paul Getty Museum, 2007), 97.

¹⁵ Anthony Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue: A Guide to the Symbols of Humankind* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 135–37.

¹⁶ Sophocles, *Plays of Sophocles: Oedipus the King; Oedipus at Colonus; Antigone*, 2006, n.p., <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/31>; Aeschylus, *The Agamemnon of Aeschylus*, trans. Gilbert Murray, 2004, n.p., <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14417>.

¹⁷ Mariko Ichikawa, "'What Story Is That Painted Upon the Cloth?': Some Descriptions of Hangings and Their Use on the Early Modern Stage," *Theatre Notebook* 70, no. 1 (November 13, 2016): 2; Eckehard Simon, ed., *The Theatre of Medieval Europe: New Research in Early Drama*, 1st edition (Cambridge England; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 242.

¹⁸ William Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*, Act I, sc. 2, accessed October 27, 2017, <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1513/pg1513-images.html>; William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*, Act II, sc. 2, accessed October 27, 2017, <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1120/pg1120-images.html>; William Shakespeare, *King Lear*, Act I, sc. 2, accessed October 27, 2017, <http://www.gutenberg.org/cache/epub/1128/pg1128-images.html>.

and nineteenth centuries playwrights like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Victor Hugo, Dion Boucicault, and Oscar Wilde included instances of cosmic symbolism in their plays to represent the greatness of a character, pending good fortune, hope, and navigation.¹⁹ Playwrights continued the practice throughout the twentieth century, including Thornton Wilder in *Our Town* (1938), Arthur Miller in *All My Sons* (1947) and Tom Stoppard in *Jumpers* (1972).²⁰ This list is just a sampling of the numerous works of art and literature that have featured cosmic symbolism throughout the ages, and it demonstrates humanity's strong tendency to include cosmic bodies symbolically in cultural and artistic creations.

In the mid-twentieth century theatre artists continued to incorporate cosmic imagery into their creations even as they experimented with form and style. The long relationship between music and theatre developed into a distinct theatre genre: the integrated book musical, indebted to yet distinct from its antecedents. Integrated book musicals connect all the elements (music, lyrics, dance) to the book, or narrative. No longer were songs thrown together into a musical show with thin or no threads connecting them, as in musical revues; rather, the integrated book musical used all elements to tell the story. Despite a few early successful attempts at integration – for

¹⁹ Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust*, trans. Harry Clarke and Bayard Taylor, 2005, <https://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/14591>; Victor Hugo, *Hernani*, n.d., 346, 370, <http://archive.org/details/Hernani>; Dion Boucicault, *The Octoroon*, Act IV, sc. 1, accessed May 12, 2017, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/46091/46091-h/46091-h.htm>; Oscar Wilde, *An Ideal Husband*, Act III, sc. 1, accessed October 27, 2017, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/885/885-h/885-h.htm>.

²⁰ Raymond J. III Wilson, "All My Sons: Arthur Miller's Sky Play in Light of Søren Kierkegaard's Either/Or," in *Art, Literature, and Passions of the Skies*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Analecta Husserliana* 112 (Dordrecht; London: Springer, 2012), 223–32; Robert Pinsky, *Thousands of Broadways: Dreams and Nightmares of the American Small Town*, The Rice University Campbell Lectures (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 55; Raymond J. III Wilson, "The Disenchantment of the Sky in Tom Stoppard's *Jumpers*," in *Art, Literature, and Passions of the Skies*, ed. Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Analecta Husserliana* 112 (Dordrecht; London: Springer, 2012), 80.

example Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein's *Show Boat* in 1927 – most theatre historians trace the advent of the Golden Age of American book musicals to the creation of Richard Rodgers and Oscar Hammerstein's *Oklahoma!* in 1943 and its ending to Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick's *Fiddler on the Roof* in the early 1960s.²¹ *Fiddler on the Roof* was itself an early version of the next incarnation of the American musical that dominated the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s: the concept musical. The concept musical shifted American musical theatre away from the integrated book musical (integrated to the narrative) and instead unified all the elements to a theme rather than a linear narrative.

These musicals, both integrated and concept, engaged with what it means to be American. In recent decades, scholars have identified the American musical as a particularly vivid reflection of American society that offers examination and critique of the society that it mirrors and, perhaps, helps create.²² American musicals have engaged with many of the issues that America has faced over the years, including: immigration, racism, violence against women, who is American and what it means to be American, greed, and the ideal of social upward mobility, among others. Pamyla Stiehl and Bud Coleman discuss the relationship between the musical and American culture in *Backstage Pass* (2012): “the musical has been, and continues to be, a significant part of America’s heritage and culture...[representing] a common vernacular and [promoting] a shared dialogue” among Americans.²³ In *The American Musical and the Formation of National*

²¹ Sheldon Patinkin, *No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance: A History of the American Musical Theater* (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 373; Pamyla Stiehl and Bud Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre* (Dubuque, IA: Kendall Hunt Publishing Co., 2012), 143.

²² See Literature Review section below.

²³ Stiehl and Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre*, 2.

Identity (2005), Raymond Knapp similarly declared that the American musical has both accommodated changes in American culture and helped to effect those changes.²⁴

Despite its close ties with American themes, towards the end of the twentieth century the American musical genre, both integrated and concept, expanded to become a global industry, taking the quintessentially American musical theatre style far beyond American shores. Many of these international musicals, though not all, are considered megamusicals due to the scope of their score, book, narrative, and production values, as well as their global reproducibility, but all the elements are still unified either thematically or by virtue of a linear narrative, making them an offspring of the American musical theatre genre. Both France and Britain, for example, have created musicals and sometimes brought them to American audiences after premiering them to non-American audiences (*Les Misérables* and *Billy Elliot*, for example). As much as study of musical theatre is a study of Americans *as* Americans, it has also become a study of American influence abroad.

At the same time that Europeans began writing musicals, new generations of Americans (like Stephen Sondheim, Jonathan Larson, Jeanine Tesori, and Lin-Manuel Miranda, among others) continued to create musicals, simultaneously reinforcing and challenging the musicals of the Golden Age and after. Musical theatre, then, is a complex and varied art form that is enjoyed by Americans and internationally. All forms of musical theatre, however, share certain elements, specifically the use of music and song to communicate the story being told. My use of the term “musical” in this study will refer to this particularly American genre of theatre that still usually, but not always, originates

²⁴ *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 2005), 3.

in the United States and that includes two types of musicals (integrated and concept). Like the artwork and literature of ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, medieval Europe, and Elizabethan England, musical theatre is often characterized by representations of the sun, moon, stars, planets, and comets.

Purpose

As might be expected from an artistic form that integrates virtually all other forms of artistic expression (visual, performative, literary), musical theatre provides a unique opportunity to explore the aesthetic, cultural, and social significance of the representations of cosmic bodies. From *The Red Moon* (1909) to *Natasha, Pierre, and The Great Comet of 1812* (2016), along with such notable examples as *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Carousel* (1945), *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), *Paint Your Wagon* (1952), *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), *Man of La Mancha* (1965), *You're a Good Man Charlie Brown* (1967), *Hair* (1968), *Pippin* (1972), *Evita* (1978), *Big River* (1985), *Les Misérables* (1985), *Starlight Express* (1987), *Rent* (1996), *Notre Dame de Paris* (1998), *Wicked* (2003), *Billy Elliot* (2005), *Hamilton* (2015), and *Bright Star* (2016), musical theatre characters often sing to or about cosmic bodies, which frequently warrant inclusion within musical theatre titles. Many of these representations are intimately connected with the themes, fears, and ambitions of the characters and plots. While musical theatre scholars have explored what the land means in musicals such as *Show Boat*, *Oklahoma!* and *The Sound of Music*, the meaning of the cosmic bodies in musical theatre remains largely overlooked.²⁵ Given that studies analyzing the significance of cosmic symbolism

²⁵ Raymond Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2005), 188–91, 123–26, 230–39.

in plays, literature, visual art, and various other artistic expressions have yielded deeper understanding of the aesthetic, cultural, and social significance of such representation, an examination of this symbolism in musical theatre will have similar benefits for theatre practitioners and scholars. Yet, to date, its use in musicals has been only fleetingly explored. This study therefore fills that gap by contributing the first book-length study investigating cosmic symbolism in selected, representative musicals that span the time period from the American Golden Age through the present: *Paint Your Wagon* (1952), *Fiddler on the Roof* (1964), *Man of La Mancha* (1965), *Hair* (1968), *Pippin* (1972), *Evita* (1978), *Les Misérables* (1985), *Rent* (1996), *Notre Dame de Paris* (1998), *Wicked* (2003), *Billy Elliot* (2005), *Hamilton* (2015), *Bright Star* (2016), and *Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812* (2016).

The ultimate goal of this study is to increase understanding of how cosmic symbolism functions within representative musical theatre works. In conducting this investigation this study will also contribute to the larger scholarly conversation around humans and the cosmos, with implications for theatre artists and scholars as well as academics and practitioners in related fields.

Justification

As a theatre genre that combines multiple forms of artistic expression (literary, musical, visual) musical theatre provides a particularly advantageous opportunity to explore the relationship between human artists and the cosmos that extends all the way back to the beginning of human consciousness and, more specifically, the relationship between music and the cosmos, which extends to at least the 6th century BCE. At that time the Greek mathematician Pythagoras related the mathematical intervals of music to

the structuring of the cosmos, a theory that came to be known as the harmony of the spheres and continued to shape astronomical theory for centuries.²⁶ In more purely artistic terms, the early twentieth century composer Gustav Holst created a suite wholly dedicated to the planets (1914), and Constant Lambert wrote music for a ballet called *The Horoscope* (1938), inspired by the assumed guiding influence astrological signs have on human life.²⁷ Musical theatre is another iteration of this special relationship between music and the cosmos, and this study offers an increased understanding of the larger phenomenon.

With its tendency towards sensationalism and spectacle musical theatre awes and enchants in many of the same ways that the cosmos does. Geoffrey Block has discussed musicals from *Show Boat* to Sondheim in terms of their special appeal for audiences, claiming that musicals “continue to move us to applaud and cheer (and sometimes hiss), to sing their songs, follow their stories and make us laugh and cry.”²⁸ A recent study conducted by Frederick Heide, Natalie Porter, and Paul Saito found that musical theatre is more than pure entertainment; using a social-cognitive theory lens and quantitative data, the authors determined that musicals affect attitudes and actually have the power to change the way people think.²⁹ Musical theatre possesses great potential to effect change,

²⁶ Carl Huffman, “Pythagoras,” The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, 2014, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2014/entries/pythagoras/>. For more on this see Huffman; B. R. Gaizauskas, “The Harmony of the Spheres,” *Journal of the Royal Astronomical Society of Canada* 68 (1974): 146–51; Joscelyn Godwin, *The Harmony of the Spheres: The Pythagorean Tradition in Music* (Rochester, VT: Inner Traditions, Bear & Co, 1992).

²⁷ Battistini and J. Paul Getty Museum, *Astrology, Magic, and Alchemy in Art*, 73; Colin Matthews, “Holst, Gustav,” Grove Music Online, n.p., <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/grovemusic/view/10.1093/gmo/9781561592630.001.0001/omo-9781561592630-e-0000013252?rskey=q86sXo&result=4>.

²⁸ Geoffrey Holden Block, *Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim and Lloyd Webber*, 2nd ed (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 3.

²⁹ Frederick J. Heide, Natalie Porter, and Paul K. Saito, “Do You Hear the People Sing? Musical Theatre and Attitude Change,” *Psychology of Aesthetics, Creativity, and the Arts* 6, no. 3 (August 2012): 224–30, <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027574>.

especially as musicals are often the first (and sometimes only) theatre to which people are exposed. Musical theatre has become a major industry in large cities like New York and London. In 2016-2017 11,362,732 people saw Broadway musicals in New York City and Broadway earned a gross profit of 1,285,180,250 dollars, with an average admission price of 113 dollars.³⁰ In the same year tours of Broadway musicals across North America grossed 1,007 million dollars and reached almost fourteen million audience members.³¹ Additionally, a sizeable audience attends amateur (high school, college, community, and university) productions of musicals. The NEA found that in 2012, 72.5 million people, 23 percent of the total population of the United States, had attended a musical.³² Musical, then, reach a significant portion of the public and earn large amounts of money, suggesting that they have the potential to be a highly influential art form.

Studying the cosmic symbolism of representative musicals can help us to understand more fully the characters and themes of the musicals as well as the nature of twentieth and twenty-first century humans' relationship to the cosmos. The late twentieth century, after all, witnessed the space race, the moon landing, and popular culture phenomena, such as the *Superman* comics and movies (starting in the 1930s), *Dr. Who* (1963), *Star Trek* (1966), *Star Wars* (1977), *Battlestar Gallactica* (1978), and the *Independence Day* movies (1996), among many others, that explored human relationships with outer space and extra-terrestrial creatures. Like television and movies, musical

³⁰ "Detailed Statistics-Broadway in NYC," The Broadway League, accessed May 1, 2018, <https://www.broadwayleague.com/research/statistics-broadway-nyc/>.

³¹ "Statistics: Touring Broadway," The Broadway League, accessed July 18, 2018, <https://www.broadwayleague.com/research/statistics-touring-broadway/>.

³² National Endowment for the Arts, "A Decade of Arts Engagement: Findings From the Survey of Public Participation in the Arts, 2002–2012," 7–8, accessed May 13, 2017, <https://www.arts.gov/publications/decade-arts-engagement-findings-survey-public-participation-arts-2002-2012>.

theatre also explores humanity's relationship to the cosmos. As New Historicists have demonstrated, artistic expression is both a product and creator of culture, and it is hardly surprising that musical theatre, itself a product of the mid-twentieth century, is fundamentally interested in the cosmos.³³ A close investigation of how musical theatre uses cosmic symbols contributes to our understanding of how humans view themselves in relation to the cosmos and how that relationship has changed over time.

Of all available options (musicals from the Golden Age to the present that employ cosmic symbols), the fourteen musicals I have selected for investigation are those that best allow me to fulfill the purpose of this study. These musicals employ cosmic symbolism in ways so abundant, prevalent, or integral to the major conflicts, characters, and themes of the musical that understanding the meaning is important to understanding fully the themes and messages of the musicals and to shedding light on larger questions of humanity's relationship to the cosmos. Due to their tendency to prioritize narrative or theme to connect all the elements I focus on both "American" integrated book musicals and concept musicals, as well as European iterations of the "American" musical style.³⁴ As such, the cosmic symbolism in these musicals is more than arbitrary reference to extra-terrestrial bodies; it is a component that specifically helps communicate the main narrative or message of the musical.

My analysis attempts to determine the ways in which this symbolism works within the world of the musical, and as such I will not be determining intent where none has been explicitly indicated. Rather, I will 'read' the performance text of the original

³³ D.G. Myers, "The New Historicism in Literary Studies," *Academic Questions* 2, no. 1 (Winter /89 1988): 31.

³⁴ Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, 2005, 123, 163.

performance of the musical in an effort to arrive at reasonable interpretations, aided by available scholarship from the fields of astrology, anthropology, psychology, semiotics, religious studies, and philosophy. None of the musicals selected have received serious attention from scholars relative to their use of cosmic symbolism; two of the selected have received no scholarly analysis at all. This study will initiate scholarship on these most recent works (*Bright Star* and *Great Comet*). Although four of the musicals selected were created outside of the United States (*Evita*, *Les Misérables*, *Notre Dame de Paris*, and *Billy Elliot*), and the geographic locations represented in the works span the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Spain, Russia, Argentina, and Oz, the musicals share common origins in the integrated musical theatre genre developed in America in the mid-twentieth century and represent essentially a common aesthetic form.

A few scholars have begun to recognize the significance of such investigations. Scott Miller, a theatre practitioner in St. Louis, Missouri, has explored the song “stars” from *Les Misérables* arguing that the night sky serves as a symbol for Javert’s world-view.³⁵ Miller does not, however, explore the song in depth, nor does he investigate other instances of cosmic symbolism in the musical. Raymond Knapp briefly engages with the astrology of *Hair*’s “Aquarius” but does not address in any depth the cosmic symbolism of other songs in the musical. Other scholars make fleeting references to the existence of cosmic symbolism in *Hair*’s lyrics or libretto without exploring its meaning in depth.³⁶

³⁵ Scott Miller, *From Assassins to West Side Story: The Director’s Guide to Musical Theatre* (Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Drama, 1996), 168.

³⁶ Denny Martin Flinn, *Musical!: A Grand Tour: The Rise, Glory, and Fall of an American Institution* (New York: London: Schirmer Books; Prentice Hall International, 1997), 479–81; David Ewen, *Composers for the American Musical Theatre* (New York: Dodd, Mead, 1968); Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, 2005, 162; Miranda Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama: British and American Musical Theatre in the 1980s and 90s*, 1st ed., Palgrave Studies in Theatre and Performance History (New York, N.Y: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 59–66.

These studies provide a starting point for my deeper explorations of cosmic symbolism in these works.

Considerable scholarship has been conducted on the relationship between the cosmos and humans' artistic creations in nonmusical fields, as art historians, theologians, and literary critics have gathered insight from analysis of cosmic symbolism in visual art, religious texts, religious iconography, and literature. In the 112th volume of the *Yearbook of Phenomenological Research*, Anna-Theresa Tymieniecka identifies the powerful connection between the sky and human emotions: "The concrete experiences that living under those skies stir within us are ground for individual impulses, emotions, sentiments that in their interaction generate their own ever-changing clouds."³⁷ She further elucidates this connection, attributing to the sky the fertility of human creativity:

The élan of imagination gets caught up in the clouds of the skies. There in that dimness, sensory receptivity, dispositions, emotions, passionate strivings, yearnings, elevations gather and propagate. From the "Passions of the Skies" spring innermost intuitions that nourish literature and the arts.³⁸

Tymieniecka's claims have been confirmed by millennia of human artistic expression, from prehistoric Germany, Spain, Britain, and France, Ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, and Christian artists of the Middle Ages and Renaissance. This study extends the valuable findings of such scholarship to musical theatre.

This study can offer similar enlightenment to theatre scholars and practitioners regarding human interaction and negotiations with the cosmos relative to the anxieties

³⁷ Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, ed., *Art, Literature, and Passions of the Skies*, *Analecta Husserliana* 112 (Dordrecht; London: Springer, 2012), ix.

³⁸ Tymieniecka, ix.

and desires surrounding the purpose of life, the brevity of life, and the seeming unfairness and struggles of life. As artistic creations made by Americans, musicals engage with what it means to be American in all the multi-faceted definitions of the word. Raymond Knapp, in *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (2005), avows that musicals reflect the best and the worst of American society, often offering images of what America might be and thereby contributing to American culture.³⁹ Knapp's study concludes in 1976 and as such does not engage with the globalization of musical theatre that occurred with megamusicals in the late 1970s. It is logical, however, to extend his contention that, if musicals made in America by Americans are reflections of Americans, then musicals made abroad would similarly reflect the ideologies of their creators and culture even while they borrowed from the American musical theatre style.

Understanding cosmic symbolism in musicals created abroad as well as those created by Americans can increase our comprehension of musical theatre as a cultural and global phenomenon and industry, particularly how this phenomenon has helped shape and reflect our societies and our relation to other cultures and the universe. This exploration can also offer an awareness of the themes that transcend national and cultural boundaries. Better understanding the use of cosmic symbolism in works across decades and across cultures can help us to have a better understanding of ourselves as humans, how our ideologies change across time, and what connects and divides us. This study will not only provide a clearer picture of musicals and their themes, but also of ourselves as humans, as global inhabitants, and as members of the cosmos.

³⁹ Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, 2005, 5, 8, 10.

Methods and Procedures

In this study I am using the term “cosmic symbolism” to refer to the verbal representation (in book or lyrics) of extra-terrestrial, heavenly, or celestial bodies (stars, sun, moon, planets, comets, etc., anything outside the Earth’s atmosphere) as symbols for human emotions and motivations.⁴⁰ This term does not designate ephemera that occurs within the Earth’s atmosphere such as weather patterns, clouds, or storms. The Oxford English Dictionary defines a symbol as “something that stands for or denotes something else (not by exact resemblance, but by vague suggestion, or by some accidental or conventional relation),” and specifies the object indicated to be “something immaterial or abstract.”⁴¹ A symbol signifies something, an idea, concept, or value, other than itself; that is, it stands for more than itself.⁴² It is perceived simultaneously as itself and as the idea, concept, or value that it connotes. Symbols are culturally determined and understood and emerge out of a certain time and place.⁴³ The symbol’s meaning may also be rooted in experience, what Anthony Stevens terms “evolutionary pressures.”⁴⁴ The dark of nighttime, after all, carried serious threats for early humans and echoes of those threats have resounded through the ages in the symbolic meaning of night. A symbol may, however, transcend “evolutionary pressures.” Stevens, who follows in the footsteps of Carl Jung, has also discussed symbolism as “a language that transcends race, geography, and time” noting similarities within the symbols of diverse cultures.⁴⁵ As the

⁴⁰ At times, I will use the term “universe” as a synonym for cosmos, as the Oxford English Dictionary identifies the two as synonyms. “Universe, N.,” *OED Online* (Oxford University Press), accessed July 19, 2018, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/214800>.

⁴¹ “Symbol, n.1,” *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, n.d.), <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/196197>.

⁴² Carl Jung, *Man and His Symbols* (Dell, 2012), 20.

⁴³ Mary Klages, *Literary Theory: A Guide for the Perplexed*, Guides for the Perplexed Series (London; New York, NY: Continuum, 2006), 35–36.

⁴⁴ Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 15.

⁴⁵ Stevens, 17–18.

concept of “universality” in a multi-cultural world is a troubling one, for this analysis it may be helpful to consider the term “transcend” in relation to themes that do not seem limited to a specific time or location.⁴⁶ Looking at similarities among the representations of the cosmos in art and architecture created by concurrent ancient cultures separated from each other by miles and oceans suggests that there are some concepts all humans engage with, albeit nuanced in ways unique to their specific cultures. Given that all early humans living on Earth looked up at night skies filled with stars and experienced similar life cycles (birth, aging, death), and that humans across the globe continue to experience these major life events, it seems logical that some of our oldest symbols might speak to multiple cultures. This study may shed some light on these questions, as the canon of musical theatre works explored spans a number of eras and cultures. This exploration may provide a clearer understanding about which symbols are culture-bound and which symbols might transcend cultural or chronological specificity. In short, we can better understand what connects us as humans.

To conduct this investigation, I first selected a canon of representative musicals from the Golden Age to the present that include cosmic symbolism in either qualitatively or quantitatively significant ways: *Paint Your Wagon*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Hair*, *Pippin*, *Evita*, *Les Misérables*, *Rent*, *Notre Dame de Paris*, *Wicked*, *Billy Elliot*, *Hamilton*, *Bright Star*, and *Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812*. This

⁴⁶ Post World War II, the concept of “universality” has become increasingly associated with a Western, privileged assumption that ignores realities of other cultures. The idea that a work of art can exemplify all humans of any era is problematic because it fails to take into consideration the structures and rhetoric of the era and culture that created it. Post-modern scholars also question claims of authenticity in an increasingly digitalized and globalized world. For more information see Klages, *Literary Theory*. For my use of the word transcend, see *Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed., s.v. “transcend.”

list is not, of course, comprehensive, but these works are the most salient sources for this investigation.

This study is guided by several questions. Under what circumstances do cosmic symbols appear and what is the effect of their appearance? Where in relation to the narrative does the symbol appear and what does that reveal about its role in the musical? How does the symbolism contribute to the creation of character, mood, and the emotional content of these works? How does it contribute to the work's larger themes and meanings? What might this symbolism mean for musical theatre artists and their audiences? How does musical theatre's use of cosmic symbolism relate to the long tradition of cosmic symbolism in Western art and thought?

The texts I analyze include the original cast recording and printed transcriptions of the lyrics, libretto, and music when available. I realize that every production of a musical is different due to the musical and vocal instruments being used; however, limiting my primary source material to the original recording of the premiere on Broadway, in the West End, or in Paris will give me some control in terms of consistency.⁴⁷

I started by identifying each instance of cosmic symbolism within each musical's libretto or score and noting its function within the narrative. This analysis led to my discovery of three major functions performed by the symbols, which I then broke down further into related sub-functions; my intention was to explore, in a single chapter, each

⁴⁷ I consider *Les Misérables* on the West End in 1985 to be the premiere of the musical as it came to be known, as input from Trevor Nunn, John Caird, (director and co-director) and James Fenton and Herbert Kretzmer (who both worked on the English lyrics) irrevocably determined the *Les Misérables* that would go on to become the recognized global phenomenon. Furthermore, the French version was significantly revised, rather than just translated, into the English version (as discussed in Edward Behr's *The Complete Book of Les Misérables*, pages 62-93). Therefore, *Les Misérables* as the world came to know it, was a collaboration between British and French artists backed by money from producer, Cameron Mackintosh.

function as manifested across the canon of selected musicals. I then assign meaning(s) to these instances, using published works from a range of disciplines, including history, anthropology, astrology, psychology, literary criticism, semiotics, musicology, musical theatre history, and art history, as the lenses through which I interpret the meaning and significance of the symbolism within the context of each individual work.

My readings are facilitated by a semiotic approach that considers denotation as well as connotation within creative works. According to *The Oxford English Dictionary* to denote something means to “have as a main or literal meaning” while connotation is “an idea or feeling suggested by a word in addition to its main or literal meaning.”⁴⁸ As Theo Van Leeuwen has elaborated, connotation indicates “a layer of broader concepts, ideas, and values which the represented people, places, things ‘stand for,’” and a “second meaning [that is] superimposed” on the denoted meaning.⁴⁹ A denoted meaning is connected to the literal nature of the object, person, or place, while a connoted meaning adds a concept or a feeling to the denoted meaning, giving the object, person, or place simultaneous literal and conceptual meanings. An example applicable to this study might be: a star is mentioned, denoting a glittering object in the sky but connoting an ideal that the character holds. Most essentially, semiotic analysis helps to unpack a range of connotative meanings associated with a particular sign within a particular context, and in my analyses I focus on connotations rather than component parts that make up the sign, as might be the technique of linguistic semioticians.⁵⁰ In order to determine connotation I outline pertinent themes associated with the particular symbol from the Western

⁴⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, 11th ed. , s.v. “Connotation”

⁴⁹ Theo Van Leeuwen and Carey Jewitt, *The Handbook of Visual Analysis* (SAGE, 2001), 96–97.

⁵⁰ Klages, *Literary Theory*, 34–35.

philosophical and cultural past and, when applicable, from the rhetoric of the era in which the musical was created in order to contextualize each instance. To support my discussion of the philosophical and artistic traditions of cosmic symbolism I rely on sources that explore humans' intellectual interaction with the cosmos since the dawn of written record. These come from a variety of disciplines, including history, psychology, philosophy, anthropology, art history, theology, and musicology. Works such as George Ferguson's *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (1955), J.C. Cooper's *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* (1987), Kevin Todeschi's *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism* (1995), Michael Ferber's *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (1999), Anthony Stevens' *Ariadne's Clue* (2001), Deborah Harding's *Stars and Stripes* (2002), Peter Marshall's *World Astrology: The Astrologer's Quest to Understand The Human Character* (2004), Matilde Battistini's *Astrology, Magic, and Alchemy in Art* (2007), Nicholas Campion's *The Dawn of Astrology* (2008) and *A History of Western Astrology* (2009), Mark O'Connell's *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Symbols, Signs and Dream Interpretation* (2010), Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka's *Art, Literature, and Passions of the Skies* (2012), and Alexander Geppert's *Imagining Outer Space: European Astroculture in the Twentieth Century* (2012) provide a philosophical and cultural history of representations of cosmic bodies in Western artwork, thought, and literature.

Literature Review

A plethora of books explore humankind's historical relationship with the cosmos and the symbolic meaning of the artifacts that humans create. The sources I include here are those most pertinent to my study. In *The Dawn of Astrology* (2008) Nicholas Campion explores the early history of astrology from the Stone Age through the rise of

Christianity and the consequential temporary decline of astrology in the first few centuries of the 1st millennium AD. Campion picks up where he left off in *Dawn of Astrology* and traces astrology under the influence of Catholicism, through the Enlightenment, to the end of the twentieth century and the advent of secularism in his 2009 *A History of Western Astrology*. Anthony Stevens, in *Ariadne's Clue* (2001), explores the archetypal symbols of dreams through a psychological lens, as well as which concepts certain symbols typically communicate. Kevin Todeschi's *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism* (1995) is an encyclopedic source on the meaning and usage of symbolism in dreams in which he explores specific cultural meanings as well as symbolic meanings that occur in several cultures. In his 1999 *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* Michael Ferber provides lengthy encyclopedic entries on symbols common to Western literature such as comets, the moon, stars, and the sun.⁵¹ In *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols* (1987) J.C. Cooper includes entries on stars, the sun, the moon, and comets that describe the various symbolic meanings each body typically evokes.

Several scholars have explored the meaning of cosmic symbolism within the visual arts. Matilde Battistini's *Astrology, Magic, and Alchemy* (2007) is a guide to the imagery of art from antiquity to the Enlightenment, with special attention to Christian-themed paintings. The book is mostly images, often accompanied by descriptive captions discussing the meaning and significance of the imagery. As indicated by the title, Battistini devotes an entire section of the book to astrology in art. In her *Stars and Stripes* (2002) Deborah Harding explores the imagery of American folk art, specifically discussing the use of stars as symbols in American patriotic imagery such as the flag and

⁵¹ Michael Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols* (Cambridge, UK; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 2.

Liberty. Philip Thompson and Peter Davenport survey the symbolism and historical associations of images in *The Dictionary of Graphic Images* (1980). They provide a discussion of the meaning of cosmic images in art within the context of their creation. In 2012 Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka published *Art, Literature, and the Passions of the Skies*, in which she compiled multiple scholarly explorations of cosmic symbolism in literature, including in the works of Arthur Miller and Tom Stoppard. In “The Disenchantment of the Sky in Tom Stoppard’s *Jumpers*,” Raymond J. Wilson III explores the connection between disenchantment and the twentieth-century exploration of outer space in terms of the actions of the characters of the play. Another useful source from *Art, Literature, and Passions of the Skies* is Wilson’s “*All My Sons*: Arthur Miller’s Sky Play in Light of Soren Kierkegaard’s *Either/Or*,” in which Wilson examines Miller’s use of astrology to comment on fate as well as Miller’s use of sky symbolism in reference to mortality. Finally, in his publication *Thousands of Broadways* (2009) Robert Pinsky explores the cosmic symbolism of *Our Town* relative to mortality in the play.

Multiple books have been written specifically exploring the symbolism of Christian iconography, including the use of cosmic imagery as symbols. In *Signs and Symbols in Christian Art* (1955), a study of Christian symbolism, George Ferguson provides an overview of the occasion and meaning of symbolism in Christian art. He organizes the book thematically, and engages with elements of nature, the earth and sky, and religious dress and objects, and often supplies photographic reproductions of the paintings in which the iconography is used. A typical entry specifies the various meanings of the image, as well as specific instances in which it is used. Gertrude Schiller, in *Iconography of Christian Art* (1972) volumes one and two, explores the imagery

surrounding Jesus Christ and the meaning of cosmic symbolism in the artwork of Christianity. Also in the book are images of the artwork about which she writes.

Scholars of musical theatre history have provided relevant information about most of the musicals analyzed in this study, and their works help me to locate this study within the larger scholarly conversation. In *Opening Night on Broadway* (1990) Steven Suskin discusses the reception accorded the musicals of the Golden Age. Gerald Bordman provides a thematic exploration of musicals from the Golden Age up to *Les Misérables*, as well as an overview of their critical and popular reception, in *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle* (1992). Additionally, Sheldon Patinkin explores the themes and reception of musicals up through 2007 in his *No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance* (2008). In *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical* (2008) Thomas Hischak provides useful dates and general production history for shows up through the end of the twentieth century. Stanley Green provides useful production history, as well as select excerpts from critical reviews of original Broadway productions in his *Show by Show* (2008). Green also includes brief thematic discussions and a handful of representative quotes regarding critical reception of several of the musicals. In works that are less encyclopedic and more contextual, like Pamyla Stiehl and Bud Coleman's *Backstage Pass* and Michael Kantor and Laurence Maslon's *Broadway: The American Musical* (2004), scholars explore the history of musical theatre by following trends and shifts in conventions across the history of musical theatre, highlighting major players, artists and productions as they move forward through time. *Backstage Pass* was published after *Broadway: The American Musical*, which allowed Stiehl and Coleman to include a brief discussion of *Billy Elliot* and *Wicked* when they appeared on Broadway. Additionally, a few key scholars have

addressed the structure and composition of musicals. Stephen Citron, in *The Musical from the Inside Out* (1997), provides a discussion of the parts of each musical, the recommended structure of a musical, and the differences between types of musicals (book versus concept musical, for example). In *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theatre* (1980) Richard Kislán explores the different component parts of a musical (libretto, lyrics, music, etc.) and their roles in the structure of the musical.

In recent years several scholars have explored the themes, plots, and critical reception of the musicals that are the focus of this study. Elizabeth Wollman discusses the themes and astrology of *Hair's* “Aquarius” in *The Theatre Will Rock* (2006) but gives minimal attention to other cosmic references in the musical. In *The Complete Book of Les Misérables* (1989), Edward Behr discusses the show’s production history and global reception and provides a reproduction of the libretto of the musical. In *Directors and the New Musical Drama* (2008) Miranda Lundskaer-Nielsen engages deeply with the themes of *Les Misérables*, specifically the three contrasting theological perspectives of the musical but she does not explore the meaning of cosmic symbols in the musical. My analysis adds an exploration of the cosmic symbolism relative to the religious themes of the musical. In his analysis of *Les Misérables* in *From Assassins to West Side Story: The Director's Guide to Musical Theatre* (1996), Scott Miller discusses the night sky in the song “Stars” as a symbol of the natural order of the universe and of God.⁵² I extend Miller’s exploration of the meaning of the stars in Javert’s song and explore additional instances of cosmic symbolism in the musical. In *The Megamusical* (2006), Jessica Sternfeld explores in depth the topic of religious themes in *Les Misérables*, as well as

⁵² Miller, *From Assassins to West Side Story*, 168.

what distinguishes a megamusical from other musical genres. Rebecca-Anne C. Do Rozario, in *The French Musicals: The Dramatic Impulse of Spectacle* (2004), engages with the themes and choreography of *Notre Dame de Paris* but does not address to any degree the lyrics of the songs nor the cosmic symbolism found therein. In *Consuming Authenticities: Billy Elliot the Musical and the Performing Child* (2012), Helen Freshwater explores how the musical capitalized on the ideal of authenticity, its theme of personal authenticity, and its moments of inauthenticity, and George Rodosthenous explores the theme of masculinity in *Billy Elliot The Musical: visual representations of working-class masculinity and the all-singing, all-dancing bo[d]y* (2007). Elysa Gardner explored more broadly the themes, plot, and reception of *Billy Elliot* in her review for *USA Today*. In *Hamilton: The Revolution* (2016) Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter trace the journey of *Hamilton* from inspiration to opening night and combine discussion of the process with discussion of major themes and characters of the musical.

In many cases, critical studies of the musicals in question exist in which scholars discuss the relationship between the musical and the cultural context in which it premiered. In *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* (2005) Raymond Knapp explores the Americanness of musicals before 1976. Regarding *Hair*, Knapp engages somewhat with the astrology of “Aquarius,” neglecting other instances of cosmic symbolism in the musical. As such, he provides a useful point from which to begin my analysis. Knapp’s exploration of the meaning of the land in musicals like *Show Boat*, *Oklahoma!*, and *The Sound of Music* shares certain similarities (of goal and method) with this study. In his 2006 book *Present at the Creation* Stuart Ostrow examines the cultural relevancy of *Hair* in the 1960s. Barry Singer provides an indepth

discussion, in *Ever After* (2004), of the production history of *Les Misérables* and explores the cultural context surrounding the musical as well as its relevancy to that context.

Singer begins his book just before the arrival of the British megamusicals to Broadway, and ends in 2003. Richard Eyre and Nicholas Wright, in *Changing Stages* (2000), include a discussion of *Les Misérables* and the culture in Britain at the time that it opened there.

Several scholars have written about semiotics specific to music. Musicologist Eero Tarasti explores the ways in which music signifies, or in other words the way music makes and communicates meaning, in *A Theory of Musical Semiotics* (1994). Several contributors to Rolf Inge Godoy and Mark Leman's *Musical Gestures: Sound, Movement, and Meaning* (2009) unpack how the meaning of music is understood. Dorothy Miell, Raymond MacDonald, and David J. Hargreaves investigate how music can produce emotions and communicate feelings in their interdisciplinary *Musical Communication* (2005). Patrik Juslin and John Sloboda compile multi-disciplinary research on the affective properties of music, in their 2010 publication *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, in order to explore the ways music may relate to emotions. They include the work of scholars from philosophy, neurobiology, psychology, musicology, sociology, and education.

Organization

This analysis is organized into six chapters. Following Chapter One, which introduces the topic, justifies the study, and outlines its purpose, methods and procedures, Chapter Two introduces the musicals from which the instances of cosmic symbolism are drawn for analysis in Chapters Three through Five, addressing their plot, themes, creative teams, a brief production history, and a succinct summary of the cultural context from

which they emerged. Chapters Three through Five each explore a specific function that cosmic symbolism performs in musicals: cosmic bodies as symbolic of comfort (Chapter Three), of characters' exceptionalism (Chapter Four), and of time and mortality (Chapter Five); each function is divided into sub-functions, as necessary. Chapter Six summarizes the findings and draws conclusions regarding the application of cosmic symbols within these musical theatre works and the aesthetic and social implications of these representations to enhance understanding of Western theatre, art, and culture more generally. The conclusion also discusses the significance of this study and implications for future research.

CHAPTER 2: MUSICAL SYNOPSES

The genre of musical theatre addressed in this dissertation has existed for nearly a century. During that time, thousands of musicals have been produced, and many include references to cosmic bodies. The works chosen for analysis in this study are selected, representative examples in which the cosmic symbolism is particularly significant to the works' themes and characterizations. This chapter provides relevant background information for the selected works, including information on context and production history, the creative teams, plot and thematic summaries, and characters.

Paint Your Wagon (1951)

Paint Your Wagon embodied many of the concerns that troubled post-World War America and brought to the Broadway musical stage the ideals of the film and television Western: community, freedom, and moral rectitude (as seen in Western-themed movies and television series like *The Lone Ranger*, 1949-1957, and *The Gene Autry Show*, 1950-1955, among many others).⁵³ Set in a California gold-rush boom town in the 1850s, *Paint Your Wagon*, according to Stanley Green, carries with it a “genuine flavor of Americana.”⁵⁴ The musical captures the idealism of the miners of the California gold rush. The narrative features the character of Ben Rumson and his daughter Jennifer, who finds a nugget of gold at the beginning of the musical. Ben Rumson stakes his claim on

⁵³ For more on the correlations between America in 1951 and the Western movie and television show, see *Hollywood's West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*, ed. Peter Rollins and John O'Connor (Lexington, KY: The University Press of Kentucky), accessed July 19, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTcwMHhuYV9fMTUyMDU3X19BTg2?sid=3f7ad0a7-a350-402b-a962-c8b320ab70b5@pdc-v-sessmgr03&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>.

⁵⁴ Stanley Green, *Broadway Musicals, Show by Show*, 6th ed (Milwaukee, WI: Applause Theater & Cinema books, 2008), 152.

the land, word of the strike spreads, and the shanty town of Rumson Creek is born. Jennifer soon meets and falls in love with another prospector, Julio, but the two drift apart when Jennifer goes back east for school and Julio leaves to find his luck elsewhere. When Jennifer returns to town, she discovers that the miners are departing for the next big strike; but this time Ben Rumson, uncharacteristically, does not wander onward. Jennifer and Ben are left in town alone, and Julio eventually returns to be reunited with Jennifer for a happy ending.

Created by Broadway veterans Frederick Loewe (music) and Alan Jay Lerner (book and lyrics), *Paint Your Wagon* opened on Broadway in November 1951 and ran for a disappointing 289 performances.⁵⁵ Critical response was divided. Some were unimpressed by Lerner and Loewe's vision of the American West, which Richard Watts, Jr. described as "flat." Walter Kerr elaborated: "[t]he authors and director have been determined that their musical shall be down to earth, rustic, honest [...] But in their passion for being straightforward, they have forgotten to put in the fun."⁵⁶ Brooks Atkinson, on the other hand, maintained that the "abundance, good humor, and romantic beauty of *Paint Your Wagon* make a very happy evening in the theatre. It's a lot of fun."⁵⁷ Although William Hawkins identified flaws in the show, he was more impressed by its strengths: "it is a show of real distinction, courage, and novelty, and one people will remember. It has gigantic faults, which make it all the more remarkable that it wields the impression it does."⁵⁸

⁵⁵ Green, 152.

⁵⁶ Quoted in Steven Suskin, *Opening Night on Broadway: A Critical Quotebook of the Golden Era of the Musical Theatre, Oklahoma! (1943) to Fiddler on the Roof (1964)* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1990), 532.

⁵⁷ Quoted in Suskin, 531.

⁵⁸ Quoted in Suskin, 531.

The context in which *Paint Your Wagon* opened, early 1950s America, was simultaneously and paradoxically characterized by extraordinary anxiety and unprecedented prosperity (for the white middle class), both stemming from the effects of World War II.⁵⁹ Joseph McCarthy's crusade against Communism had begun in 1950, and much of the decade was characterized by the overarching rhetoric of democracy versus Communism.⁶⁰ J. Ronald Oakley described the decade as one of "great poverty in the midst of unprecedented prosperity" and rampant racism and sexism co-existing with the rhetoric of equality.⁶¹ The dawn of television occurred in 1950s America (transcontinental television launched in 1951), and television viewing increased as the decade moved forward, with western-themed shows, which satisfied a nostalgia for a simpler past, spotlighted freedom and individuality, and featured family entertainment, garnering significant attention.⁶² *Paint Your Wagon* was yet another iteration of this obsession with a mythical past. American relationships with outer space also shifted and increased in the 1950s. Anxieties regarding the political and economic situations in the post-World War II era often manifested themselves in presumed visits by extra-terrestrial beings.⁶³ In 1947 a UFO was reported over Roswell, New Mexico, and throughout the post-war period belief in and sightings of UFOs increased, in America as well as in

⁵⁹ Martin Halliwell, *American Culture in the 1950s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007), 2.

⁶⁰ Halliwell, xi.

⁶¹ Ronald J. Oakley, *God's Country: America in the Fifties*, Unabridged Version edition (New York, NY: Barricade Books, 1990), x.

⁶² Halliwell, *American Culture in the 1950s*, xi; McDonough, "Wee Willie Winkie Goes West: The Influence of the British Empire Genre on Ford's Cavalry Trilogy," 102; Peter Rollins and John O'Connor, eds., *Hollywood's West: The American Frontier in Film, Television, and History*, 18, accessed July 19, 2018, <http://eds.b.ebscohost.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/ehost/ebookviewer/ebook/ZTcwMHhuYV9fMTUyMDU3X19BTg2?sid=3f7ad0a7-a350-402b-a962-c8b320ab70b5@pdc-v-sessmgr03&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1>.

⁶³ James Miller, "Seeing the Future of Civilization in the Skies of Quaroble: UFO Encounters and the Problem of Empire in Postwar France," in *Imagining Outer Space: European Astroculture in the Twentieth Century*, ed. Alexander C.T. Geppert (Hampshire, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 246, 255.

Europe.⁶⁴ The tendency of the characters of *Paint Your Wagon* to look up to the stars and to assign meaning to the stars relates powerfully to the cultural moment in which the musical premiered. As the 1960s dawned, American musical theatre continued to explore identity in the face of a changing world, and three musicals from the decade looked to the cosmos in the process.

Fiddler on the Roof (1964)

Fiddler on the Roof provided a rare moment in which the culture of Jewish Americans, who had been deeply influential on Broadway for years, was explicitly portrayed in musical form.⁶⁵ Its creators included Jerry Bock (music), Sheldon Harnick (lyrics), and Joseph Stein (book). Their musical adaptation of Sholem Aleichem's short story "Tevye and His Daughters" follows a poor Jewish milkman, Tevye, and his family (wife Golde and five daughters) and their navigation through changes within early twentieth-century Russia.⁶⁶ The musical opens with a song about what provides the foundation of the villagers' lives: tradition. Yet, as Act I continues, Tevye will have his traditions challenged by the young tailor, Motel, who asks for Tevye's daughter Tzeitel's hand in marriage. In Act II Tevye again must struggle with challenges to tradition when a traveling scholar asks for his second daughter's hand in marriage, taking her away from

⁶⁴ "Roswell; Facts & Summary," History.com, accessed April 30, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/roswell>; Andrew Stuttaford, "Among the Ufologists," *New Criterion* 36, no. 7 (March 2018): 28–32, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aft&AN=128232684&site=eds-live&scope=site>; Miller, "Seeing the Future of Civilization in the Skies of Quarobole: UFO Encounters and the Problem of Empire in Postwar France," 253; C. G. Jung, *Flying Saucers: A Modern Myth of Things Seen in the Sky*, 2nd edition (Psychology Press, 2002).

⁶⁵ Stiehl and Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre*, 269. Irving Berlin, Oscar Hammerstein, George Gershwin, Lorenz Hart, Jerome Robbins and Leonard Bernstein all had Jewish heritage to name just a few.

⁶⁶ Green, *Broadway Musicals, Show by Show*, 209.

Anatevka, and when his third daughter seeks to marry a Christian – something Tevya cannot accept. At the end of the musical, the villagers prepare to depart the village that they love, going their separate ways into the world. Pamyla Stiehl and Bud Coleman have identified some of the musical's themes as faith, family, community, persecution, tradition, and the challenging of tradition.⁶⁷

Fiddler on the Roof opened on Broadway in September 1964.⁶⁸ The initial critical reception to *Fiddler on the Roof* was generally positive.⁶⁹ Walter Kerr referred to it as a “very-near-miss” that might have been an “altogether charming musical.”⁷⁰ John Chapman considered it “darling, touching, beautiful, warm, funny, and inspiring,” and Howard Taubman thought it achieved integration “of uncommon quality.”⁷¹ Chapman and Taubman must have seen what audiences saw because *Fiddler* ran for 3,242 performances.⁷²

The themes of *Fiddler* related to the upheaval and excitement of its transformational cultural moment in America. Sharon Monteith identifies what she considers the “most important domestic crises” of the decade as the fight for civil rights, the Vietnam War, the War on Poverty, and the space race.⁷³ In 1957 Russia sent the first cosmonaut into space on *Sputnik*, and in 1961 Alan Shepard became the first American

⁶⁷ Stiehl and Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre*, 203, 268.

⁶⁸ “Fiddler on the Roof,” International Broadway Database, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/fiddler-on-the-roof-3213>.

⁶⁹ Suskin, *Opening Night on Broadway: A Critical Quotebook of the Golden Era of the Musical Theatre, Oklahoma! (1943) to Fiddler on the Roof (1964)*, 207–9.

⁷⁰ Quoted in Suskin, 207.

⁷¹ Quoted in Suskin, 209.

⁷² “Fiddler on the Roof.”

⁷³ Sharon Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 1.

astronaut to travel to space.⁷⁴ In 1960 four African American students refused to leave a Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, North Carolina, challenging the inequity of segregation and beginning a movement of sit-ins across the South.⁷⁵ Shortly after being the first Catholic elected to the office of President of the United States John F. Kennedy escalated the anti-communist activity that America had been conducting in Vietnam since the 1950s into a full-scale war.⁷⁶ Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* came out in 1963, triggering second wave feminism.⁷⁷ It is significant that this musical that engages with tradition and cultural change emerged out of the early 1960s and the changes that characterized the decade.

Man of La Mancha (1965)

If *Fiddler on the Roof* mirrored, to some extent, the upheaval of its era, *Man of La Mancha*, which opened a year later, may have provided a much-needed glimmer of hope. With the privilege of hindsight Mike Davis contends that the 1960s witnessed the end of post-World War II prosperity, to be followed by slumps in the 1970s; while the creators and audiences of *Man of La Mancha* certainly could not know what was to come, the musical responded to both the negative and positive energies of its time. In addition to war, assassinations, and social unrest, the excitement of the space race and intent to send a man to the moon also characterized the decade: in 1961 President Kennedy established

⁷⁴ "Sputnik," accessed April 30, 2018, <https://history.nasa.gov/sputnik/>; David Hitt, "Who Was Alan Shepard?," NASA, May 12, 2015, <http://www.nasa.gov/audience/forstudents/k-4/stories/nasa-knows/who-was-alan-shepard-k4.html>.

⁷⁵ "Greensboro Sit-In," History.com, accessed June 8, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/black-history/the-greensboro-sit-in>.

⁷⁶ "The 1960s," History.com, accessed June 8, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/1960s>; "Vietnam War," History.com, accessed June 8, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/vietnam-war/vietnam-war-history>.

⁷⁷ Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s*, 164.

an ambitious goal for America to send a man to the moon by the end of the decade, a goal America achieved.⁷⁸ Perhaps the optimism provided by the civil rights advances such as the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, and the frontier spirit of the space race inspired the optimism of *Man of La Mancha*.

Man of La Mancha (which premiered on Broadway in November, 1965) tells the tale of an idealistic seventeenth century knight (Don Quixote) who seeks to make the world a better place.⁷⁹ The musical opens with novelist Miguel de Cervantes imprisoned by the Inquisition and forced to mount his own defense in a mock trial convened by his fellow prisoners; as his defense he tells the story of Alonso Quijano, who, as the hero Don Quixote, rides out into the world to fight evil. Along the way he meets Aldonza, a prostitute whom he believes is the ideal maiden (Dulcinea), achieves knighthood, and is defeated by his mortal enemy, who is really Doctor Carrasco (in disguise and hired by Don Quixote's niece to break her uncle of his delusions). Back home, Quijano/Don Quixote lies on the verge of death but is temporarily reinvigorated by the faith in his quest that Sancho Panza, his squire, and Dulcinea, his lady, express. Quijano dies believing in his impossible quest, and when the Inquisitors return to take de Cervantes away, his fellow prisoners reprise Don Quixote's hopeful mantra "The Impossible Dream."

Man of La Mancha had a hard time getting to Broadway. As Stanley Green has reported, many thought "the idea of a windmill-tilting old gaffer as a hero of a musical

⁷⁸ Monteith, 1; "The Decision to Go to the Moon: President John F. Kennedy's May 25, 1961 Speech before Congress," accessed June 21, 2018, <https://history.nasa.gov/moondec.html>.

⁷⁹ "Man of La Mancha: Broadway Musical, Original," International Broadway Database, accessed April 15, 2018, <http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/man-of-la-mancha-4727>.

hardly seemed a formula” for success.⁸⁰ The musical was first tried out at the Goodspeed Opera House in Connecticut and then transferred to off-Broadway. Eventually *Man of La Mancha* opened in November 1965 at the ANTA Washington Square Theatre.⁸¹ Mitch Leigh composed the music, Joe Darion wrote the lyrics, and Dale Wasserman penned the book (an adaptation of Wasserman’s television play *I, Don Quixote* (1959), itself an adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes’ seventeenth-century novel *Don Quixote*).⁸² Critical response was somewhat divided. Brooks Atkinson praised the musical as “one of the most imaginative theatre events of the decade.”⁸³ Howard Taubman was less enthusiastic but conceded that it “rate[d] more plusses than minuses.”⁸⁴ The show enjoyed a run of 2,328 performances, became an international hit, and has been revived several times on Broadway.⁸⁵

***Hair* (1968)**

Described by scholar Stanley Green as “a product of its time,” *Hair* deeply embodied the counter-culture movement of the 1960s. It was also a new style of show on Broadway: not only was the plot skeletal, but the music and the staging broke significantly from the style of musicals generally seen on Broadway in the 1960s, and even in 2018. The interactive approach certainly would have been a surprise to theatre audiences, as the performers moved among the spectators during the opening number,

⁸⁰ Green, *Broadway Musicals, Show by Show*, 215.

⁸¹ “Man of La Mancha: Broadway Musical, Original.”

⁸² Green, *Broadway Musicals, Show by Show*, 215.

⁸³ Quoted in Stanley Green, *The World of Musical Comedy: The Story of the American Musical Stage as Told through the Careers of Its Foremost Composers and Lyricists*, 4th ed., and enl. (San Diego, CA: London: A.S. Barnes; Tantivy Press, 1980), 401.

⁸⁴ Howard Taubman, “Don Quixote, Singing Knight: *Man of La Mancha* Has Kiley in Title Role,” *The New York Times*, November 23, 1965, 40, <https://www.nytimes.com/1965/11/23/archives/theater-don-quixote-singing-knight-man-of-la-mancha-has-kiley-in.html>.

⁸⁵ Flinn, *Musical!*, 468.

climbing over seats, and inviting the audience to be a part of the experience. Audiences were not put off, as *Hair* became a box office hit and drew new, younger audiences to the theatre. *Hair* premiered for a limited off-Broadway run in December 1967 at the Public Theatre and eventually opened on Broadway in April 1968 in a revised form at the Biltmore Theatre, where it ran for 1,750 performances.⁸⁶ Galt MacDermot, a newcomer to Broadway, composed the music. Two of its creators also performed in the cast: Gerome Ragni and James Rado (book and lyrics).⁸⁷ Critics were mixed in their reception of *Hair*'s unique approaches to staging, particularly its annihilation of the fourth wall. Clive Barnes thought the innovation was intriguing, and John Chapman abhorred it.⁸⁸ Barnes also lauded the freshness of the music, as well as the musical's inherent connection to the era in which it was created, writing, "the show is the first Broadway musical in some time to have the authentic voice of today rather than the day before yesterday."⁸⁹

The musical's engagement with many of the themes and concerns of the counter-culture movement that emerged during the Vietnam War make it irrevocably a part of 1960s America. *Smithsonian Magazine* asserts that in 1968 "[m]ovements that had been building along the primary fault lines of the 1950s – the Vietnam War, the Cold War,

⁸⁶ Green, *Broadway Musicals, Show by Show*, 224.

⁸⁷ "Hair," accessed June 10, 2018, <http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/hair-3393>; Elizabeth L. Wollman, Galt MacDermot, and Stephen Trask, *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical: From Hair to Hedwig* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006), 45, <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/toc/ecip0611/2006010056.html>.

⁸⁸ Wollman, MacDermot, and Trask, *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical: From Hair to Hedwig*, 48.

⁸⁹ Clive Barnes, "Hair - It's Fresh and Frank," *The New York Times*, April 30, 1968, sec. Theater, <https://www.nytimes.com/1968/04/30/archives/theater-hair-its-fresh-and-frank-likable-rock-musical-moves-to.html>.

civil rights, human rights, youth culture – exploded with force.”⁹⁰ In protest of the war young Americans burned their draft cards and protested on university campuses.⁹¹ The draft card issue became so prevalent that in 1965 President Johnson signed a law making its destruction a federal crime.⁹² The Tribe of *Hair* express their concern with many of these issues and recreate be-ins, protests, and love-fests onstage.

Popular culture in the 1960s featured humans voyaging into space and meeting new and diverse life-forms. *Star Trek* aired in 1966, imaginatively creating alien life forms like Klingons and Vulcans, identifying space as “the final frontier,” and indicating the purpose of the starship Enterprise “to explore strange new worlds, to seek out new life and new civilizations, to boldly go where no man has gone before.”⁹³ *Hair* exhibits this fascination with humans and space, speaking to the tone of the time in more than one way.

Hair’s skeletal narrative follows Claude Bukowski, who is trying to decide whether he should go to the Vietnam war, and a tribe of counter-culture youth who protest the war in Vietnam as they experiment with free love, drugs, and Eastern spirituality. The musical opens with a song expressing a belief in astrology and a hope for a better world and features songs that engage with weighty and complex contemporary issues such as racism, patriotism, gender norms, and the war as well as numbers that

⁹⁰ Kendrick McDonald, “1968: A Seismic Year,” *Smithsonian*, 2018, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=edsgsc&AN=edsgcl.523393508&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

⁹¹ Lily Rothman, “This Photo Shows the Vietnam Draft-Card Burning That Started a Movement,” *Time*, accessed April 28, 2018, <http://time.com/4061835/david-miller-draft-card/>; Monteith, *American Culture in the 1960s*, 180.

⁹² Rothman, “This Photo Shows the Vietnam Draft-Card Burning That Started a Movement.”

⁹³ Smith Goldstone, “Where No Man Has Gone Before,” *Star Trek*, September 22, 1966, https://www.amazon.com/The-Man-Trap/dp/B005HED5YW/ref=sr_1_7_dvt_7_wnwz?s=movies-tv&ie=UTF8&qid=1525115796&sr=1-7&keywords=star+trek.

explore themes of drug use and free love.⁹⁴ In the end Claude decides to go to Vietnam and dies there. Elizabeth Wollman indicates Ragni and Rado's intention to make a musical that captured the essence of the counter cultural movement.⁹⁵ *Hair* also addresses such issues as materialism, environmental concerns, and alternative forms of spirituality.⁹⁶ This era of cultural shifting was followed by one of increased anxiety in the face of global catastrophes; the next decade saw two musicals that invoked the cosmos in powerful ways.

Pippin (1972)

Although looking and sounding a lot like the 1970s, *Pippin* evoked a fargone era to comment on contemporary culture. *Pippin* recounts the adventures of Charlemagne's oldest son, Pippin, on his quest to find identity and fulfillment in 8th century France.⁹⁷ The musical opens with a meta-theatrical production number featuring the Leading Player and his Troupe of players as they set up the premise of the show. Then the narrative starts: Pippin, just returned from school, sets out to find his purpose by trying warfare, loveless sex, and social causes. He finally finds an "ordinary" woman, Catharine, and her son and lives with them for a time.⁹⁸ Becoming bored again, however, he leaves once more to find his purpose and is almost enticed to destruction by the Leading Player. At the last minute, however, Pippin realizes that what he had with Catharine was pretty good and returns to her. The Leading Player responds in anger,

⁹⁴ Stiehl and Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre*, 337.

⁹⁵ Wollman, MacDermot, and Trask, *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical: From Hair to Hedwig*, 46.

⁹⁶ Stiehl and Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre*, 337.

⁹⁷ Thomas S. Hischak, *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical: Theatre, Film, and Television* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 586.

⁹⁸ Stephen Schwartz, *Kind of Woman (from Pippin Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Jill Clayburgh, 2000.

striking all the technical elements, and Pippin and Catharine sing that their love is enough.

Created by Stephen Schwarz (music and lyrics) and Roger Hirson (book), the musical opened on Broadway in October 1972.⁹⁹ Critics appreciated the perky, driving, carnivalesque style of the musical more than its content. Walter Kerr, for example, declared “[t]he libretto is simply not a match for the music and staging” and concluded that “Pippin is almost entirely an exercise in style.”¹⁰⁰ Similar to Kerr, Clive Barnes considered *Pippin* “one of the best musical stagings to be seen on Broadway in years,” but was unimpressed by the book.¹⁰¹ Audiences apparently appreciated the musical as *Pippin* ran for 1,944 performances before it closed in 1977.¹⁰²

Will Kaufman’s discussion of the “Me Decade” in *American Culture in the 1970s* is particularly relevant to *Pippin*. Although Kaufman challenges what he considers the “overarching misapprehensions of the decade as the decade of narcissism” he does identify fads that point to a certain amount of self-obsession in the decade, such as the interest in Zen, yoga, channeling, transactional psychology, and the Church of Scientology.¹⁰³ The prevalence of focus on self in the 1970s speaks to the character of Pippin and his journey to find his place in the world. The early 1970s was characterized by several political scandals as well as the continuing movements for civil rights and women’s rights, the “generation gap,” protests against the Vietnam War, and the Kent

⁹⁹ “Pippin,” accessed April 9, 2018, <https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/pippin-3096>.

¹⁰⁰ Walter Kerr, “It’s a Lovely Way to Do a Show,” *The New York Times*, October 29, 1972, sec. Theater, <https://www.nytimes.com/1972/10/29/archives/its-a-lovely-way-to-do-a-show-its-a-lovely-way-to-do-a-show.html>.

¹⁰¹ Brynn Cox, “Vintage Playbill: Pippin, Original Broadway Cast, 1972,” Playbill, January 3, 2013, <http://www.playbill.com/article/vintage-playbill-pippin-original-broadway-cast-1972-com-201162>.

¹⁰² Stiehl and Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre*, 304; “Pippin.”

¹⁰³ Will Kaufman, *American Culture in the 1970s*, 1st edition (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), 5.

State University massacre in 1970.¹⁰⁴ The Pentagon Papers were published in newspapers in 1971, and in June of 1972 the *Washington Post* disclosed the Watergate Scandal.¹⁰⁵ It appeared that the leaders of the nation were perhaps not as reliable as previously thought. The scandals that rocked the foundations of American society in the early 1970s provide further impetus to find one's place in an unstable world.

The 1970s had begun, however, on a high note, and one with special implications for man's relationship to the cosmos. July 1969 witnessed the historic moon landing and American astronaut Neil Armstrong's famous walk on the moon.¹⁰⁶ Armstrong's landing was a seminal event in American history and culture, forever altering the way Americans would view the Cosmos. In the 1970s America furthered its activities in space, launching the Viking Mission to Mars in 1975 and the Voyager mission to Jupiter and Saturn in 1977.¹⁰⁷ *Pippin* premiered to audiences just three years after the Moon Landing and manifested the era's fascination with the cosmos in its use of cosmic symbolism. Despite its ostensible eighth century setting, *Pippin* speaks directly to the era in which it was created.

Evita (1978)

Like *Pippin*, *Evita* borrows from the past but is intimately connected with the era in which it emerged. *Evita* follows the rise and fall of Argentinian First Lady Eva Perón, beginning after her death in 1952 and then looking back to trace her rise from her

¹⁰⁴ Kaufman, xii.

¹⁰⁵ Kaufman, xiv–xvi.

¹⁰⁶ “July 20, 1969: One Giant Leap For Mankind,” NASA, February 19, 2015, http://www.nasa.gov/mission_pages/apollo/apollo11.html.

¹⁰⁷ “Viking 1 & 2, Mars Exploration Program,” NASA, accessed June 8, 2018, <https://mars.nasa.gov/programmissions/missions/past/viking/>; “Voyager Mission Overview,” NASA, accessed June 8, 2018, <https://voyager.jpl.nasa.gov/mission/>.

common roots. In 1934 Eva Duarte leaves her hometown at the age of fifteen for the big city of Buenos Aires where she becomes a model, a film actress, and eventually wife of General Juan Perón. When General Perón wins the presidency, Eva becomes the First Lady and continues to perform acts that appear to be charitable but simultaneously increase the wealth and power of the Peróns. Nevertheless, the poor of Argentina consider her a saint. Eva's declining health forces her to pull back from political involvement, and she dies at thirty-three, a beloved saint for the poor of Argentina.¹⁰⁸ The musical is told through the lens of dissident Che (based on the Argentinian revolutionary Che Guevara but called only Che in the musical) who provides a simultaneously sympathetic and critical portrayal of "Santa Evita."¹⁰⁹ Andrew Lloyd Webber (music) and Tim Rice (lyrics and book) highlight the rags to riches nature of the musical when they describe it as "a Cinderella story about the astonishing life of a girl from the most mundane of backgrounds who became the most powerful woman that her country [...] had ever seen."¹¹⁰ The musical is also about the nature of fame.¹¹¹

With its themes of political and economic instability, *Evita* fits neatly into the context in which it was created. The political situation in mid-1970s Britain was what theatre critic Michael Coveney termed "volatile" largely due to the weak Labour

¹⁰⁸ "Saga Of Eva Peron: 12 Years To Power," accessed April 15, 2018, <https://archive.nytimes.com/www.nytimes.com/learning/general/onthisday/bday/0507.html>.

¹⁰⁹ Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, *Evita: The Legend of Eva Peron, 1919-1952* (New York: Drama Pub, 1979); "Evita," International Broadway Database, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/evita-3809>; Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, *Santa Evita (from Evita Original Cast Recording)*, with David Essex and the original London cast (MCA Records, 1978).

¹¹⁰ Quoted in Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama*, 36.

¹¹¹ Lundskaer-Nielsen, 36.

government's inability to stabilize the stock market.¹¹² The decade also experienced a global energy crisis, a financial crash, and miners' strikes that only added to the government's struggles.¹¹³ Miranda Lundskaer-Nielsen makes an interesting parallel when she notes that in 1979, "[s]hortly after the musical opened, Margaret Thatcher [a grocer's daughter] moved into the Prime Minister's residence at 10 Downing Street."¹¹⁴ While humanity in the 1970s dealt with oil shortages and hostage crises, in popular culture writers sent many of their fictional literary, television, and movie characters to space. Pierre Christin and Jean-Claude Mézières' space fiction graphic novel *Valérian et Laureline* was first printed in 1967 in France, and *Star Wars: A New Hope* (perhaps influenced by the previous, as Ross Johnson has suggested) appeared in 1977.¹¹⁵ *Battlestar Galactica* premiered to audiences in 1978 and in the same year the first *Superman* movie starred Christopher Reeve as the Man of Steel from the planet Krypton.¹¹⁶

Evita began as a successful concept album, and then opened to audiences at the Prince Edward theatre in London's West End on June 21, 1978.¹¹⁷ The musical received mostly positive reviews from critics, although some did not appreciate Che's narration of

¹¹² Miranda Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama: British and American Musical Theatre in the 1980s and 90s*, 1st ed., Palgrave Studies in Theatre and Performance History (New York, N.Y.: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 36.

¹¹³ "Was the 1970s Really Such a Grim Decade?," BBC News, April 16, 2012, <http://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-17703483>.

¹¹⁴ Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama: British and American Musical Theatre in the 1980s and 90s*, 37; "Was the 1970s Really Such a Grim Decade?"

¹¹⁵ Ross Johnson, "Valérian and Laureline Is the Essential Space Opera You've Never Read," The B&N Sci-Fi and Fantasy Blog, July 18, 2017, <https://www.barnesandnoble.com/blog/sci-fi-fantasy/valerian-laureline-essential-space-opera-youve-never-read/>; George Lucas, "Star Wars: Episode IV: A New Hope," May 25, 1977, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0076759/>.

¹¹⁶ *Battlestar Galactica*, 1978, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0076984/>; Richard Donner, *Superman*, 1978, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0078346/>.

¹¹⁷ For a summary of critical response, see Jessica Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, Profiles in Popular Music (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006), 103; Green, *Broadway Musicals, Show by Show*, 254.

the action.¹¹⁸ While Michael Billington objected to Lloyd Webber and Rice's approach to the story as having "a tone of fence-sitting neutrality" and being a "ludicrous ballyhoo," he admits that there are redeemable qualities, such as the "beautiful score" and "marvelous" staging; overall Billington appears to have been more impressed by Prince's staging than by the story.¹¹⁹ Additionally, many critics were concerned about the musical's glamorization of a fascist leader.¹²⁰ Billington does, however, make an important observation: the audience were brought to their feet at the conclusion of the musical.¹²¹ Audiences kept the musical running for eight years in London and in New York for 1,567 performances.

Les Misérables (1985)

During the 1980s, Britain continued to experience political and economic woes. *Les Misérables*, created by French and British artists and premiering in London in 1985, engaged with many of the issues. The decade was characterized by a "historically high" unemployment rate, a conservative government in power (headed by Margaret Thatcher) that prioritized a free economy and privatization of the economy, riots and strikes in response, and changes to the way life in the UK had traditionally been organized: by class.¹²² Thatcher and her allies emphasized a rhetoric of "self-help," rejecting the

¹¹⁸ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 103; Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama: British and American Musical Theatre in the 1980s and 90s*, 37.

¹¹⁹ Michael Billington, "Evita Review: Breathtaking Inventiveness and Quicksilver Fluency," *The Guardian*, September 22, 2014, sec. Stage, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2014/sep/22/evita-review-andrew-lloyd-webber-theatre>.

¹²⁰ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 103.

¹²¹ Billington, "Evita Review: Breathtaking Inventiveness and Quicksilver Fluency."

¹²² Anita Biressi and Heather Nunn, *Class and Contemporary British Culture* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 3; Nicholas Abercrombie and Alan Warde, *Changing Britain* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 3.

collectivism and social democracy that had dominated British politics since 1945.¹²³ As a result of the high unemployment and Thatcher's policies, riots and strikes erupted. In 1981 and 1985 the two greatest waves of race riots in inner-city London occurred.¹²⁴ *Les Misérables*' representation of the suffering of the poor and the fight for social justice correlates strongly to the changes characterizing Britain in the 1980s.

Les Misérables (an adaptation of Victor Hugo's nineteenth century novel) is set in early nineteenth century France and features paroled convict Jean Valjean as he strives to be worthy in the eyes of heaven. Early in the musical Jean Valjean is released as a parolee and forgiven for theft by a Bishop. The Bishop's forgiveness inspires Valjean to become a better person, and he jumps parole to start over with a new identity. Years later, in the town of Montreuil Valjean has become the mayor and intervenes on behalf of a dying Fantine, promising to take care of her child, Cosette. In Paris ten years later, the poor are still suffering and young radicals are planning an uprising, led by Enjolras and Marius. Marius, however, meets Cosette (now grown) and is torn between love and principles. Meanwhile Police Inspector Javert, who has been pursuing Valjean for years, has also come to Paris and is getting closer to catching the criminal he seeks to bring to justice. In a cruel love triangle Eponine pines for her childhood friend, Marius, who does not love her in return. Act II opens on the barricades where the youth have begun their uprising. Javert arrives, undercover, but is recognized and apprehended. Valjean exhibits mercy and frees Javert instead of killing him. As the uprising turns sour, Eponine dies,

¹²³ Monia O'Brien Castro, "Pandemonium Britain: Interactions between Formal and Informal Places of Governance in the 1980s," *Journal of Urban History* 41, no. 4 (July 2015): 610; "British History in Depth: Thatcherism and the End of the Post-War Consensus," accessed June 18, 2018, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/thatcherism_01.shtml.

¹²⁴ Castro, "Pandemonium Britain," 608.

Marius is wounded, and Valjean gets him away from the barricade. Valjean runs into Javert in the process, however, and must convince Javert to let him save Marius before submitting to arrest. Unable to reconcile this good man with the criminal he has been pursuing, Javert commits suicide by jumping from the bridge into the river Seine. Days later, in the wake of the failed uprising, Marius reflects on the death of his comrades and friends. Finally at the end of the musical Marius and Cosette are married, and Jean Valjean dies of old age, departing to join Fantine in eternity. A critique of social injustices and the living conditions of the poor, *Les Misérables* explores the themes of freedom and justice for the poor, young love, and relentless pursuit in the name of justice.¹²⁵

Les Misérables opened at the Barbican Theatre in London in October 1985.¹²⁶ With music by Claude-Michel Schonberg, lyrics by Herbert Kretzmer and James Fenton, and book by Alain Boublil and Jean-Marc Natal, *Les Misérables* was a project heavily indebted to the Royal Shakespeare Company as the directors and several of the actors came from that company.¹²⁷ Initially conceived by Schonberg and Boublil, a French version of the musical premiered to French audiences in September 1980; the musical was then moved to England by producer Cameron Mackintosh in an English version significantly revised by directors Trevor Nunn and John Caird and lyricists James Fenton and Herbert Kretzmer.¹²⁸ London audiences were enthusiastic about the musical, but the

¹²⁵ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 178.

¹²⁶ Edward Behr, *The Complete Book of Les Misérables*, 1st U.S. ed (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1989), 140–41.

¹²⁷ Patinkin, *No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance: a History of the American Musical Theater*, 478; Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 179–80.

¹²⁸ Patinkin, *No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance: A History of the American Musical Theater*, 478. I examine the *Les Misérables* production that premiered in the West End in 1985 because it is the version that became the recognized global phenomenon and the version that most musical theatre audiences know.

reviewers were less so.¹²⁹ According to Trevor Nunn, the critics saw *Les Misérables* as “clear evidence that the lights were going out all over Europe and a new dark age had begun.”¹³⁰ *London Times* critic Irving Wardle pronounced the music quite good but decried the “spectacle and push-button emotionalism” that distracted from story and character.¹³¹ Other reviewers compared the musical to the novel and thought that the musicalization failed the original source.¹³² Some critics, however, found much to admire; John Peter found the musical “brilliantly paced and thrillingly organised,” and Michael Coveney thought “One Day More” was one of the best first-act finales in musical theatre.¹³³ Critics eventually warmed up to the musical, which achieved great success in London, going on to run for eighteen years there, and transferring to Broadway for 6,680 performances and around the world.¹³⁴ *Les Misérables* spoke both to the political and economic situation at the time of its creation as well as the relationship between humans and the cosmos in the 1980s. As the 1990s dawned and the end of the millennium approached two more musicals gazed upward.

Rent (1996)

While Colin Harrison balks at narrowly defining the decade of the 1990s, he identifies four major themes that characterized it and asserts that across all four, “the

¹²⁹ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 185.

¹³⁰ Quoted in Lundskaer-Nielsen, *Directors and the New Musical Drama: British and American Musical Theatre in the 1980s and 90s*, 60.

¹³¹ Quoted in Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 186.

¹³² Sternfeld, 186.

¹³³ John Peter, “Adult Spectacle,” *Sunday Times*, October 13, 1985; Michael Coveney, “Les Misérables,” *Financial Times*, October 9, 1985.

¹³⁴ Sternfeld, *The Megamusical*, 185; Stiehl and Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre*, 389–90; “Les Misérables,” International Broadway Database, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/les-misrables-4443>.

1990s came across as a ‘twilight’ moment.”¹³⁵ In the shadow of the end of the world, as the dawning of the year 2000 promised to cause irreparable damage to machines, the 1990s was simultaneously filled with exciting change in technology, the looming vigor of a new century, and the threat of the potential end of the world.¹³⁶ This sense of the 1990s as a twilight moment is reflected in both *Rent* (1996) and *Notre Dame de Paris* (1998)..

1990s America followed in the wake of the 1980s, which were characterized by conservative policy, the warming and eventual end of the Cold War, and the AIDS crisis. The term AIDS was first used in 1982 in the early moments of the epidemic, and as the death tolls and infection rates increased through the 1980s and into the 1990s celebrities, artists, and everyday people continued to die as a result of the virus.¹³⁷ In 1989 the Berlin Wall came down, symbolizing the end of the Cold War and much of the fear and rhetoric that had characterized the post-World War II world.¹³⁸ The 1990s continued the trend of significant change in the face of lingering conservatism. Early in the 1990s America declared war in the Middle-East, the world wide web was born (forever altering communication and triggering the information age), and President Bill Clinton introduced the ‘don’t ask, don’t tell’ policy in the military that was a weak version of a proposal to end discrimination against homosexuals in the armed forces.¹³⁹ In many ways the 1990s was a preparation for the dawning of the new millennium, and very much a twilight decade for the twentieth century, as Harrison defined it.

¹³⁵ Colin Harrison, *American Culture in the 1990s*, 1st ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 4.

¹³⁶ National Geographic Society, “Y2K Bug,” National Geographic Society, January 21, 2011, <http://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/Y2K-bug/>.

¹³⁷ “A Timeline of HIV and AIDS,” HIV.gov, May 11, 2016, <https://www.hiv.gov/hiv-basics/overview/history/hiv-and-aids-timeline>.

¹³⁸ “Berlin Wall, Cold War,” History.com, accessed April 30, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/cold-war/berlin-wall>.

¹³⁹ Harrison, *American Culture in the 1990s*, x–xiv, 4.

Rent is certainly a product of its time, responding to the AIDS epidemic and the pending end of the second millennium. It witnesses a year in the lives of artists living the Bohemian lifestyle in New York City's East Village in the middle of the AIDS crisis. The musical opens in aspiring film-maker Mark and struggling rock musician Roger's flat, and in the opening number other major characters are introduced: Tom Collins (friend of Mark and Roger), Maureen (Mark's ex-girlfriend), Joanne (Maureen's new girlfriend), and Benny (Mark and Roger's landlord and ex-friend). Other characters follow: Angel, who picks Tom Collins up after he is mugged, and Mimi, who introduces herself to Roger by coming to his flat for a light (for her candle). As Act I continues, the group attends Maureen's protest show at the empty lot, and after the show they all go to the Life Café. Act II opens with probably the most famous song of the musical, "Seasons of Love," and as Act II progresses, the relationships between Roger and Mimi and between Maureen and Joanne fall apart, while Angel's health deteriorates. Angel dies, and characters go their separate ways. Finally, Roger returns from wandering out west to find Mimi on the verge of death. She dies but is sent back from beyond the grave by Angel, and the ending is mostly happy. Stiehl and Coleman consider the musical an "heir" to *Hair*, and identify its messages of searching for connections and meaning in life, and of living each moment fully, authentically, and as positively as possible.¹⁴⁰ Barry Singer specifies the themes of empathy and love in *Rent*: "The show's underlying empathy, its gentle but overwhelming sense of tolerance, of celebration and love in the face of death."¹⁴¹ Like *Hair* *Rent* was a product of its times, closely connected both in narrative

¹⁴⁰ Stiehl and Coleman, *Backstage Pass: A Survey of American Musical Theatre*, 341.

¹⁴¹ Barry Singer, *Ever After: The Last Years of Musical Theater and Beyond* (New York: Applause, 2004), 109–10.

and style to the era in which it was created. Michael Greif, director of the original Broadway production of *Rent*, was drawn by the timeliness of the musical, which he considered a “musical about contemporary life.”¹⁴²

Jonathan Larson (music, book, lyrics) died shortly before opening night at New York Theatre Workshop in February 1996. Four months later, *Rent* opened on Broadway at the Nederlander Theatre, winning the 1996 Pulitzer Prize for drama and running for 5,012 performances before it closed in 2008.¹⁴³ According to Elizabeth Wollman, several critics were impressed enough to claim that *Rent* would revitalize the American musical.¹⁴⁴ Ben Brantley drew parallels between *Rent* and *Hair* in his review of the NYTW production. His comments are laudatory, as he contends that “one forgives the show’s intermittent lapses into awkwardness or cliché [sic] because of its overwhelming emotional sincerity,” and concludes “[p]eople who complain about the demise of the American musical have simply been looking in the wrong places. Well done, Mr. Larson.”¹⁴⁵ Brantley was equally enthusiastic when he attended the Broadway incarnation of the musical after its move in April 1996.¹⁴⁶ In a review for *Theatre Journal* Rick Simas asserted that “*Rent* is a work of true originality [...] Larson’s work has come closer than any other since *Hair* to solving the dilemma of making Broadway once again

¹⁴² Quoted in Singer, 107.

¹⁴³ Singer, 109–11; “Rent,” International Broadway Database, accessed May 28, 2018, <http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/rent-4791>; Mark Steyn, *Broadway Babies Say Goodnight: Musicals Then and Now* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 209.

¹⁴⁴ Wollman, MacDermot, and Trask, *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical: From Hair to Hedwig*, 176.

¹⁴⁵ Ben Brantley, “Rock Opera A la Boheme And Hair,” *The New York Times*, February 14, 1996, sec. Theater, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/02/14/theater/theater-review-rock-opera-a-la-boheme-and-hair.html>.

¹⁴⁶ Ben Brantley, “Enter Singing: Young, Hopeful And Taking On The Big Time,” *The New York Times*, April 30, 1996, sec. Theater, <https://www.nytimes.com/1996/04/30/theater/theater-review-enter-singing-young-hopeful-and-taking-on-the-big-time.html>.

‘popular.’”¹⁴⁷ On the other hand, scorchingly negative reviews did exist, most notably by Francis Davis for the *Atlantic Monthly* titled “Victim Kitsch,” in which Davis convicts Larson of being derivative in his compositions, and his songs of being “too close to the surface” with minimal to no harmony.¹⁴⁸ Overall, however, *Rent* enjoyed enormous success in the wake of its creator’s tragic death.

Notre Dame de Paris (1998)

Nicholas Campion has written of the “collapse of established religion in the industrialized West” occurring in the late twentieth century.¹⁴⁹ France in the 1990s was characterized by decreased interest in organized religion as well as increased anxiety regarding globalization and identity, themes that appear in *Notre Dame de Paris* in obvious as well as veiled ways. In France, by 1994 only 8% of Catholic adults attended mass regularly, and similar defection occurred in the ranks of young Jews and Protestants.¹⁵⁰ France also suffered angst about its national identity and along with this anxiety came an intense distrust, and often hate, of immigrants.¹⁵¹ In March of 1995, for example, a large group of ‘sans-papiers’ (immigrants without residence papers) took refuge in a church in Paris, and in August of that year police violence against another group of immigrants who had taken refuge in a church was televised.¹⁵² This wariness of

¹⁴⁷ Rick A. Simas, “Review of *Rent*; Bring in ’da Noise, Bring in ’Da Funk,” *Theatre Journal* 49, no. 2 (1997): 220–59, <http://www.jstor.org.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/stable/3208686>.

¹⁴⁸ Francis Davis, “Victim Kitsch,” *Atlantic* 278, no. 3 (September 1996): 99, 103, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=f5h&AN=9702262716&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

¹⁴⁹ Nicholas Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Volume II: The Medieval and Modern Worlds*, 1 edition (London; New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2009), 257.

¹⁵⁰ James F. McMillan, *Modern France: 1880-2002*, The Short Oxford History of France (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 222–24.

¹⁵¹ H. R. Kedward, *France and the French: A Modern History*, 1st ed (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2006), 551.

¹⁵² Kedward, 567–68.

immigrants is reflected in *Notre Dame de Paris* and moments of the musical seem to have been pulled straight out of the newspapers. By 1998, however, when *Notre Dame* debuted, France's victory in the World Cup over its arch-rival Croatia served as an opportunity to emphasize team work and plurality, as H. R. Kedward asserts, and to conceive of "playing together" as a metaphor for racial and social integration.¹⁵³ By the end of the decade France was taking steps to encourage *rapprochement* between immigrants and French citizens, but the problems were far from solved and are noticeably made manifest in *Notre Dame de Paris*.

Notre Dame de Paris first premiered as a concert performance in January 1998 at the MIDEM (Marché International du Disque et de l'Édition Musicale; International Market of Discs and Music) in Cannes and was then developed into a full theatrical production that opened in Paris in September 1998 at the Palais des Congrès, a Parisian concert venue and convention center.¹⁵⁴ With music by Richard Cocciante and book and lyrics by Luc Plamondon, *Notre Dame de Paris* is an adaptation of Victor Hugo's 1833 novel of the same name. The musical has seen success both in France and around the world, enjoying long runs in Paris (two years), Rome (three years), Russia (six years), and has led to an increased interest in musicals in France.¹⁵⁵ In an article for *Le Monde* in October 2000 Gérard Presgovic, composer of another French musical: *Roméo et Juliette*, which followed on the heels of *Notre Dame de Paris*, identified the important legacy *Notre Dame de Paris* had in France: "*Notre Dame* a libéré des énergies créatrices et

¹⁵³ Kedward, 604.

¹⁵⁴ Régine Barrioz and Lionel Cramenil de Laleu, *Making of Notre Dame de Paris* (Pomme Musique, 1999).

¹⁵⁵ Marc Roche, "La critique anglaise reste de glace devant Notre-Dame de Paris," *Le Monde.fr*, May 28, 2000, http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2000/05/28/la-critique-anglaise-reste-de-glace-devant-notre-dame-de-paris_3610851_1819218.html; Lira Nassiboullina, "Comparative Analysis of the French, English, and Russian Versions of the Musical *Notre-Dame de Paris*" (Concordia University, 2010), 29.

financières. Nous sommes en train de créer une vraie culture des comédies musicales en France” (*Notre Dame* released creative and financial energies. We are in the process of creating a real culture of musical comedies in France).¹⁵⁶ While *Notre Dame de Paris* has not yet found a large audience base in America (except for its two hundred performance run in an English version in Las Vegas in 2000) it has been translated into English, Spanish, Russian, Italian, and Korean but is most often performed in French and has reached over ten million people in more than ten countries.¹⁵⁷

Set in Paris during the fifteenth century, the musical opens with a prologue sung by the narrator Gringoire, followed by a demand from the Gypsies for sanctuary in Notre Dame Cathedral. As Act I continues several characters (Arch-Deacon Frollo, captain of the guards Phoebus, and bell ringer Quasimodo) become enamored with a Gypsy woman, Esmeralda, and express their desire for her. Esmeralda and Fleur-de-Lys, Phoebus’ fiancé, also sing about their love for Phoebus. At the end of the act Esmeralda meets Phoebus for a *rendez-vous* at a local brothel, but Phoebus is stabbed by an undisclosed assailant who resembles Frollo and Act I comes to a close. Act II opens with a reflection by Frollo and Gringoire about the advancement of humankind. After the philosophical prologue it is revealed that Esmeralda has been arrested and has confessed under torture to bewitching Phoebus. She is condemned to die, but the Gypsies and Quasimodo stage a rescue and free her from her cell. The Gypsies further protest the abuse they receive from the authorities of Paris, and their leader, Clopin, is injured in the process; he dies in

¹⁵⁶ Aida N’Daye, “La Comédie Musicale ‘Made in France’ Fait Recette,” *Le Monde.fr*, October 6, 2000, http://www.lemonde.fr/archives/article/2000/10/06/la-comedie-musicale-made-in-france-fait-recette_3636999_1819218.html.

¹⁵⁷ Nassiboullina, “Comparative Analysis of the French, English, and Russian Versions of the Musical *Notre-Dame de Paris*,” 28–29, 31.

Esmeralda's arms, and Esmeralda is arrested and hanged. A grieving Quasimodo rushes down to reclaim her body, concluding the show on a mournful note.

Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario identifies some of the central themes of the musical, specifically the theme of alienation, discussing the connections between Victor Hugo's nineteenth century novel and the "contemporary social context of asylum-seekers, protest movements, and globalization" that permeated France in the late 1990s.¹⁵⁸ *Notre Dame de Paris* was closely connected to the context of the final decade in the second millennium.

Wicked (2003)

In 2003 *Wicked* opened to Broadway audiences at the Gershwin Theatre. With music and lyrics by Stephen Schwartz and a book by Winnie Holzman, *Wicked* is an adaptation of the novel *Wicked* (1995), by Gregory Maguire, itself an adaptation of L. Frank Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*.¹⁵⁹ *Wicked* is set in L. Frank Baum's fantasy land of Oz and takes place concurrently with the events of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* but focuses on the two witches, Glinda (the good witch in *Wizard of Oz*) and Elphaba (the Wicked Witch of the East in *Wizard of Oz*). Although critical response to the musical itself was lukewarm, critics tended to laud the performances of the two leads (Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel). Paul Laird records the critical response to *Wicked* in general as ranging from "unqualified raves" to "sarcastic pans."¹⁶⁰ Ben Brantley was not impressed with the overall package, finding that the social justice themes were clunky

¹⁵⁸ Rebecca-Anne C. Do Rozario, "The French Musicals: The Dramatic Impulse of Spectacle," *Journal of Dramatic Theory & Criticism* 19, no. 1 (Fall 2004): 130.

¹⁵⁹ Paul R. Laird, *Wicked: A Musical Biography*, Reprint edition (Lanham, Md: Scarecrow Press, 2011), 1.

¹⁶⁰ Laird, 251.

and undermined by the book, yet he was entranced by Kristin Chenoweth's performance.¹⁶¹ Howard Kissel thought the show had "no dramatic logic or emotional center," but Linda Winer was drawn to the story of the two witches and lauded the performances of Menzel and Chenoweth.¹⁶² Audiences, it appeared, were entranced. The show has run for 6,141 performances, as of July 15, 2018.¹⁶³

The musical opens with the citizens of Oz celebrating the melting of the Wicked Witch of the West (Elphaba). The musical then jumps back to the beginning, where the mismatched roommates at school, Glinda and Elphaba, initially hate each other. As Glinda and Elphaba spend time together they become allies and by the time they meet the Wizard of Oz they are fast friends. Their meeting with the Wizard reveals his power-hungry evil ways, and Elphaba acts against the Wizard and his cruelty (causing him to label her as "wicked"). Glinda and Fiyero (the love interest) remain on the side of the Wizard, achieving posts in his ranks. Finally, Glinda and Elphaba say their final farewells before Elphaba stages her death by melting and runs off with Fiyero.

At first glance *Wicked* appears mostly escapist, reveling in the tale of two witches in a fictional land.¹⁶⁴ Upon closer examination, however, *Wicked* engages with questions

¹⁶¹ Ben Brantley, "There's Trouble In Emerald City," *The New York Times*, October 31, 2003, sec. Movies, <https://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/31/movies/theater-review-there-s-trouble-in-emerald-city.html>.

¹⁶² Laird, *Wicked*, 253–54.

¹⁶³ "Wicked," International Broadway Database, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/wicked-13485>.

¹⁶⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary describes escapism as "the habit of trying to distract oneself from unpleasant realities by engaging in fantasy or forms of entertainment." In a long article discussing Stephen Sondheim relative to the history of musical theatre, Frank Rich begins by discussing the musical theatre fare that tended to characterize Broadway before *Oklahoma!* in 1943, asserting that they were "trivialities." *Oklahoma!*, however, "had paved the way, commercially and artistically, for an American theatrical form in which script, song and dance merged to create a drama as well as escapist, fairy-tale entertainment." Rich identifies the ability for musical theatre to simultaneously engage with heavy themes and to be enjoyably escapist for its audiences. When I use the term escapist, I am referencing this long interaction between musical theatre and escapism. For more information see Catherine Soanes and Sara Hawker, eds., *Escapism*, 3rd Rev., Compact Oxford English Dictionary of Current English (Oxford: Oxford University

that permeated America in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Martin Halliwell and Catherine Morley highlight the bloody military operations that opened the century following the 9/11/2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center in New York City.¹⁶⁵ Congress passed the Patriot Act in 2001, as a response to the acts of terror in New York City, and debate followed regarding the waiving of rights in favor of security.¹⁶⁶ In March, 2003, America, entrenched in a “war on terror” in Afghanistan, declared war on Iraq as a “pre-emptive strike.”¹⁶⁷ There are certainly echoes of these conversations in *Wicked* as the citizens of Oz appear to be largely blind to their leader’s actions.

Wicked appears to have tapped into another cultural current, as magic and wizardry enjoyed a phenomenal resurgence in popular culture with the publication of *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone* in 1997, launching a series of bestselling books about a boy wizard fighting evil that had only gained momentum by 2003.¹⁶⁸ Another explanation for the success of *Wicked* may be found by looking at the resurgent interest in religion in the early twenty-first century. As Wilfred McClay argues, the “apparent resurrection of religion” at the beginning of the twenty-first century may have been a result of the inability of secularism to fulfill the needs that religion assuaged. Perhaps

Press, 2008); and Frank Rich, “A Musical Theater Breakthrough,” *The New York Times*, October 21, 1984, sec. Magazine, <https://www.nytimes.com/1984/10/21/magazine/a-musical-theater-breakthrough.html>.

¹⁶⁵ Catherine Morley and Martin Halliwell, *American Thought and Culture in the 21st Century* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 2, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=258120&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

¹⁶⁶ “Surveillance Under the Patriot Act,” American Civil Liberties Union, accessed April 28, 2018, <https://www.aclu.org/issues/national-security/privacy-and-surveillance/surveillance-under-patriot-act>.

¹⁶⁷ C. N. N. Library, “Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts,” CNN, accessed April 27, 2018, <https://www.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/index.html>; “Bush Announces the Launch of Operation Iraqi Freedom, Mar 19, 2003,” History.com, accessed April 27, 2018, <http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/bush-announces-the-launch-of-operation-iraqi-freedom>.

¹⁶⁸ Becky Barnicoat, “Decade Timeline,” the Guardian, October 19, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/oct/17/decade-timeline-what-happened-when>; “J.K. Rowling’s *Harry Potter* Series - TIME,” *Time*, accessed July 19, 2018, http://content.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,1637886_1638263_1638259,00.html.

Wicked similarly fills a need for solace and temporary diversion from the pain of the world, even as it manages to engage with concerns of its day.

Billy Elliot (2005)

Set in Durham County, UK during the nationwide 1984 miners' strike *Billy Elliot* portrays a miner's son who wants to dance. After a boxing class at the gym, Billy is coerced into a ballet class. He soon realizes, however, that he wants to be a ballet dancer and begins taking dance classes in secret. Meanwhile the miners' strike continues, and the dance class is often set in direct opposition to what is happening outside in the larger scope of the community. Eventually Billy's dad finds out about his son's ambition, and while at first completely against it, he finally plans to sacrifice his ideals in order to insure his son's dreams by stepping off the picket line and going back to the mine as a scab. The community talks him out of it, promising support for his family and Billy's dreams. At the end of the musical Billy leaves to pursue his dreams, and the miners lose the strike and return to work with little gained. Elysa Gardner has identified the musical's themes as being yourself, working to achieve dreams, fighting for a better world, community, gender and class identity, and the ideal of tolerance.¹⁶⁹

Early twenty-first century Britain was characterized by increasing hardship for the working class and an enduring legacy of the mine closures of the 1980s. In their discussion of the plight of the working class in early twenty-first century Britain, Abercrombie and Warde contend that "[t]he sociological focus has thus shifted from the working to the middle class, meaning that the working class was increasingly side-lined

¹⁶⁹ Elysa Gardner, "Billy Elliot Musical Taps into the Hope and Energy of Youth," USA Today, November 16, 2008, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/life/theater/reviews/2008-11-13-billy-elliott_N.htm?csp=N009.

in the early twenty-first century.”¹⁷⁰ Moreover, Abercrombie and Ward identify one of the most significant developments affecting the UK in the twenty-first century to be “the reduction in the number of male manual laboring jobs.”¹⁷¹ These realities echo loudly in the themes and situations of *Billy Elliot*. Memories of the strike of 1984-85 and its aftermath still loomed in 2005 when *Billy Elliot* premiered to London audiences.¹⁷² The defeat of the striking miners has been seen by some as a “defeat for the whole working class” and a contributing factor to the existence of exploitative employment practices seen a generation later.¹⁷³ The premiere of *Billy Elliot* in London in 2005, then, had serious potential to strike a chord with audiences twenty years distanced from the era it portrays. In popular culture *Doctor Who* was rebooted on television in 2005, bringing a significantly British extra-terrestrial (first introduced in the 1960s) back to the spotlight. Like *Billy Elliot*, *Doctor Who* would also reach American audiences.

Billy Elliot opened to London audiences in 2005 with music and lyrics by Elton John, a book by Lee Hall, and direction by Stephen Daldry. *Billy Elliot* was an adaptation of the 2000 film of the same name (also written by Lee Hall and directed by Stephen Daldry, but with music from pop bands like The Clash, T-Rex, Eagle Eye Cherry, and The Style Council, among others). The stage musical ran for over 4,600 performances at London’s Victoria Palace Theatre in the West End.¹⁷⁴ Critical reception was favorable. In his review for *The Guardian* Michael Billington avers that *Billy Elliot* succeeds because

¹⁷⁰ Abercrombie and Warde, *Changing Britain*, 3.

¹⁷¹ Abercrombie and Warde, 3.

¹⁷² Biressi and Nunn, *Class and Contemporary British Culture*, 6.

¹⁷³ Donald MacIntyre, “How the Miners’ Strike of 1984-85 Changed Britain for Ever,” accessed March 19, 2017, <http://www.newstatesman.com/politics/2014/06/how-miners-strike-1984-85-changed-britain-ever>.

¹⁷⁴ Mark Shenton, “*Billy Elliot* Closes at West End’s Victoria Palace Theatre Tonight,” Playbill, April 9, 2016, <http://www.playbill.com/article/billy-elliott-closes-at-west-end-39-s-victoria-palace-theatre-tonight-com-375105>.

the music and choreography “enhance” the story taken from the film.¹⁷⁵ Ellen Lampert-Gréux attests to the global appeal of *Billy Elliot*, maintaining that the musical “[took] the world by storm.”¹⁷⁶ Indeed, the musical played on Broadway for 1,312 performances, and according to the *Billy Elliot* UK tour homepage, *Billy Elliot* has played to over twelve million people worldwide.¹⁷⁷

Hamilton (2015)

On August 6, 2015 Lin-Manuel Miranda’s *Hamilton* opened on Broadway. Inspired by Ron Chernow’s biography of Alexander Hamilton, the germinating seeds of the musical were first heard in 2009 at an evening of live performances at the White House.¹⁷⁸ As of June 17, 2018, the musical has run on Broadway for 1,197 performances, opened two concurrently running productions in London and Chicago, and currently has two touring productions.¹⁷⁹ The critical and popular reception was staggering in its enthusiasm. In his review of *Hamilton* Ben Brantley gushed: “I am loath to tell people to mortgage their houses and lease their children to acquire tickets to a hit Broadway show. But “Hamilton,” [...] might just about be worth it.”¹⁸⁰ In *Time* magazine Eliza Berman explores *Hamilton*’s influence on America, claiming that the musical has become a

¹⁷⁵ Michael Billington, “*Billy Elliot*, Victoria Palace, London,” the Guardian, May 12, 2005, <http://www.theguardian.com/stage/2005/may/12/theatre1>.

¹⁷⁶ Ellen Lampert-Gréaux, “Anatomy of a Musical,” *Live Design* 43, no. 1 (2009): 39.

¹⁷⁷ “*Billy Elliot: The Musical*,” accessed June 18, 2018, <http://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/billy-elliott-the-musical-475107>; “Homepage: Billy Elliot the Musical UK & Ireland Tour,” Billy Elliot Tour, accessed April 26, 2018, <http://billyelliottthemusical.com/>.

¹⁷⁸ Rebecca Mead, “A Hip-Hop Interpretation of the Founding Fathers,” *The New Yorker*, February 2, 2015, <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/02/09/hamiltons>.

¹⁷⁹ “*Hamilton*,” International Broadway Database, accessed March 22, 2018, <https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/hamilton-499521>; “London,” *Hamilton* Official Site, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://hamiltonmusical.com/london/>; “Chicago,” *Hamilton* Official Site, accessed July 19, 2018, <https://hamiltonmusical.com/chicago/>.

¹⁸⁰ Ben Brantley, “Review: *Hamilton*, Young Rebels Changing History and Theater,” *The New York Times*, August 6, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/07/theater/review-hamilton-young-rebels-changing-history-and-theater.html>.

“cultural phenomenon” and asserts that *Hamilton* has “penetrat[ed] deeply into mainstream culture.”¹⁸¹ Whether it irrevocably alters the style of American musicals or not, *Hamilton* is a landmark work in terms of musical styles used on Broadway, the ethnic backgrounds of performers seen on Broadway stages, and the way Americans interact with history.

Hamilton possesses intriguing links to the political leadership and social issues of its day. The era in which *Hamilton* opened on Broadway was characterized by increased awareness of and resistance to racial injustice. In 2008 Barack Obama became the first African American president of the United States. Just one year into Obama’s presidency, in 2009, Lin-Manuel Miranda and Alex Lacamoire performed selections from *Hamilton* at the White House, and towards the end of Obama’s second term as president *Hamilton* opened on Broadway. Previously in the decade (2013) the Black Lives Matter movement was initiated in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman for the shooting of Trayvon Martin.¹⁸² In 2014 and 2017, however, America witnessed painful echoes of Martin’s death in the shooting of Michael Brown in Ferguson, Missouri (2014) and the acquittal of his killer (2017).¹⁸³ The decade has continued to witness instances of police violence towards African Americans and increased animosity towards immigrants. Scholars John Carlos Rowe and Arjun Appadurai posit that the twenty-first century will witness challenges to the national hegemony of America and a destabilizing of American national identity as America becomes an increasingly global and multicultural nation.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸¹ Eliza Berman, “*Hamilton* Nation,” *Time* 188, no. 14 (October 10, 2016): 50, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=mih&AN=118457517&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

¹⁸² “Herstory,” *Black Lives Matter* (blog), accessed April 28, 2018, <https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/herstory/>.

¹⁸³ “Herstory.”

¹⁸⁴ Morley and Halliwell, *American Thought and Culture in the 21st Century*, 8.

Although economically and politically threatened, America's space program moved in exciting new directions in the 21st century. 2011 witnessed the end of NASA's space shuttle program, as promised by President George W. Bush in 2004, but NASA continued to work toward exploration of Mars, landing "the most sophisticated rover" on Mars in 2012 and moving ahead on technologies that would, in the future, facilitate manned missions to an asteroid.¹⁸⁵

There are echoes of and responses to these cultural shifts in *Hamilton*. *Hamilton* also engages with the concept of legacy and the narratives that get remembered, something that will be interesting to watch as time moves forward and the second decade of the twenty-first century becomes history rather than recent and current events.

The musical traces Alexander Hamilton's journey from his early beginnings as an orphaned immigrant to the Colonies, through his rise to become a Founding Father of the United States of America, and eventually his death on the dueling ground. The musical reveals Hamilton's relationships with his fellow founding fathers, Washington, Jefferson, and Aaron Burr, his wife Eliza Schuyler, and Maria Reynolds, a married woman with whom Hamilton begins an affair that ends in scandal. His wife, Eliza, responds by burning the letters Hamilton has written her over the years, erasing herself from the historical record. Ben Brantley discusses several themes of the musical, including: "rebels grabbing and shaping the future of an unformed country," ambition, who owns history, and who gets to be in charge of the narrative. For Brantley, the star of the show is

¹⁸⁵ Robert Z. Pearlman, "NASA's Space Shuttle Program Officially Ends After Final Celebration," Space.com, accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.space.com/12804-nasa-space-shuttle-program-officially-ends.html>; "Accomplishments 2012, Science Mission Directorate," accessed June 9, 2018, <https://science.nasa.gov/about-us/science-strategy/accomplishments/2012>; "Accomplishments 2013, Science Mission Directorate," accessed June 9, 2018, <https://science.nasa.gov/about-us/science-strategy/accomplishments/2013>; "Accomplishments 2014, Science Mission Directorate," accessed June 9, 2018, <https://science.nasa.gov/about-us/science-strategy/accomplishments/2014>.

“history itself, that collision of time and character that molds the fates of nations and their inhabitants.”¹⁸⁶ As Miranda himself states in *Hamilton: the Revolution* the musical “asks us to think about what we leave behind when we’re gone: it invites us to think about legacies.”¹⁸⁷

Bright Star (2016)

Bright Star was one of two musicals premiering on Broadway in 2016 that featured cosmic bodies in their titles. Opening in March of that year, *Bright Star* featured music by bluegrass musicians Edie Brickell and Steve Martin, lyrics by Brickell, and book by Martin.¹⁸⁸ Nelson Pressley’s assessment that *Bright Star* left its audience with a feeling of “moderate satisfaction” was generally reflected in the critical response.¹⁸⁹ Pressley said of the musical it “caus[es] absolutely no pain. But it doesn’t quite light up the evening sky, either,” highlighting the musical’s enjoyablity but lack of exceptionalism (and using the evening sky in the process).¹⁹⁰ Charles Isherwood more generously noted the “sweet, homespun quality” of the musical, characterizing it as a “fresh breeze from the South” and reveling in the “easygoing,” “gentle spirit” and lack of gaudiness that the musical exhibited.¹⁹¹ Marilyn Stasio complimented Cusack’s performance in the leading role but identified the “sheer scale of the package” as

¹⁸⁶ Brantley, “Review.”

¹⁸⁷ Lin-Manuel Miranda and Jeremy McCarter, *Hamilton: The Revolution*, Unabridged edition (New York, NY: Grand Central Publishing, 2016), 276.

¹⁸⁸ “*Bright Star*,” International Broadway Database, accessed November 28, 2017, <https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-show/bright-star-503621>.

¹⁸⁹ Nelson Pressley, “Martin-Brickell Musical *Bright Star* Sets Broadway Closing Date,” *Washington Post*, June 16, 2016, sec. Arts and Entertainment, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/arts-and-entertainment/wp/2016/06/16/martin-brickell-musical-bright-star-sets-broadway-closing-date/>.

¹⁹⁰ Pressley.

¹⁹¹ Charles Isherwood, “*Bright Star* Beams Nostalgia Underscored by Fiddles and Banjos,” *The New York Times*, March 24, 2016, sec. Theater, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/25/theater/review-bright-star-beams-nostalgia-underscored-by-fiddles-and-banjos.html>.

overwhelming the musical's homespun quality.¹⁹² Although critical response does not always determine box office, *Bright Star* failed to find an audience, closing after 109 performances.¹⁹³

Loosely based on the Iron Mountain Baby folktale, the musical is set in North Carolina, beginning in the late 1940s and flashing back to events that occurred in the 1920s.¹⁹⁴ The story focuses on two couples: Alice and Jimmy, who were teenagers in the 1920s, and Billy and Margo, who are young adults in the 1940s. Returning from World War II, Billy learns from his adoptive father, Daddy Cane, that his mother has died, and he sets out to pursue his dreams of becoming a published writer. Simultaneously Alice, a successful editor in Asheville, searches for the child that was taken from her in her youth, following the breadcrumbs of her past to her hometown and the doorstep of the man she once loved. Scenes from Alice's past tell the story of her love affair with Jimmy that ended in the birth of a child and the loss of that child at the hands of Alice and Jimmy's fathers. By the end of the musical, Alice finds her long-lost son, now grown; Alice and Jimmy are re-united; and Billy returns Margo's unrequited love as the musical concludes on a heart-warming note. Isherwood describes the musical as a "nostalgia tinged, romantic tale" of "lives torn apart and made whole again."¹⁹⁵ Its creators, Brickell and

¹⁹² Marilyn Stasio, "Broadway Review: Steve Martin and Edie Brickell's *Bright Star*," *Variety*, March 25, 2016, <http://variety.com/2016/legit/reviews/bright-star-review-steve-martin-edie-brickell-broadway-musical-1201738313/>.

¹⁹³ Michael Paulson, "*Bright Star*, by Steve Martin and Edie Brickell, to Close on Broadway," *The New York Times*, June 14, 2016, sec. Theater, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/16/theater/bright-star-by-steve-martin-and-edie-brickell-to-close-on-broadway.html>.

¹⁹⁴ Harry Haun, "Creating a Broadway Bluegrass Musical from Scratch Was New, Exciting and Bright," *Playbill*, March 25, 2016, <http://www.playbill.com/article/creating-a-broadway-bluegrass-musical-from-scratch-was-new-exciting-and-bright>.

¹⁹⁵ Isherwood, "*Bright Star* Beams Nostalgia Underscored by Fiddles and Banjos."

Martin, have characterized the musical as a story about love lost and found, lives intersecting, and characters on the brink of discovery of their own histories.¹⁹⁶

Bright Star opened amidst political turmoil and served as vaguely escapist fare in a world that was out of control. Steven Erlanger, of the *New York Times*, identifies the era, specifically the year 2015, as one of “unraveling,” pointing to terrorist attacks around the world (including Aleppo, Homs, and Paris), the flight of Syrian refugees to Europe, a Russian plane shot down by NATO forces for the first time in decades, and protests in America over police violence toward African Americans.¹⁹⁷ Erlanger also indicates the instability of the natural world in 2015, asserting “[e]ven the earth seemed slightly unhinged – ice caps melting [...] huge snowstorms and floods, a major earthquake in Nepal.”¹⁹⁸ In politics, 2016 was an election year in which Bernie Sanders and Hillary Clinton vied for the Democratic nomination and Donald Trump won the Republican ticket and, eventually, the presidency in what one writer aptly described as a “carnival atmosphere.”¹⁹⁹ In scientific news, in 2015 NASA’s New Horizons mission was the first space craft to reach Pluto and the year marked the 25th anniversary of the launching of the Hubble Telescope into space.²⁰⁰ In popular culture the film *The Martian* was released in October of 2015 and the *Stars Wars* franchise was resurrected yet again in December, 2015 in the form of *The Force Awakens* to much hype and excitement.²⁰¹ Into the topsy-

¹⁹⁶ CBS Sunday Morning, *Steve Martin and Edie Brickell’s Bright Star*, accessed May 1, 2016, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P-QdcJzrzQg>.

¹⁹⁷ Steven Erlanger, “The Year in Pictures 2015,” *The New York Times*, December 21, 2015, sec. Sunday Review, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/12/27/sunday-review/2015-year-in-pictures.html>.

¹⁹⁸ Erlanger.

¹⁹⁹ Erlanger.

²⁰⁰ “Accomplishments 2015, Science Mission Directorate,” accessed June 10, 2018, <https://science.nasa.gov/about-us/science-strategy/accomplishments/2015>.

²⁰¹ Ridley Scott, Drew Goddard, and Andy Weir, *The Martian*, October 2, 2015, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt3659388/>; J. J. Abrams, Lawrence Kasdan, and J. J. Abrams, *Star Wars: Episode VII - The Force Awakens*, December 18, 2015, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt2488496/>; Alexandra

turvey state of politics and social justice *Bright Star* responded to the instability of the world by offering gentle hominess and avoiding direct engagement with contemporary issues.

Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812 (2016)

In November 2016, another mostly escapist musical, the second of the year to include a cosmic reference in its title, opened on Broadway.²⁰² An adaptation of Leo Tolstoy's nineteenth-century novel *War and Peace*, *Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812*, portrays the adventures of young Natasha, engaged to the absent Andrey and recently come to Moscow. Enjoying what the city has to offer, she meets the alluring Anatole (a married man) and breaks off her engagement with Andrey to run away with him. When the plan is discovered, Natasha's reputation is ruined. Meanwhile the middle-aged artist, Pierre, searching for his *raison d'être*, finds some meaning in life when he offers kindness to the shamed Natasha. At the end of the musical the characters reflect on the title cosmic event that occurred in 1812.

Like *Bright Star*, *Great Comet* emerges out of the unstable social situations of the world in 2016. In her summary of the year, Susan Chira of the *New York Times* indicates that the year in general was "so unexpected, so tumultuous, that the fight has just begun over which narrative might possibly explain it."²⁰³ *Great Comet* relates specifically to the racial politics characterizing the decade. Susan Chira identifies the turmoil of the election

Gibbs, "Star Wars: The Force Awakens Surpasses \$100M in Advanced Ticket Sales: Report," December 16, 2015, <https://www.cnbc.com/2015/12/16/star-wars-the-force-awakens-surpasses-100m-in-advanced-ticket-sales-report.html>.

²⁰² "Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812," accessed April 8, 2018, <https://www.ibdb.com/broadway-production/natasha-pierre--the-great-comet-of-1812-506425>.

²⁰³ Susan Chira, "The Year in Pictures 2016," *The New York Times*, December 22, 2016, sec. Sunday Review, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2016/12/22/sunday-review/2016-year-in-pictures.html>.

year and suggests that “[f]or some, it was the comeuppance of the elites and the rebellion of the forgotten white working class.”²⁰⁴ This theme was especially poignant in the election of Donald Trump to the U.S. Presidency. In some ways, with its emphasis on the petty problems of the aristocracy in pre-revolution Russia, *Great Comet* is an intriguing addition to the national dialogue in 2016. *Great Comet* also reflects the rhetoric regarding elitism that surrounded the 2016 presidential election. In popular culture four movies, *Independence Day: Resurgence*, *Arrival*, *Passengers*, and *Approaching the Unknown*, were released, yet again creatively engaging with humans’ interaction with space and extra-terrestrial life-forms.²⁰⁵

Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812 opened on Broadway at the Imperial Theatre with music, lyrics, and book by Dave Malloy and ran for 336 performances.²⁰⁶ Critics showered praise on the musical’s charms and inventive staging. Charles Isherwood lauded its “witty, inventive, enchantment,” declaring it “the most innovative and the best musical to open on Broadway since *Hamilton*.”²⁰⁷ Maria Mazzaro highlighted the musical’s immersive nature, describing it as a “quirky hodgepodge [...that] works well.”²⁰⁸ Marilyn Stasio raved that the musical “is a luscious, 360-degree

²⁰⁴ Chira.

²⁰⁵ Roland Emmerich, *Independence Day: Resurgence*, Action, Adventure, Sci-Fi, 2016, <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1628841/>.

²⁰⁶ Jackson McHenry, “How *The Great Comet* Moved From Cabaret to Broadway,” *Vulture*, accessed April 8, 2018, <http://www.vulture.com/2017/06/the-great-comet-set-broadway-set-history.html>; “*Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*,” *Ars Nova* (blog), March 29, 2016, http://arsnovanyc.com/Great_Comet_of_1812; “*Natasha, Pierre & The Great Comet of 1812*.”

²⁰⁷ Charles Isherwood, “*Natasha, Pierre & the Great Comet of 1812*, on the Heels of *Hamilton*,” *The New York Times*, November 14, 2016, sec. Theater, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/11/15/theater/natasha-pierre-and-the-great-comet-of-1812-review.html>.

²⁰⁸ Maria Mazzaro, “*Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*,” *Opera News*, April 2017, <http://proxy.mul.missouri.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=asn&AN=121840003&site=eds-live&scope=site>.

immersive experience that feels like being smothered in velvet.”²⁰⁹ Ironically, a casting scandal involving the replacement of Nigerian actor Okieriete Onaodowan with white actor Mandy Patinkin in the leading role of Pierre resulted in the show’s premature closing.²¹⁰

As I analyze each instance of cosmic symbolism in the following chapters I focus on the characters and their actions as they have been set up by the creators rather than on creator intent in terms of what the cosmic symbolism means. In this way I seek to avoid determining intent where no intent has been expressly stated. Rather I seek understanding of how the cosmic symbolism functions within the worlds the creators have devised.

²⁰⁹ Marilyn Stasio, “*Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812*,” *Variety*, November 22, 2016, <http://eds.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/eds/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=2&sid=8322547b-bd2c-42c9-8b94-b53e02d13a40%40sessionmgr4009>.

²¹⁰ Michael Paulson, “Race, Money and Broadway: How *Great Comet* Burned Out,” *The New York Times*, August 29, 2017, sec. Theater, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/29/theater/great-comet-broadway-race.html>.

CHAPTER 3: THE COSMOS AS SYMBOL OF COMFORT

I'm a lost and lonely man without a star to guide me.

-Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, *Paint Your Wagon*

Following the long history of humans seeking guidance and comfort from the cosmos, I will explore in this chapter moments in which musical theatre characters seek comfort from the cosmic bodies they see above them. I use the word “comfort” in its connotation of offering solace and consolation. What humans seek when they invoke the stars and other heavenly bodies involves a constellation of related assurances: the assurance that one is not alone in the vast cosmos; assurance that there is a plan to the random cruelty of life; assurance that the cosmic bodies can help elucidate that plan; and hope for a better future. Psychologist Margaret Hamilton proposes that looking to the stars can “offer a bit of comfort, a sort of seeing through the veil” that helps clue humans to their place within the cosmos and suggests an order to the chaos.²¹¹ The occasions explored in this chapter are examples of musical theatre characters turning to the skies for comfort and assurance in an effort to see through the veil.

For each instance I analyze the circumstances in which the incident occurs, the location of the instance within the musical, and the resulting influence on the character, as suggested by his or her actions as a result of the cosmic interaction. I begin with the examples that feature characters looking to cosmic bodies as witnesses to human life, seeking the solace that something in the universe might observe and care about human experience. I move then to the instances in which the characters seek assurance of a

²¹¹ Linda Rodriguez McRobbie, “How Are Horoscopes Still a Thing?,” *Smithsonian*, accessed February 26, 2018, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/how-are-horoscopes-still-thing-180957701/>.

cosmic plan, and then, finally to moments in which characters look to cosmic bodies for hope. Table 2 below tracks the incidents, by show and thematically, that are analyzed in this chapter.

Table 1: Chapter Three: The Cosmos as Symbol of Comfort

Musical	Function				
	As Witness of Human Experience		For Assurance of an order to the cosmos		For hope
<i>Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812</i>	"Great Comet of 1812"	Comet			
<i>Billy Elliot</i>	"The Stars Look Down"	Stars			
<i>Notre Dame de Paris</i>	"Lune"	Moon			
<i>Paint Your Wagon</i>	"I Talk to the Trees"	Stars			
			"Wand'rin' Star"	Star	
			"They Call the Wind Maria"	Stars	
<i>Les Misérables</i>			"Stars"	Stars	
			"Javert's Suicide: Soliloquy"	Stars	
<i>Bright Star</i>			"Bright Star"	Star	
				"Sun is Gonna Shine"	Sun
<i>Hair</i>			"Aquarius"	Jupiter, Moon	
				"Let the Sunshine In"	Sun

The Stars Look Down: Cosmic Bodies as Witness to Human Life

Like humans in general, who turn to the cosmos to find their place within it, musical theatre characters often look heavenward to find assurance that what they experience matters. As James Miller, following Carl Jung, asserts in “Seeing the Future of Civilization in the Skies of Quaroble;” humans often look to “extraterrestrial sources” when confronted with “unfamiliar and threatening circumstances.”²¹² Certainly scholars have interpreted the plethora of UFO sightings in post-World War II Europe and America thusly. Psychologists Outi Lillqvist and Marjaana Lindeman have found that “people in stressful situations may feel that astrology helps them understand what is happening and why” in an “attempt to regain control over themselves.”²¹³ The human characters in musical theatre are no different.

At the conclusion of *Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812*, the title event, the appearance of the great comet, occurs to witness Pierre’s newly thawed heart. Pierre visits the shamed Natasha and sings to her “if I were free / I would get down on my knees this minute / And ask you for your hand.” His gesture lifts her spirits slightly, and the effect that his gesture has on her inspires Pierre, suggesting to him the purpose for which he has been searching the entire musical; it is not explicitly clear what that purpose is, but Pierre’s feeling of relief and rejuvenation is palpable. As he leaves Natasha’s house, he begins singing “The Great Comet of 1812” asking himself “where to

²¹² Miller, “Seeing the Future of Civilization in the Skies of Quaroble: UFO Encounters and the Problem of Empire in Postwar France,” 259.

²¹³ Outi Lillqvist and Marjaana Lindeman, “Belief in Astrology as a Strategy for Self-Verification and Coping with Negative Life-Events,” *European Psychologist* 3, no. 3 (September 1998): 203, <https://doi.org/10.1027/1016-9040.3.3.202>.

now?”²¹⁴ He has been confused and lost for most of the musical, but at this moment he has just been enlightened and inspired by Natasha’s response to his kind gesture. In a musical during which Pierre tries to find his reason for being, he has finally found a glimmer of meaning, and the final song reflects his newfound sense of purpose.

Both music and lyrics highlight Pierre’s encounter with the comet and reveal his search for something in the universe to witness the change he has just undergone. The music throughout the song is somber and subdued with only the piano accompanying Pierre in a gentle vamp. The music in this song is the most tender of the musical, indicating Pierre’s emotional state; Pierre is not in a state of turmoil; rather, he has finally found peace within himself, and the peaceful music reflects that.

Pierre now finds himself in unfamiliar territory, singing: “It’s late / Where to now?” After being so moved by Natasha’s look of gratitude he has been changed and does not know where the new-found Pierre should go. The chorus joins Pierre, singing gently as they describe the night in which Pierre finds himself: “It was clear and cold / Above the dirty streets, / Above the black rooves, / Stretched the dark, starry sky.” The lyrics do more than just establish the setting, as Pierre experiences a personal connection with the sky above him; this emphasis on the starry night sky early in the song foreshadows Pierre’s imminent cosmic experience as it turns the focus upward. When Pierre adds, following the chorus, “This vast firmament / Opened to my eyes” he seems to express that this is the first time he has truly seen the night sky, the firmament, as it was meant to be seen. The ensemble sings “and there in the middle / Above Prechistensky Boulevard /

²¹⁴Dave Malloy, *The Great Comet of 1812 (from Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812 Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Josh Groban. Audio CD (Reprise, 2017). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

Surrounded and sprinkled on all sides by stars.” The music *crescendos*, and the piano drops out as the ensemble sings *a capella*: “Shines the great comet of 1812, / The brilliant comet of 1812.”²¹⁵ As Scott Lipscomb and David Tolchinsky have argued, the lack of music can be as powerful as accompanying music.²¹⁶ The absence of music under this lyric spotlights the moment in which all of Prechistensky Boulevard stands transfixed by the speeding comet: as the characters are struck by the phenomenon; so too is the music.

The piano comes back in along with an oboe, and Pierre sings of his particular experience with the comet. He invokes only to refute the astrological belief that comets portend doom: “The comet, said to portend / Untold horrors / And the end of the world.” This is not true for Pierre:

But for me / The comet brings no fear. / No, I gaze joyfully, / And this bright star
/ Having traced its parabola / With inexpressible speed / Through immeasurable
space / Seems suddenly to have stopped / Like an arrow piercing the earth /
stopped for me.

Of all the millions of people on planet earth witnessing this phenomenon (and given the nine-month duration of visibility of the comet there were undoubtedly millions who did so), it seems to have stopped specifically for Pierre.²¹⁷ For Pierre, the comet’s appearance seems to place him within the cosmos, making him a part of it. Psychologist Margaret Hamilton suggests that placing stock in horoscopes allows readers to see themselves as

²¹⁵ *Crescendo*, as described in the Oxford English Dictionary is “a gradual increase of volume of a tone or passage of a piece of music.” “Crescendo, N.,” *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, n.d.), <http://www.oed.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/view/Entry/44265>.

²¹⁶ Scott D. Lipscomb and David E. Tolchinsky, “Role of Music Communication in Cinema,” in *Musical Communication*, ed. Dorothy Miell, Raymond MacDonald, and David J. Hargreaves (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 383–402.

²¹⁷ Jean-Michel Faidit, “The Great Comet of 1811 Left Its Mark,” *Planetarian* 43, no. 4 (December 2014): 38–42; “Historical World Population Data,” Johnston’s Archive, accessed January 12, 2018, <http://www.johnstonsarchive.net/other/worldpop.html>.

“part of the world” because they gain a sense of which sign they are most like, as well as when they are at their strongest as a result of the alignment of cosmic bodies; they can gain a sense of who they are in relation to the other types of people in the cosmos.²¹⁸ Pierre even claims that the comet (this inanimate object thousands of miles away) can feel him: “It seems to me / That this comet / Feels me, / Feels my softened and uplifted soul, / And my newly melted heart, / Now blossoming / Into a new life.” Such a claim is profound; by asserting that the comet can feel his emotional state, Pierre affirms the extraordinary height of the emotion he is feeling. The comet witnesses his change from a man who had no purpose in life to one who has found new life by offering kindness to a desolate young woman. Pierre’s experience makes manifest the tendency to “gaze toward the sky in search of familiarity and understanding” that has long characterized humankind.²¹⁹ He looks up to understand the change in himself and discovers something out there to mark his change. It is important to note that the comet does not serve as a catalyst for change, but rather symbolizes the great discovery that Pierre has just made and emphasizes his impulse to turn to the cosmos as witness to that experience.

While Pierre reaches out to the cosmos for witness at a time of revelation and joy, “The Stars Look Down” in Act I of *Billy Elliot* offers a vibrant example of characters turning to the stars to witness their suffering. Sung by the miners of Durham County, the song follows an audio clip of a morning radio news broadcast of a rally that occurred in Durham and a speech given there regarding solidarity among workers. At its very start the musical situates the narrative in the political and economic unrest that characterized

²¹⁸ McRobbie, “How Are Horoscopes Still a Thing?”

²¹⁹ George V. Coyne S.J and Alessandro Omizzolo, *Wayfarers in the Cosmos: The Human Quest for Meaning* (Cambridge: The Crossroad Publishing Company, 2002), 3–4.

the 1980s in Britain, intimately connecting the musical to the era out of which it emerged. As the speech fades out a lone trumpet plays the main theme of the song, lightly accompanied by the rest of the brass section.²²⁰ The miners replace the trumpet, singing of their hardships, and trumpet and low brass continue accompanying the vocals as the men sing: “Through the dark and through the hunger, / through the night and through the fear. / Through the fight and years of hardship, / through the storms and through the tears.” The instrumentation favors the low horns as the men sing that they “will always stand together in the dark right through the storm / we will stand shoulder to shoulder.” The instrumentation serves to support the vocals, offering a foundation from which the melody and lyrics receive strength and to which the melody and lyrics return at moments when the accompaniment and melody meet up on the same note. It is as if the music also stands with the miners in their hardship. The low brass instruments used (trombones and euphoniums), give a deep resonant quality to the accompaniment that provides powerful support under the men’s singing. The lyrics and the music have established the miners’ hardships, and they also indicate the miners’ determination to stand together as a community despite their suffering as the vocals shift to a slightly more up-beat tempo with a martial rhythm as the men sing the chorus:

And the stars look down on the mean and hungry / and the stars look down and
show the way. / And the stars look down and we stand together, / to see a day, /
when the stars look down and know our history / when the stars look down upon

²²⁰ Elton John and Lee Hall, *The Stars Look Down* (from *Billy Elliot: The Musical Original London Cast Recording*), with the Original London Cast of *Billy Elliot* (Decca Broadway, 2006). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

our past / and the stars look down and see our future bright at last. / When we
stand as one beneath the sun.

The stars observe and witness the fight for a better life as well as the hardship the miners endure and the tears they shed. In art, cosmic bodies have been used as “silent witnesses” to famous events of suffering, for example the sun and moon featured in Raphael Mondi’s 1503 painting of the suffering of Jesus on the cross.²²¹ The miners similarly look to the stars when they are suffering, casting the stars as active observers that not only witness and stand with them in their suffering but that also “see” a better future for them, a vision the miners seem to trust: “and the stars look down and see our future bright at last. / When we stand as one beneath the sun.” This faith in the stars and their ability to know the future expressed in these lyrics is a manifestation of humans’ tendency to assume, as psychologist Chris French has asserted, that there is “some kind of framework to help them understand what’s going on in their lives.”²²² As Udo Becker emphasizes, the light of the sun is often “a symbol of justice.”²²³ *Billy Elliot* employs this symbolic meaning of the light of the sun.

When the announcement comes that they are out on strike, a soloist sings: “The stars look down when we’re abandoned, look down in the heart of night,” and the ensemble responds:

And the stars look down and give us vision to see the light. / The stars look down
upon our struggle, the stars look down and know the past, / the stars look down
and see our future bright at last / when we’ll stand as one, beneath the sun.

²²¹ Robert Priseman, “Beauty and Suffering, Traditional Themes in Western Painting,” *Writing*, 2017, 1, <http://www.robert-priseman.com/press/>.

²²² McRobbie, “How Are Horoscopes Still a Thing?”

²²³ Udo Becker, *The Continuum Encyclopedia of Symbols* (New York, NY: Continuum, 2000).

Unlike man and social systems, the stars will never forsake the miners. Billy Elliot sings a solo, echoing the miners' hopes and ideals and after Billy's solo, the miners sing again.

In the second half of the song the miners express a more direct connection between themselves and the stars:

And the stars look down at their reflection / and the stars look down and there's a light, / when the stars look down and see the justice and the right. / And the stars look down and see the struggle / and the stars look down and know the pain / and the stars will lead you where light shines again / when we stand as one beneath the sun.

Again, the stars observe the fight for justice, but with the added element that they look down at "their reflection" and "know the pain" that the miners experience. In this instance, the stars do not passively witness the suffering that the miners experience; their observation seems to lead to an intimate understanding of the miners' suffering. It is intriguing that the stars look down on their reflection; here the stars and whatever is below them looking up are closely connected as mirror images of each other. The circumstance evokes the astrological tradition of "as above, so below," and astronomer Carl Sagan's claim that "we are starstuff" –both reassuring notions.²²⁴ If the reflection of the stars is the humans, then the inclusion of such a lyric is in keeping with some of the traditional beliefs of astrology and astronomy that humanity is "a microcosm" of the

²²⁴ Sagan, 286; Peter H. Marshall, *World Astrology: The Astrologer's Quest to Understand the Human Character* (London: Macmillan, 2004), xxxi; Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Volume II*, 64.

cosmos, and the miners boldly place themselves within the grand scope of the cosmos as, at least, akin to “starstuff.”²²⁵

As the men sing, they invoke the cosmic bodies as symbolic of the justice to come when they win their demands from the mine owners and end their suffering. When singing of their hardships the miners sing of the stars as “our redemption,” a word that conjures powerful connotations—primarily of religious salvation.²²⁶ Redemption can also mean payment for a crime or debt in the search for an improved life.²²⁷ Given that there is no mention of any God in the song, the men appear to mean salvation from their current plight and ascension into a better life. Psychiatrist Anthony Stevens terms the “general tendency of the human psyche” to categorize light as good and darkness as bad.²²⁸ The light here signifies justice and clear vision and once the miners have achieved justice, the stars will see them in the good light. While the miners are in the dark, however, the pinpricks of light that are seen in the darkness (stars) must serve as inspiration.

Billy Elliot’s implementation of the stars as witnesses to and salvation from the suffering of humans speaks powerfully to the cultural context in which the musical was created. Considering the uncertain future faced by the British working class in the early twenty-first century the assurance that something witnesses the plight of humans might offer solace in the face of dwindling employment numbers. Given the lingering memory of the 1984-85 miners’ strike in early twenty-first century Britain, the idea that something might witness humans’ idealistic efforts, specifically the miners’ struggle for social

²²⁵ Marshall, *World Astrology*, xxxi.

²²⁶ “Redemption, N.,” Oxford English Dictionary online, February 28, 2018, <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/160259>.

²²⁷ “Redemption, N.”

²²⁸ Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 141.

justice in 1984 Britain, may have resonated in the face of continued decline twenty years later: at least something witnessed the valiant efforts. *Billy Elliot*, while seemingly rooted in early twenty-first century Britain, also spoke to global audiences following its eleven year run in London. Perhaps, then, there is something simultaneously singular and broadly impactful about looking to the stars.

In *Notre Dame de Paris* Gringoire, the narrator, looks to the moon, rather than the stars, to witness the suffering of humans, but he does so with less assurance than the miners of *Billy Elliot*, who seem to assume that the stars will stand beside them. Gringoire's song occurs shortly after Esmeralda has been freed from prison by Quasimodo and the Gypsies, who sing angrily of freedom and the right to sanctuary in "Liberé." Gringoire joins them, similarly demanding sanctuary for the outcasts in France. After "Liberé" concludes, Gringoire is left alone onstage and turns to sing to the moon of Quasimodo's pain at the hands of unrequited love. As Thompson and Davenport indicate in the *Dictionary of Graphic Images* "ideas of love and romance feature largely" in relation to the symbolism of the moon, and Kevin Todeschi corroborates this assertion, adding that the moon often represents desire and yearning.²²⁹ In a song in which he reflects upon the pain of unrequited love Gringoire appropriately sings to a cosmic body traditionally associated with love and desire.

"Lune" opens with Gringoire softly singing the chorus of the song (although the lyrics are altered slightly every time it is reprised): "Lune / Qui la-haut s'allume / Sur / Les toits de Paris / Vois / Comme un homme / Put souffrir d'amour" (moon, / which on

²²⁹ Thompson and Davenport, *The Dictionary of Graphic Images*, 157; Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 175.

high shines / on / the rooftops of Paris, / see / how a man / suffers love).²³⁰ The lyrics are accompanied by cyclical and repetitive music. Throughout the song, the music achieves a feeling of moving upward even as it maintains its cyclical, repetitive nature. This is significant, as nothing is really solved for Quasimodo by the end of the song; rather, his status as an unrequited lover stays the same. As Richard Kislan indicates, music can reinforce movement in the dramatic action, and here it reinforces the lack of forward movement for Quasimodo.²³¹ Gringoire continues, *crescendoing* as he sings “Bel / Aster solitaire / Qui meurt / Quant revient le jour / Entends / Monter vers toi / Le chant de la terre” (beautiful / solitary star / that dies / when the day returns / hear the song of the earth rise to you). That humans only cry out to the moon at night is simultaneously obvious and meaningful. The moon is only present at night, disappearing as day dawns. The moon is often the brightest light in an otherwise dark night, offering a vivid witness to which humans cry out in their actual or metaphorical darkness. This instinct to turn to the moon on an otherwise dark night extends back to the earliest existence of humanity. Rachel Feltman and Sarah Kaplan emphasize how bright the moon would have seemed “back before humans controlled their light exposure with indoor electricity and street lights.”²³² The moon in the darkness also invokes specific connotations of darkness that deepen the meaning of Gringoire’s song. As Anthony Stevens notes, a dark night may signify nothing more than the lack of light between sunset and sunrise, however, the

²³⁰ Richard Cocciante and Luc Plamondon, *Le Temps de Cathédrales* (from *Notre Dame de Paris Original Paris Cast Recording*), with Bruno Pelletier, trans. Rebecca Holley (Pomme Musique, 1999). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

²³¹ Richard Kislan, *The Musical: A Look at the American Musical Theater*, A Spectrum Book (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1980), 204.

²³² Rachel Feltman and Sarah Kaplan, “Dear Science: Does a Full Moon Really Change Human Behavior?,” *Washington Post*, October 24, 2016, sec. Speaking of Science, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/speaking-of-science/wp/2016/10/24/dear-science-does-a-full-moon-really-change-human-behavior/>.

darkness of night may also connote “spiritual decline, death and despair,” like the aching of the heart.²³³ To have the light of the moon within that darkness provides not only light to see by and thus avoid dangers, but also assuages the emotional darkness that humans suffering unrequited love may feel. It is a metaphorical darkness that, coupled with the literal darkness of night, grows so intense Gringoire must look to the moon for witness and solace. It is significant that he ascends up the scale and *crescendos* in volume as he sings since he is singing about the cries of man soaring to the stars even as his voice soars upwards. As Richard Kislán contends, the way a singer sings the note can reinforce the emotion of the moment, and this is reflected in Gringoire’s singing of “Lune.”²³⁴

As Gringoire continues, the music and lyrics emphasize both Quasimodo’s pain due to unrequited love and the tendency of humankind to look to the cosmos for witness to their sorrow. When Gringoire reaches the lyrics “Entends le crie / d’un homme qui a mal” (listen to the cry / of a man who is hurting) he hits a high note at a high volume. This high pitch and volume emphasize Gringoire’s desperation in imploring the moon to witness Quasimodo’s pain. From there Gringoire begins to descend back down the scale and volume as he sings of the lack of comfort Quasimodo receives from the stars: “pour qui / un million d’étoiles / Ne valent / Par les yeux de celle / Qu’il aime” (for whom / a million stars / mean nothing / compared to the eyes / of the one he loves). Although both Gringoire and Quasimodo look to the cosmos in search of comfort, the descending pitch and volume signify their failure to find it in the stars. Gringoire reaches the volume at which he began the song as he repeats the chorus. He continues this rise and fall pattern for another verse until he sings “lune” again for the fourth time, following the lyric

²³³ Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 141.

²³⁴ Kislán, *The Musical*, 214.

“jusqu’à toi” (up to you). He hits a high note, and holds it for a sustained amount of time; as he holds the lyric, he begins to descend down the scale a total of two whole notes and a half note, the entire time sustaining the volume at which he is singing. His holding of the notes evokes a sense of longing; it is a cry from his core, and this cry recalls the primal cries of humans on the earth as well as the emotional pain of those who live with broken hearts. He again drops back down for another two verses and ends on a volume only slightly higher than the one that began the song. Solos from the string section, especially the cellos in between certain verses, further tug at the heartstrings by giving the cries of humanity an earthy and resonant quality. The song evokes a primeval pain that strains the vocal chords and the heart strings as Gringoire reaches volumes that are often challenging for a tenor.²³⁵ In the third verse, Gringoire assumes that Quasimodo cries out to the moon regarding his suffering, singing: “de Quasimodo / Qui pleure / Sa détresse folle / Sa voix [...] S’envole / Pour arriver jusqu’à toi” (Quasimodo / who cries / his crazy distress / his voice flies / to arrive at you). As the third verse progresses, Gringoire again *crescendos* until by the fourth verse he is back up at high volumes. Not only is the imagery of the moon, that bright cosmic body seen in the dark of night, invoked, but the music and vocality strike a primeval chord that harkens back to times when there were no street lights and the darkness was even more frightening and threatening for humankind.²³⁶ The song concludes with Gringoire singing the word “d’amour” twice in a manner that evokes, as Rebecca-Anne Do Rozario has suggested, a howl.²³⁷ Such vocality provides a

²³⁵ The tenor range is generally attributed to the adult male voice and ranges between the C below middle C to the A above middle C; tenor is generally the vocal part between bass and alto. For definition see: “Tenor, n.1 and Adj.,” OED Online, n.d., <http://www.oed.com/view/Entry/199155>.

²³⁶ Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 141.

²³⁷ Do Rozario, “The French Musicals,” 131.

musical manifestation of how Quasimodo and many who live with unrequited love must feel: they hurt so much they howl at the moon. Importantly the song ends with Gringoire calling up to the moon, and, following the song, Gringoire will go on, like the moon, to witness the suffering of the Gypsies and Quasimodo at the hands of Frolo and Phoebus. Neither the moon nor Gringoire, however, will intervene on behalf of those who suffer, so unlike the miners in *Billy Elliot*, who found alliance and inspiration from the stars, Gringoire and Quasimodo do not find the comfort they seek from the cosmos.

While the previous songs emphasize the characters' faith that cosmic bodies witness their suffering and experiences, *Paint Your Wagon*'s "I Talk to the Trees" reveals an instance in which a character expresses doubt that cosmic bodies pay attention to human suffering, no matter how much the individual wants them to. Early in Act I, Julio tells Jennifer about his dreams of finding enough gold to buy back his family's land in California. As he talks, he comes to the realization that his dreams could be possible and that Jennifer may be a big part of the fulfillment of those dreams. He asserts "I have never been so sure in all my whole life as I am right this minute." Jennifer queries "why this minute?" and Julio responds "Because you listen" at which point he begins to sing "I Talk to the Trees."²³⁸ In the song, he expresses his former loneliness and how that has suddenly changed: he is no longer lonely when talking to Jennifer.

The song starts out with a romantic Spanish classical guitar rhythm.²³⁹ The music is reminiscent of the style of Andres Segovia or Francisco Tarega, among others.²⁴⁰ As

²³⁸ Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, *Paint Your Wagon: A Musical Play in Two Acts*, Fireside Theatre Book Club ed. (New York: Coward-McCann, 1952), 30. Subsequent quotations of the lyrics are from this version of the libretto.

²³⁹ Frederick Loewe, *I Talk to the Trees (Paint Your Wagon Original Broadway Cast)*, with Tony Bavaar (RCA Victor Broadway, 1990). Subsequent references to music are from this recording.

²⁴⁰ Eamonn Rodgers, *Encyclopedia of Contemporary Spanish Culture* (London, New York: Routledge, 2002), 242.

Julio begins to sing, the music serves more to decorate the lyrics than to specifically highlight certain elements of the lyrics. The song reveals that Julio has previously turned to the stars in his loneliness: he “talks to the stars” in the hope that they will care about his suffering. Although in his experience “they never hear” he continues to seek their witness of his suffering, reaching out to them for affirmation and solace. As Julio continues to sing, the song of loneliness becomes a love song. At moments in the song, the classical guitar rhythm from the beginning returns. After the song, Julio exits and Jennifer, visibly smitten, turns to the stars, herself. She picks up Julio’s discarded laundry bag, buys two cakes of soap from the store, and sings “I talk to the trees,” highlighting her similar loneliness and her love for Julio as well as her need for the stars to provide solace in her loneliness. While Jennifer and Julio have found companionship in each other, they spend the majority of the musical apart, only coming back together at the end. It is possible, then, that in their lonely interim time, they will again turn to the stars seeking witnesses of their pain. While Julio and Jennifer exhibit an impulse to turn to the cosmos for comfort in times of loneliness they do not receive explicitly direct results from turning to the stars, and they both struggle with their faith in the stars’ ability to provide solace even as they continue to turn to them for it.

Filling the Darkness with Order and Light: Assurance of a Cosmic Plan

While musical theatre characters sometimes receive comfort from knowing that something out there witnesses their suffering and joys, at other times they seek even more assurance from the cosmos that their lives matter. They need to know that there is an ordered plan to the cosmos and how their lives fit within that plan. By knowing that their efforts matter in the grander scheme of the cosmos they are guided along their path

through life. Characters gain this assurance by looking up for guidance along the path set out for them, for assurance regarding their own personality and tendencies, and for affirmation of the correctness of their deeds from the cosmic order itself.

In the song “Bright Star,” from the musical of the same name, Billy expresses his belief that his star will lead him where he should go in life and that the result has been and will continue to be beneficial for him. Early in Act I Billy returns to his small North Carolina home town following the end of World War II. He visits his girl, Margo, and tells her that he is thinking about submitting his stories to the *Asheville Southern Journal*. When she asks what made him decide to do so he responds by singing the opening lyrics to the song, which he continues to sing as he travels to Asheville. The song has a peppy, upbeat bluegrass rhythm and in that sense the music strongly supports Billy’s enthusiasm and faith in his star. The song opens with “I’m ready for my life to start” and continues “don’t lead the way I must follow my own bright star.”²⁴¹ Here he expresses his faith that a star will guide him along the path of his life, and that he must remain constant to that star. In *A History of Western Astrology*, Nicholas Campion discusses how mankind has looked to the sky for guidance for millennia, as “a means of navigating a course through” a “sea of influences,” and Billy turns to the stars from a similar impulse.²⁴² Billy continues: “many a long cold night, I huddled down in the dark. / I made a vow if I ever made it out, I’d follow my own bright star.” Billy shares how the star has provided assurance in dark moments of his life, and how he made a commitment to remain faithful to his star. Then he reaches the chorus: “bright star keep shining for me, shine on and see

²⁴¹ Edie Brickell and Steve Martin, *Bright Star (from Bright Star Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with A.J. Shively, Audio CD (Ghostlight Records, 2016). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

²⁴² Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Volume II*, 43.

me through, / bright star keep shining for me and one day I'll shine for you." Here he expresses not only dependence upon a star's guidance, but asks for constancy from his star, much like early navigators on the sea. Later in the song Billy sings "I have learned the brightest day can turn into the darkest night." This lyric reveals the reason he is asking his star to continue shining for him; he has seen some significant darkness, but he is not dwelling on that as he now has a bright star to lead him and he finds no reason to doubt his guiding star. Toward the end of his song, the chorus joins him singing in counterpoint: "bright star, bright day." Their lyrics firmly reinforce Billy's impression that the bright star has power to provide him with a "bright day" (i.e. a good life).

Although Billy is not the main character of the musical—most of the journey of the musical follows Alice—it is Billy, the discarded child, who sings to the stars for guidance. Perhaps this is because he needs a little more help from above while Alice's life was largely steered by her parents. In any event, placing his faith in his bright star will prove beneficial for him, as he gains a start in his dream career as a writer in Asheville and is ultimately reunited with his birth mother. There is no exact indication in the libretto whether this reunion was the result of destiny or merely coincidence. A long belief in fate and destiny might argue that Billy was destined by the stars to be reunited with his mother. Certainly his willingness to again place his trust in his star has not led him wrong. Whether it was fate or coincidence is not as important as the fact that putting trust in his star has yet again been beneficial for Billy.

As Billy in "Bright Star" has faith in the path set out for him by his lucky star, the characters of *Hair* similarly believe that the cosmos has the future well in hand. In the opening song of *Hair*, "Aquarius," the Tribe invokes the new age astrological notion of

the Age of Aquarius.²⁴³ In so doing they reveal their belief that the planets and moon steer the actions and fates of humans and that there is a “higher” plan and a better future to come. The libretto stipulates that as the audience enters the theater, the Tribe is already onstage, getting dressed and setting up for the show; the song emerges out of pre-show, with no overture to mark the beginning of the performance.²⁴⁴ The music gently builds, beginning with chimes and shifting into a subtle guitar vamp that provides a repetitive rhythm that seems to anticipate something coming.²⁴⁵ After several bars of the vamp a solo voice sings, opening Act I with visions from astrology: “When the moon is in the seventh house / and Jupiter aligns with mars / Then peace will guide the planets and love will steer the stars.” The lyrics describe specific positions of the moon and planets which, according to astrology, will usher in the Age of Aquarius.²⁴⁶ James Lewis notes that a typical date for the start of the Age of Aquarius is the year 2000, which at the time of *Hair* would have been some thirty years distant.²⁴⁷ He cautions, however, that if the start date of the Age of Pisces (the great age directly preceding the Age of Aquarius) is accurate (roughly around 0 AD) and considering the estimate that each age is 2,150 years long, then the Age of Aquarius would be more likely to start around 2150, some 180 years after the events of *Hair*.²⁴⁸ The characters of *Hair*, mired in the demoralizing

²⁴³ James R. Lewis, *The Astrology Encyclopedia* (Detroit, MI: Visible Ink Press, 1994), 7.

²⁴⁴ Galt MacDermot, Gerome Ragni, and James Rado, *Hair: The American Tribal Love-Rock Musical* (New York: Pocket Books, 1969). Subsequent quotations are from this version of the libretto.

²⁴⁵ Galt MacDermot, James Rado, and Gerome Ragni, *Aquarius (from Hair Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with the Original Broadway Cast, Audio CD (Masterworks Broadway, 2009). Subsequent references to the music are from this recording.

²⁴⁶ Lewis, *The Astrology Encyclopedia*, 7. In describing the Age of Aquarius Lewis notes that accuracy is challenging in forecasting the exact dates of the great ages: “[b]ecause of the space between different constellations, it is difficult if not impossible to determine precisely when one age ends and another begins.”

²⁴⁷ Lewis, 11.

²⁴⁸ Lewis, 11; Terry MacKinnell, *The Dawning: Shedding New Light on the Astrological Ages* (Xlibris Corporation, 2011), 35.

violence of the Vietnam War, sexism, and racism, continue to look forward to the idealic new age. Once the Age of Aquarius has dawned the universe will be dominated by peace and love, because the astrological constellations achieved a certain foreseen alignment. The rest of the Tribe join the soloist for the chorus, singing “This is the dawning of the Age of Aquarius,” and the music adds a trumpet to the repetitive rhythm of the guitars. As the Tribe continues, delineating the good aspects that will characterize the era of Aquarius that they think is dawning: “harmony and understanding, sympathy and trust abounding,” among others, the music shifts to a new repetitive theme that gives the lyrics a list-song quality. After the verse, the soloist reprises the opening lyrics and music, reemphasizing the influence that the stars have over the fate of earth: “When the moon is in the seventh house / and Jupiter aligns with mars / Then peace will guide the planets,” and the Tribe joins her on “and love will steer the stars.” Finally, the Tribe concludes the song singing “Aquarius” four consecutive times, almost as a mantra, inviting the peaceful age in, and the song ends with the punctuating sound of a gong. In the Age of Aquarius peace and love will dominate the earth due to the position of the planets and moon.

As the musical takes place during the turmoil of the Vietnam War, the belief that an age of love and peace will dawn as a result of the position of the stars and despite the violent actions of humans is comforting. At the time *Hair* was created America was mired in a bloody, unwinnable war in which America’s sons were dying by the tens of thousands.²⁴⁹ The era was also marked by racial violence and increased tensions between sexes, classes, and generations in America. The world certainly did not seem to be guided by peace and love. Astrologer Wynne Jordan asserts that while astrology does not

entirely absolve humans of responsibility, it can certainly lighten the burden.²⁵⁰ Astrology has the potential, then, to offer a sense of comfort in knowing that the world is headed toward a better age, regardless of the reality of life at the current moment. Belief that the planets and stars would lead humanity into a better age must have seemed comforting to anyone who mourned and feared the situation in the 1960s. As a result, while the characters engage with the state of the world through be-ins, actively loving their fellow humans, burning draft cards, and protesting the war with chants of “hell no we won’t go” some of the burden has been lifted off them by the cosmic trajectory toward peace, and as a result of the opening number the members of *Hair*’s Tribe achieve some comfort.

In *Paint Your Wagon*’s “Wand’rin’ Star” character Ben Rumson looks to the stars for guidance and a consistent plan of action no matter what life throws at him. The song occurs in Act II, following the departure of most of the miners of Rumson Town to another gold strike. Running low on supplies and hope, the miners move on in search of fortune. Ben’s daughter Jennifer returns home after the miners have left, and asks her pa if he will be moving on too. He replies by singing his confidence in the knowledge of his nature: “I was born under a wand’rin’ star” elaborating on his nomadic nature by singing that he has “never seen a sight that didn’t look better looking back.”²⁵¹ His thoughts on home highlight his tendency to roam as he sings: “home is made for comin’ from / For dreams of goin’ to,” “hell is in hello,” and “heaven is goodbye.” Throughout the song Rumson returns to the chorus (“I was born under a wand’rin’ star”) consistently using the star that reigned at his birth as explanation for his nature. The accompanying music

²⁵⁰ Wynne Jordan, “Astrology Articles,” East Coast Astrology, 13–14, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.eastcoastastrology.ca/articles.html>.

²⁵¹ Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe, *Paint Your Wagon: A Musical Play in Two Acts* (New York: Coward-McCann, 1952), 116. Subsequent quotations of lyrics are from this version of the libretto.

emphasizes Ben's consistent nature and the reliable influence of the star, providing a repetitive, percussive accentuation to his words that sounds like the clip-clop of a horse plodding along.²⁵² As Richard Kislán contends, the music of musical theatre often serves to "project character."²⁵³ In this case the music evokes the reliable itinerancy of Ben Rumson. Ben Rumson surrenders responsibility for his actions to the star under which he was born but achieves a sense of reassurance from knowing how he will respond to anything that is thrown at him: he will wander onward. Believing that one's nature is wholly dependent upon the particular position of the stars at birth, and not as a result of habits that the individual can work to change, is a comfort to the character of Ben Rumson. Given that Ben lives in a time of rapid change and pioneering spirit (not unlike the late-1940s and early 1950s during which the musical was created and premiered), having a firm understanding of his nature and behavioral tendencies is immensely stabilizing for him. Perhaps knowing one's nature is the result of a star's influence would have appeared comforting in post-World War II America on the brink of nuclear warfare.

Ben Rumson, however, does change across the course of the musical, abandoning his star and changing his nature towards the end of his life. Two scenes after "Wand'rin' Star," when Ben tries to leave for the next big gold strike, he decides to stay put, telling Jennifer he "wouldn't be happy anywhere else." This is a significant break from his habitual nomadic nature. While Rumson has not given up hoping and dreaming, he has shifted his path away from the outlined destiny of his guiding star that had provided him

²⁵² Frederick Loewe, *Wand'rin' Star (from Paint Your Wagon Original Broadway Cast)*, with James Barton (RCA Victor Broadway, 1990). Subsequent references to music are from this recording.

²⁵³ Kislán, *The Musical*, 230.

with dreams. His dreams are now in the town that possesses his name and he has finally found comfort and stability on earth rather than in the stars.

Ben's signature song later offers the same kind of comfort to the other meandering miners. Toward the end of the musical, these miners inherit the assurance that Ben Rumson has possessed all his life when they sing his song. As the miners prepare to move on to the next gold strike they take up Rumson's song, emphasizing their similar restless natures, singing "I was born under a wand'rin' star." While Ben may have abandoned his wandering tendencies, it seems that there will always be miners who identify with and follow a wandering star and who find assurance of a cosmic plan in claiming their natures as wanderers. That the community adopts Rumson's song as their mantra in the face of disappointment and upheaval as they move onward suggests that finding assurance of one's nature in the stars, and not triggered by one's own choices may offer powerful comfort. To see so many characters finding assurance in the stars may have offered a source of comfort in a post-war world plagued by anxieties regarding a "cold war" between nuclear powers, a "space race," and other political and economic uncertainties, and relates to the over 12,000 sightings of extra-terrestrials that were reported from 1947 to 1969.²⁵⁴

Ben Rumson's tendency to look heavenward for assurance of a cosmic order and plan is echoed by Javert in *Les Misérables*; when Javert finds that his theology and the reality of the world do not agree, however the result is less hopeful. In *Les Misérables*, Javert's Act I song "Stars" reveals Javert's reliance on the stars for the theological affirmation they provide. In his analysis of *Les Misérables* Scott Miller suggests that in

²⁵⁴ "Project Blue Book: Unidentified Flying Objects," National Archives, August 15, 2016, <https://www.archives.gov/research/military/air-force/ufos.html>.

the song Javert “sees the night sky as a symbol of the immutability of the universe. The stars represent God and the natural order of things.”²⁵⁵ Kevin Todeschi, in *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, argues that stars are often “associated with omens or messages especially from a higher realm.”²⁵⁶ Christianity has certainly embraced this symbolism, insuring through the ages that the rites of the Church were celebrated at the proper times; in order to do so, as Nicholas Campion has pointed out, Christians needed to accurately interpret both the Bible and the stars.²⁵⁷ After all, the Old Testament affirms that the glory of God and the second coming of Christ would be marked by signs in the sky.²⁵⁸ As a fervent Christian for whom the sky is profoundly symbolic, Javert looks up to the stars out of a similar religious impulse.

In “Stars” Javert reveals his reliance on the cosmos for moral affirmation. Following his interference in the attempted robbery of Valjean and Cosette, Javert discovers that he may have just missed the man he has been pursuing for years. Out of frustration Javert banishes everyone back to their business, and the music of “Stars” begins to play. The song begins out of his frustration but ends up affirming his world-view; in a moment of crisis, Javert looks up and finds in the stars assurance of the righteousness of his quest. The music starts with a repetitive circular rise and fall; this first theme is played on the strings, which are characterized by a synthetic or electric timbre.²⁵⁹ It is not until Javert starts singing that the song manifests a feeling of forward momentum with the circular repetitive nature of the strings remaining underneath the

²⁵⁵ Miller, *From Assassins to West Side Story*, 168.

²⁵⁶ Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 243.

²⁵⁷ Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Volume II*, 20.

²⁵⁸ Campion, 50.

²⁵⁹ Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, *Stars (from Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast Recording)*, with Roger Allam, Audio CD (Relativity, 1998). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

vocals. The music suggests staying in place even as the melody in the vocals attempts to move forward. The cyclical theme matches Javert's mental state at the beginning of the song: Javert's mind is spinning around and around, advancing nowhere, and the music is similarly stagnant. Javert begins singing "There, out in the darkness, / A fugitive running, / Fallen from grace." Here, he uses the darkness to indicate not only the time of day but also Valjean's sinful nature. In Christian iconography literal darkness is often a symbol of spiritual darkness.²⁶⁰ Anthony Stevens notes that often "the failing light of dusk" symbolizes, among other things, "spiritual decline."²⁶¹ Following this traditional connotation Javert connects the darkness of the night sky to immorality out of which his efforts will create order: "God be my witness / I never shall yield."

Eventually, when Javert starts to wrestle with his ideology, the repetitive instrumental theme changes to a fairly simple theme that begins to ascend bit by bit up the scale (at the lyrics "he knows his way in the dark"); orchestra and vocals *crescendo* until they reach a high point (at the lyric "and if you fall as Lucifer fell"). The instruments change from synthetic violins to acoustic strings that soar upward. At the top, when Javert sings: "And if you fall / As Lucifer fell / You fall in flame," the high strings take over and soar. He reaches the chorus and looks up at the stars to sing what I call the 'stars' leitmotif: "Stars in your multitudes, / Scarce to be counted, / Filling the darkness / With order and light." The night sky is dark, but so is the moral morass of humanity and, like the stars, Javert provides order and light – his provision achieved through the legal system. As Campion has noted "if regularity was required" for pre-Renaissance

²⁶⁰ George Ferguson, *Signs & Symbols in Christian Art* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 1955), 54.

²⁶¹ Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue*, 142.

Christians “irregularity was a major problem, the sin of a cosmos out of control.”²⁶²

Javert also looks to the cosmos for signs of moral order and affirmation, employing both the biblical imagery of Lucifer’s fall from heaven, and stars’ deaths in fire, to symbolize failure: “And if you fall / As Lucifer fell / You fall in flame.” Here Javert connects the biblical with the cosmic, firmly situating his theology not only in Christianity, but in the Old Testament, as the description of Lucifer’s fall can be found in Isaiah 14, verse 12.²⁶³ As a result, Javert situates his theology in a judgmental, wrathful Old Testament attitude rather than a forgiving New Testament tone. Use of dark versus light communicates Javert’s moral superiority, in his own eyes, and Valjean’s corrupt morality; in the moral darkness of the world, Javert is a star of moral rectitude.

Nicholas Campion notes how stars have been used in literature as allegorical guides, symbols of virtue, and guides to perfection.²⁶⁴ Similarly, in “Stars,” the cosmic bodies serve as guides for Javert throughout his quest for moral justice. Javert continually turns to the stars for guidance and assurance regarding his theology and actions. Javert sees the stars as guardians against the darkness and himself as constant as the stars; the persistently repetitive music supports this constant vigilance. He sings “You are the sentinels / Silent and sure. / Keeping watch in the night,” emphasizing the constant nature of the stars as the song continues: “You know your place in the sky, / You hold your course / And your aim, / And each in your season returns and returns / And is always the same.” The reliability and predictability of the stars, which maintain the same paths year after year, is comforting, as Carl Sagan has proposed: “the familiar constellations must

²⁶² Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Volume II*, 21.

²⁶³ *Holy Bible The New King James Version*, 1st Ed (Thomas Nelson Publishers, n.d.), 469.

²⁶⁴ Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Volume II*, 73.

have been reassuring in the midst of an unexplored ocean.”²⁶⁵ Javert sees himself as similarly reliable, serving as a sentinel to keep back the darkness of immorality.

The song continues, structured by the two alternating musical themes in the accompaniment (the first repetitive theme and the second ascending, *crescendoing* theme) until Javert comes to the climax “and so it has been and so it is written.” At this point he makes the decision to stick to his principles; the two musical themes join together to employ both the forward potential of the *crescendoing* second theme and the repetitive nature of the rising and falling (first) theme. The music reveals that Javert has achieved a reconciliation between a stasis that comforts him and forward movement towards achieving his goals. Javert expresses this resolution, this re-affirmation of his worldview reflected in the order of the stars, in these lyrics: “Scarce to be counted / Changing the chaos / To order and light/ You are the sentinels / Silent and sure / Keeping watch in the night / Keeping watch in the night.” Javert returns his focus to the stars as the song ends, reiterating their reliability.

Javert’s use of the stars adheres to the Christian and nautical traditions of looking to the stars for moral and geographic guidance, respectively.²⁶⁶ As they were for early navigators, the stars are reliable and constant for Javert; he looks to them for assurance that his morality and actions concur with the ordered plan of the cosmos. Furthermore, these stars keep the darkness at bay for Javert, much as they would have lit up the dark sky for pre-historic humans. Assured of the righteousness of his theology and mission

²⁶⁵ Sagan, 33.

²⁶⁶ Mark Denny, *The Science of Navigation: From Dead Reckoning to GPS* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 132.

Javert continues serving justice until he confronts Valjean again and is forced to re-examine his ideology in Act II.

After witnessing two acts of humanity on the part of Valjean, Javert wrestles with his unflinching ideology, and turns to the stars again for reassurance in the song, “Javert’s Suicide: Soliloquy;” this time, however, the stars fail him. He begins singing: “Who is this man? / What sort of devil is he / To have me caught in a trap / And choose to let me go free?”²⁶⁷ Javert continues to wrestle with the conflict between his theology and the reality of Valjean’s humanity, wondering that “Vengeance was his / And he gave me back my life.” Finally Javert concludes that the two are incompatible, singing: “I am reaching but I fall / And the stars are black and cold, / As I stare into the void / Of a world that cannot hold.” Valjean has saved Javert’s life and seeks to save Marius’ life, and Javert cannot reconcile such acts of kindness with his worldview that demands punishment for Valjean’s criminal acts. As Javert looks again to the stars for guidance, they do not send their constant and guiding light, but are “black and cold.” Javert stares into the void of his theology as well as the void of space and time. He concludes that this world, where his ideology does not fit with reality, “cannot hold,” and instead of changing, like Valjean at his moment of crisis earlier in the musical, Javert ends his life, committing suicide by jumping into the river.

The music accompanying Javert’s suicide draws important parallels between Javert (antagonist) and Valjean (protagonist), emphasizing the differences between their philosophies; the music also demonstrates Javert’s loss of faith. The melody that

²⁶⁷ Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, *Javert’s Suicide: Soliloquy (from Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast Recording)*, with Roger Allam, Audio CD (Relativity, 1998). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

accompanies Javert's questioning is the same music that accompanied Valjean's self-searching soliloquy, "Prologue III: What Have I Done?" in Act I. Using the same melody, as a reprise, to accompany Javert's thoughts directly connects the two characters to each other and reveals the major difference in their ideologies: Valjean is willing to make a change, whereas Javert cannot. Instead of changing Javert flees the world "that cannot hold" by way of suicide. As soon as Javert jumps, the music changes from the music of Valjean's soliloquy: as Javert falls, the 'stars' leitmotif returns to accompany his fall, reprising his unflinching moral outlook and his connection with the stars.

Paint Your Wagon's Act I song "They Call the Wind Maria" (pronounced 'muh-rye-uh'), features miners in the desolate and rugged west turning to the stars at a bleak moment in their lives as they search for assurance of a cosmic plan and guidance along that plan. The song occurs following their interaction with Ben Rumson's daughter Jennifer; talking to her reminds them of their women left back East. As a "dark and eerie night" falls, they sing of the wild and desolate landscape in which they find themselves "lost" and "lonely" and of what they have given up.²⁶⁸ The song opens with a solitary banjo picking out a few notes, to which Steve responds "Yeah Jake, play something, let's hear something besides the wind blowing through them dang hills."²⁶⁹ The banjo player picks four notes and then the orchestra takes over, playing a four-count repetitive vamp that circles for roughly nine bars. The music emulates the repetitive motion of a speeding train's wheels: even as it seems to move forward, it circles right back around in place.

²⁶⁸ Lerner and Loewe, *Paint Your Wagon*, 34. Subsequent quotations of lyrics are from this version of the libretto.

²⁶⁹ Frederick Loewe, *They Call the Wind Maria* (from *Paint Your Wagon Original Broadway Cast*), with Rufus Smith and the Original Broadway Cast (RCA Victor Broadway, 1990). Subsequent references to music are from this recording.

Like the miners, the music struggles to make any headway in the dark night and desolate landscape. As the music plays Steve sings about the wildness of the West: “Away out here they got a name / For wind and rain and fire; / The rain is Tess, the fire’s Jo, / And they call the wind Maria.” Steve attributes to Maria great power not only to move the clouds, but also to move the stars when he sings “Maria blows the stars around / And sends the clouds a-flyin.’ / Maria makes the mountains sound / Like folks were up there dyin.’” Instead of the stars being constant and reliable, the wind is given the power to move them. In the face of loneliness and a dark, eerie night, the stars are not entities to be relied upon.

The music accompanying the lyrics aurally creates a desolate landscape and magnifies the men’s quest for solace in their lost and lonely status. Under the lyrics ending the verses, the rhythm shifts, becomes less repetitive, and descends in steps down the scale, as when Steve sings “and they call the wind Maria,” and “Maria makes the mountains sound like folks were up there dying.” This descent provides a brief resolution that is immediately destroyed by the music circling back to the beginning of the verse. When Steve sings the chorus, “Maria, Maria, they call the wind Maria” the strings play a theme that sounds like gusting wind on a dark night, followed by the descending theme from above. On the lyric in the third verse, “I’m a lost and lonely man,” the strings play a sad romantic variation of the descending theme. The use of a theme that sounds sad and romantic accentuates the men’s loneliness and despair, emphasizing what they gave up to come out west. When the other miners reprise the lyrics from the opening verse, “Out here they got a name for rain / For wind and fire only” and add “But when you’re lost and all alone / There ain’t no word but lonely,” the instrumentation returns to the repetitive

vamp, but then drops down to a volume level so low it is almost inaudible when Steve sings “And I’m a lost and lonely man without a star to guide me.” The absence of music here is powerful as it is a change from the pattern and highlights the lyrics that are accompanied by silence.²⁷⁰ At this moment in the song the lack of accompanying music accentuates the soloist and his loneliness in the desolate West. Like the other miners, who are lost and lonely, Steve is adrift without a star to guide him. He is so lost in fact that “not even God” can find him. The music comes back with the romantic theme played sweetly under “Maria blow my love to me.” The song concludes with the ensemble of miners and Steve singing the chorus and the music supporting them at its most frantic disposition and loudest volume. It is as if the miners have taken all they can take, emotionally, and are crying out to Maria, in the absence of the stars, for aid. As the miners together approach the first word of the last phrase the accompaniment and ensemble vocals drop out leaving Steve to sing the final words (“my love to me”) solo and *a capella*. The orchestra joins him again at the end, playing the repetitive rhythm that dominated throughout most of the song. In this instance, the music advances nowhere by the end of the song, spinning its wheels even as it attempts to move, just as the men also fail to advance.

The men’s description of the landscape around them possesses a threatening quality. Indeed, it hearkens back to the ever-present threatening darkness that, as Anthony Stevens points out, we have “only very recently” been able to “banish” in cities and towns with electric lights.²⁷¹ In his “lost and lonely” state, Steve yearns for the comfort that a star’s guidance might afford him but is offered only the wild power of the

²⁷⁰ Lipscomb and Tolchinsky, “Role of Music Communication in Cinema,” 383–402.

²⁷¹ Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 141.

wind. The scene ends following this song, and the miners will remain lonely until Jake builds a dance hall and his girl Cherry brings some dance hall women up to the mining camp at the beginning of Act II.

“They Call the Wind Maria” reveals the tendency of musical theatre characters to turn to cosmic bodies for guidance, but in this case the stars are not reliable as guides; indeed, their movements are at the mercy of the powerful western wind. While the emphasis on the power of the wind certainly has much to do with the sheer cliffs and rugged mountains that are the setting for the musical, when placed in contrast with the other musicals that use cosmic symbolism to achieve assurance, the prospectors’ lack of faith in the stars in “Maria” is striking. In addition, *Paint Your Wagon*’s premiere date occurred during the post-war frenzy of UFO sightings. Despite the long tradition of looking up (to constellations, to gods) for guidance, it appears that, at least in this instance, Outer Space had become at best unhelpful and at worst the source of a potential threat.

Let the Sunshine In: Hope

In addition to seeking reassurance that humans are members of the cosmic community and that they will be guided along an ordered plan, musical theatre characters sometimes seek hope in times of great hardship. Whereas in the two previous functions (characters seeking comfort through witness and knowledge of the cosmic plan) characters have primarily sung to the stars and moon, when it comes to hope characters turn to the sun. Here musicals follow a tradition from literature, as works like Dante’s *Paradiso* and those of more recent writers like Laurie Halse Anderson, and Lisa Church and Ann Prescott have employed the sun to symbolize hope. In fact, the title of a book by

Church and Prescott is inspired by the Scottish author Samuel Smiles' proverb: "hope is like the sun, which, as we journey toward it, casts the shadow of our burden behind us."²⁷² The two instances explored below feature characters looking to the sun for hope.

In "Sun is Gonna Shine" *Bright Star*'s Mama Murphy invokes the sun for hope to cheer her daughter Alice. Opening Act II, the song starts out in a somber tone as the banjo and fiddle play and repeat a descending two-bar variation of the melody of the song.²⁷³ Coming out of the heartbreak of having her child torn from her at the end of Act I, Alice sings of her "lonely, broken feeling." Her mama attempts to lift her spirits by countering "you got the power / you got the faith / you got the burning fever / you got the light / you got the way / we're never all alone." When Alice laments "I got the old dark cloud," she invokes the literary trope of clouds as symbols of grief or sorrows. Mama responds by invoking the sun as a symbol of hope: "the sun is gonna shine again, / sun is gonna shine again," suggesting to Alice that though she is in a dark place (emotionally) at the moment, the sun will shine again, she will find happiness again.²⁷⁴ As Anthony Stevens has observed, the sun often connotes healing, and Mama Murphy taps into that power in trying to restore her daughter's optimism.²⁷⁵ Eventually Alice joins her, repeating those lyrics.

²⁷² Lisa Church and Ann H. Prescott, *Hope Is Like the Sun: Finding Hope and Healing After Miscarriage, Stillbirth, or Infant Death* (Hampton, Va: Hopexchange Pub, 2004), front matter; See also Linda Oatman High, "Cracks of Light in the Darkness: Images of Hope in the Work of Laurie Halse Anderson and an Interview with the Author," *The ALAN Review* 38, no. 1 (2010); John Anthony Mazzeo, "Dante's Sun Symbolism," *Italica* 33, no. 4 (1956): 243–51, <https://doi.org/10.2307/476967>.

²⁷³ Edie Brickell and Steve Martin, *Sun Is Gonna Shine (from Bright Star Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with the Original Broadway Cast, Audio CD (Ghostlight Records, 2016). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

²⁷⁴ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 44.

²⁷⁵ Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue*, 135.

As the song progresses other characters (Margo and the girls) join Mama Murphy and Alice in singing the chorus, reinforcing the message of hope. Billy's Dad, Daddy Cane, joins in the message: "something tells me it'll be alright, / something tells me it's gonna be okay." The ensemble then repeats the chorus several times as the song picks up tempo, more instruments are added, and Alice and Daddy Cane sing in counterpoint to the chorus. Daddy sings that everything is ok, Alice sings that the clouds are rolling by, the rest of the ensemble sings that the "sun is gonna shine." The multiple layers of lyrics and melodies provide depth, and the music evokes an increasingly hopeful and joyful attitude. It is as if just singing about the sun shining again lifts their spirits and as they sing the instrumentation accompanying the vocals becomes more ebullient. The lyrics employ vivid imagery of the cloudy sky clearing and the sunlight shining through again to emphasize the hope that the characters are seeking. Finally, all singers join and sing the chorus together twice, ending together on "the sun is gonna shine again." They sing the lyrics in *staccato*, emphasizing not only the words they are singing but exuding a confidence and strength as they sing.

The song prepares the characters and the audience for Act II, in which the sun (metaphorically) will slowly begin to appear until the happy conclusion at the end of Act II. The song also motivates Alice to search for the child she gave up in her youth, which she will do throughout Act II. *Bright Star* retains the tradition of the sun providing hope and comfort to humans, and the music accompanying the lyrics communicates the meaning of the cosmic symbolism. For Alice, the sun lifts her spirits in a moment of intense inner turmoil and pain, serving to hearten her and to motivate her future self to search for a solution to her pain, i.e., to search for the child she lost years previously.

A second potent example of the sun offering hope occurs during the finale of *Hair*, “Flesh Failures/Let the Sunshine in.” Added for the move to Broadway, the song develops out of the Tribe protesting the war in Vietnam. When Claude tells them “like it or not they got me,” as he has died over in Vietnam, the Tribe begins singing “Flesh Failures.” The music starts out with a repetitive, grating rhythm on the guitar, over which the soloist sings.²⁷⁶ As the song continues, more instruments and vocals are added, reprising bits from previous songs that present a bleak image of the world and humanity at the moment: “smells from laboratories,” “facing a dying nation,” “listening for the new-told lies.” Throughout, the song possesses a quality of moving forward while remaining in place, almost as of marching in place or walking around unendingly in a circle. Finally, the music transforms, as do the lyrics, from the grating guitar rhythm, distressing “smells from laboratories,” and the reality of “facing a dying nation” in “Flesh Failures,” to images of hope and energetic, uplifting music in “Let the Sunshine in.” The vocals break abruptly into the mantra “Let the Sunshine in,” by which point the music has come to seem less grating, even if still repetitive. Both the music and the sun are influential in offering relief from the distressing world of “Flesh Failures.”

In some ways, while the song is hopeful, the vocals possess a desperate timbre, coupled with the words for “Flesh Failures,” suggesting that the world desperately needs some hope. Once the first “sunshine” lyric is sung, the Tribe sings only “Let the sunshine / Let the sunshine in / The sunshine in” nine times until the end of the song, and the conclusion of the musical, imparting an urgency and insistence that the sunshine and

²⁷⁶ Galt MacDermot, James Rado, and Gerome Ragni, *Flesh Failures/Let the Sunshine In (from Hair Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with the Original Broadway Cast, Audio CD (Masterworks Broadway, 2009). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

hope are desperately needed. Set amidst the turmoil of the Vietnam War and the counter-culture response to the war, and premiering the same year in which the Tet Offensive occurred and over 14,000 American soldiers were killed in Vietnam, the musical's finale invokes the hope of the sunshine in a fairly hopeless era.

Conclusion

From these representative examples, some conclusions may be drawn regarding how cosmic symbolism functions to provide comfort to characters within these representative musical theatre works.

Most characters turned to the cosmos for comfort in moments of tribulation. Of the eleven incidents analyzed in this chapter, nine involve characters who are suffering, while only two feature characters who are not experiencing grief or hardship. This finding aligns with the general human tendency to look to the cosmos for guidance, answers, and affirmation when facing turbulence, anxiety, and suffering as scholars such as James Miller, Outi Lillquist, Marjaana Lindeman, Nicholas Campion, and Carl Sagan have noted, and artists have portrayed in visual imagery of famous events of suffering.

A more surprising finding, perhaps, identifies stars as the cosmic bodies humans seeking comfort turned to most frequently. The characters turn to the stars for comfort in six instances, whereas they look only twice to the sun, and once each to the remaining cosmic bodies: moon, comet, and planets. The fewer number of times that characters turned to the moon at night (one) than to the stars (six) suggests that the stars are seen as more constant than the changing moon, a perception notably expressed in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. It appears that characters are more likely to turn to the cosmic bodies at night (as all but one of those are generally seen at night) suggesting that characters are

more likely to need comfort at night than during the day. Specifically in the explorations of cosmic bodies as witnesses to human experience, all of the cosmic bodies referenced are those most easily seen at night (stars, moon, comet) suggesting that when musical theatre characters are confronted by the dark vastness of space at night they tend to look to the cosmos to witness their experiences. Given that nighttime would have been accompanied by serious threats for ancient humans, nighttime carries with it a connotation of evil inherited from these early humans, and while darkness may not be as threatening for modern humans, some deep part of humanity remembers, and musical theatre characters mark this connection with our ancestors. There is similar consistency regarding which cosmic bodies human characters sing to for assurance of the cosmic plan and their place within it, as four of the five instances explored involve characters singing to the stars, and one to the planets. When characters look to the cosmos for hope, however, they look to the sun, the brightest, warmest cosmic body in their galaxy. This inclination is a continuation of the tendency from literature, revealing that the sun continues to be a compelling body to look to when seeking hope.

When seeking comfort two of the eleven characters turn to the cosmos from a specifically religious point of view: Javert in “Stars” sees his Christian theology affirmed in the order of the stars and the Tribe in “Aquarius” invoke New Age spirituality and astrology in their belief that there is an ordered plan to the cosmos and that the moon and planets can guide them along their destiny within that plan. This finding continues and complicates the millennia-long close association between religion and the cosmos; it seems that twentieth/twenty-first century secularism has not completely robbed the cosmos of its divine associations and supernatural powers. The direct and overt

correlation between religion or spirituality and the cosmos that does occasionally appear reveals important details about the characters who look to the cosmos and adds necessary information to the libretto.

Like pre-GPS humans' tendency to look to the stars for navigational guidance musical theatre characters often look heavenward for guidance. In nine of the instances characters received from the stars the guidance they were seeking. In only two of the occurrences did they seem to fail the characters. Only one character, Ben Rumson, abandons his comforting and guiding star and the wandering identity associated with it. Moments in which characters abandon their previous cosmic bastions of comfort or support reveal significant changes that occur in the characters, providing depth and nuance to the characters' development.

The types of characters who sing to the cosmos for comfort reveals the relationship between musical theatre characters and the cosmos as well as important information regarding the characters. In only one instance did an antagonist sing to the stars, whereas three protagonists sing to the cosmos; this circumstance suggests that the antagonists are often denied a close relationship with the cosmos that allows for their beliefs and ambitions to be expressed. Javert is a unique character in musical theatre history, as he is afforded this privilege as an antagonist. The frequency of moments in which the ensemble sings to a cosmic body (seven occurrences) reveals singing to the cosmos as a communal activity, and suggests that the pre-historic practice of engaging in ritual with the cosmos may still resonate with humanity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

The location of the occurrences in the narrative thread of the musicals communicates important information regarding the character's trajectory through the narrative of the musical. Musical theatre characters need comfort and affirmation from the cosmos only slightly more often in Act I than in Act II. Six of the instances explored occur in Act I and four occur in Act II. Cosmic symbolism, then, is integral to establishing the concerns and anxieties of the characters and in setting up the premise of the musicals but only slightly less important in the second half of the musical.

Furthermore, five of the instances occur at the extreme ends of the musical, with three opening a musical and two concluding a musical, meaning that characters tend to look to the cosmos often at either the beginning of their journey, as a guiding, hopeful talisman, or at the end, as a consoling comfort in the face of a lack of change. This structure suggests that the cosmic symbolism is inherently connected to the narrative of the musical, either revealing important information at the beginning of the characters' journey or revealing new concerns of a lack of resolution at the end of the narrative. Of the eleven instances of cosmic symbolism examined, eight of the songs feature the cosmic body in the title of the song, emphasizing the centrality of the cosmic body to the song, and two of the musicals include the cosmic body in the title of the musical itself, marking the importance of the cosmic body to the musical as a whole. This appears to be a break from tradition, as few of the titles of novels and plays researched for the literature review of this study incorporated the cosmic body into the title of the piece; more research needs to be done to determine if this is an accurate generalization across the history of Western literature. Nevertheless the cosmos still appears to be considered a

powerful potential source of assurance, answers, and comfort to musical theatre characters and, by extension, twentieth/twenty-first century humans.

CHAPTER 4: THE COSMOS AS SYMBOL OF HUMAN EXCEPTIONALISM

Some men are heroes. Some men outshine the sun.

-Stephen Schwartz, *Pippin*

The second function I explore features cosmic bodies as symbolic of human exceptionalism. In the instances identified in this chapter, the characters maintain an ideal, feel an emotion, or perceive a person so compelling that they must look beyond their atmosphere to describe them; they look up and invoke the brilliant cosmic bodies they see in the sky to describe the greatness that they perceive. This function involves several sub-functions: to highlight the grand heights of the characters' ambitions; to illustrate the intensity of the character's passion; and to spotlight a character's exceptional nature or power. In most of the instances the symbolism reflects favorably on the person it symbolizes; in a few, however, it emphasizes the extraordinary, yet adverse power or nature of the person.

For every sub-function, I explore first the instances in which the cosmic symbolism is used positively, starting with the occurrences that feature the stars, then moving to the ones that feature the moon, followed by those that look to the sun, and concluding with any instances that look to other bodies, such as comets. From there, I move to the instances in which the symbolism accentuates the negative power of the person it signifies, moving in the same order as above. Finally, I conclude by discussing the symbolic function of cosmic bodies across all three sub-functions. Table 2 below tracks the incidents, by show and thematically, that are analyzed in this chapter.

Table 2: Chapter Four: The Cosmos as Symbol of Human Exceptionalism

Musical	Function					
	Symbol of Human Ambition		Symbol of Passion		Symbol of Exceptional Nature or Power	
Man of La Mancha	“The Impossible Dream”	Stars				
	“To Each His Dulcinea”	Moon				
			“It’s All the Same”	Stars		
			“Little Bird”	Moon		
Notre Dame de Paris	“Le Temps de Cathédrales”	Stars				
			“Ces diamants-là”	Stars		
			“Les Cloches”	Stars		
			“Beau Comme le Soleil”	Sun		
			“Tu vas me Détruire”	Moon		
Evita	“High Flying Adored”	Stars				
Hamilton	“Burn”	Sun				
					“Dear Theodosia”	Sun
Wicked			“As Long As You’re Mine”	Moonlight		
Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812			“No One Else”	Moonlight		
Les Miserables			“Love Montage”	Moon, Sun		
Pippin					“Finale”	Sun
					“I Guess I’ll Miss the Man”	Sun

To Reach the Impossible Star: Cosmic Bodies as Symbols for Human Ambition

Since at least 1633 humans have looked to the sky for symbols of the heights to which they aspire.²⁷⁷ Author J. C. Cooper asserts that a star often symbolizes a great accomplishment or the “highest attainment.”²⁷⁸ In the seventeenth century Anglican priest George Herbert evoked the sky as a symbol of soaring ambition: “Sink not in spirit; who aimeth at the sky.”²⁷⁹ P. T. Barnum allegedly stated that “if I shoot at the sun I may hit a star,” which became an oft-quoted adage.²⁸⁰ Similarly, the saying “aim for the moon, if you miss you’ll land among the stars” is commonly attributed to W. Clement Stone and has entered common usage in various iterations. Musical theatre characters frequently follow in this tendency to employ cosmic bodies as symbolic of the great things they aim to do.

Man of La Mancha’s “The Impossible Dream” provides a striking example of a star used to symbolize the height of human ambition. Halfway through the musical Don Quixote sings “The Impossible Dream,” with a star as a symbol for the impossibly high standards that he seeks to achieve. The song emerges out of Don Quixote’s attempt to explain to Aldonza the nature of his quest on the eve of his knighting ceremony, and he begins by listing a plethora of impossible tasks that he seeks to accomplish: “to fight the unbeatable foe,” “to bear with unbearable sorrow,” “to right the unrightable wrong.”²⁸¹

²⁷⁷ J.C. Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, New edition (London: Thames & Hudson, 1987), 159.

²⁷⁸ Cooper, 159.

²⁷⁹ George Herbert, *The Temple: Sacred Poems and Private Ejaculations* (Scott-Thaw, 1904), 18.

²⁸⁰ Garson O’Toole, “If I Shoot at the Sun, I May Hit a Star; Quote Investigator,” Blog Post, *Quote Investigator* (blog), accessed March 22, 2018, <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2012/11/20/shoot-at-sun/>.

²⁸¹ Mitch Leigh, Dale Wasserman, and Joe Darion, *Man of La Mancha: A Musical Play* (New York: Random House, 1966), 49. Subsequent quotations are from this version of the libretto.

The music features a steady snare drum beat and possesses a slight feeling of moving forward, even while it circles back around to its starting point at the end of each bar.²⁸²

The melody ascends slightly up the scale, giving the illusion of moving forward and upward, while Don Quixote sings about the impossible deeds he wishes to conduct. After eight bars the accompaniment and vocals repeat this ascension, returning to the same pitch on which they began the song and rising again as Don Quixote sings the second verse, listing additional impossible tasks he aims to do.²⁸³ The music marks the fact that he has yet to accomplish these tasks and, like the music, Don Quixote circles from ideal to ideal, while marching out into the world to achieve them.

Don Quixote's vocals finally change and acquire a feel of moving forward when he concludes the second verse and begins to sing the chorus. The forward momentum of the music symbolizes Don Quixote marching out to achieve his high aspirations. The second verse ends with him singing "to reach the unreachable star." The vocal line and music *crescendo* slightly and the instrumentation becomes fuller, maintaining the repetitive rhythm but adding sentimental echoes of the melody. The increase in volume emphasizes the heights to which Don Quixote attempts to soar; as his ideals rise, so does his expression of them. The lyrics lead him into the chorus and a proclamation of his objective: "This is my Quest, to follow that star, / No matter how hopeless, no matter how far, / To fight for the right without question or pause, / To be willing to march into hell for a heavenly cause!" He has faith in his quest and its outcomes as he professes that

²⁸² Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion, *The Impossible Dream (from Man of La Mancha Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Richard Kiley, Audio CD (MCA, 1987); "Man of La Mancha," Tams Witmark (blog), accessed March 26, 2018, <http://www.tamswitmark.com/shows/man-of-la-mancha/>.

²⁸³ Leigh and Darion, *The Impossible Dream (from Man of La Mancha Original Broadway Cast Recording)*. Subsequent references to music are from this recording.

his “heart will lie peaceful and calm” when he is laid to rest and “the world will be better” for his efforts. The martial instrumentation from the first verse returns, providing a purposeful feel to the lyrics “And the world will be better for this, / That one man, scorned and covered with scars, / Still strove with his last ounce of courage;” here he abruptly *crescendos* into the lyric from the chorus: “To reach the unreachable stars!” From there, he continues the chorus asserting that: “This is my Quest, to follow that star, / No matter how hopeless, no matter how far;” the music continues to *crescendo*, and cymbals and horns join him as he sings “this is my quest.” Don Quixote delivers the final “to reach the unreachable stars” at a volume level higher than any previously in the song, holding the notes of ‘reach,’ ‘unreachable,’ and ‘star’ longer than he has at any point previously. It is as if his voice, like himself, is attempting to reach the unreachable star. His ideal will inspire Aldonza to renew her faith in the world but will also lead to Don Quixote’s death when he becomes disillusioned. Don Quixote may die when his heart is broken by the world, but he will have achieved some aspect of his quest in inspiring one broken human to renew her faith and hope in the world. The “unreachable stars” provide Don Quixote with the impossible heights to which he attempts to soar despite the world that aims to keep humans in unassuming, unhopeful darkness. As *Man of La Mancha* premiered in 1965 amidst the continued anxiety of the Cold War and social unrest in juxtaposition to social advancement of the civil rights movement and the excitement of the space race, the optimism of *Man of La Mancha* may have been both a response to the concerns of the time and an affirmation of a potentially brighter future, particularly an affirmation of human action in the face of significant odds.

The opening song of *Notre Dame de Paris*, “Le Temps des Cathédrales,” also uses the stars to highlight the high ambition of humans. Sung by the narrator, Gringoire, the song serves as a prologue that establishes the philosophical context and the era of the story about to unfold.²⁸⁴ Gringoire establishes the story as one of “amour et de désir” (love and desire) and situates “les artistes,” like himself, at the center of the process of transcribing knowledge for future generations.²⁸⁵ He sings “Nous les artistes anonymes / De la sculpture ou de la rime / Tenterons de vous la transcrire / Pour les siècles à venir” (We the anonymous artists / of sculpture and rhyme / try to transcribe it for you / for the centuries to come). Gringoire invokes the long legacy of works of art and literature and situates himself within that tradition. The accompanying music is characterized by strummed guitar chords and then finger-picked guitar chords that create a cyclical rhythm with no forward momentum; it is only an introduction to the main body of the song. Gringoire then goes on to sing about the philosophy of the time and the ambition of man to make his mark on glass or stone (as in cathedrals and the sculpture arts): “Il est venu le temps des cathédrales / Le monde est entré / Dans un nouveau millénaire / L’homme a voulu monter vers les étoiles / Ecrire son histoire / Dans le verre ou dans la pierre.” (It was the time of the cathedrals / the world entered a new millennium / man wished to ascend to the stars / to write his history on glass or stone). As he sings, his vocals ascend both up the scale and up in volume. The instrumentation accentuates his rise in volume and energy, then temporarily drops out as he begins to ascend (at “Il est venu le temps des”) and then, led by a cymbal roll, joins back in with Gringoire on “cathédrales.” An

²⁸⁴ Do Rozario, “The French Musicals,” 130.

²⁸⁵ Richard Cocciante and Luc Plamondon, *Le Temps de Cathédrales (from Notre Dame de Paris Original Paris Cast Recording)*. Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

organ also joins Gringoire as he ascends toward the stars, adding depth and resonance to the instrumentation. The music has finally begun to gain a feel of moving somewhere, rather than circling back around on itself as it has from the beginning of the song. Here, the cosmic symbolism stands for man's insatiable urge to become the best that he can be. Indeed, in English, we would say "shoot for the stars" and the lyric "L'homme a voulu monter vers les étoiles" is analogous. As Kevin Todeschi has contended, stars typically represent dreams, aspirations, and ideals, as well as excellence, and Gringoire's reference to the stars follows in this tradition.²⁸⁶ The music accentuates the heights of ambition; specifically the temporary silence of the accompaniment, which creates a tremendous dramatic effect of spotlighting Gringoire's upward ascension. Mervyn Cooke discusses the dramatic effect that silence can have, alleging that "the sudden cessation of music when the latter is expected to be continuous can have an enormous dramatic impact."²⁸⁷ Such is the case here. The absence of music makes both his vocals and the return of the music on 'cathédrales' more poignant. Gringoire repeatedly returns to the chorus throughout the song, reiterating the mantra of man wanting to ascend to the stars twice more, situating the ideal centrally in the song and in the musical, as the song serves as a prologue that establishes the time, place, and theoretical framework of the age.

It is notable that man wants to make his permanent mark by writing his history in glass and stone; it seems that, while seeking to ascend to the stars, humankind can only leave evidence of its greatness by making its mark on earth-bound materials and edifices. Despite this rootedness, when speaking of the impact of the mark, Gringoire invokes the stars as symbolic of the influence that humanity wants to have on future generations. This

²⁸⁶ Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 218.

²⁸⁷ Mervyn Cooke, *A History of Film Music* (London, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 3.

is a powerful dichotomy as both the imagery of earth-made materials and transcendent cosmic bodies are invoked to articulate the great ambition of humans, making their ideals simultaneously earth-bound and transcendent. Such symbolism hearkens back to Anna-Theresa Tymieniecka's claim that humans are always rooted to the earth despite their desires to soar to the cosmos, as she writes: "even if we dream of becoming space colonizers [...] our ground station will always be earth."²⁸⁸

The symbolism in the song is characterized by an uncomfortable relationship with both religion and social justice. It is significant that this is the "time of cathedrals," as Gringoire sings, but he does not sing about ascending to God or heaven. Instead he sings to the stars, emphasizing a relatively secular tone within a musical that is set in an era heavily characterized by Catholic ideology. Perhaps this choice is the result of the fading interest in religion exhibited in 1990s Europe as Catholics, Protestants, and Jews stopped regularly attending religious services in multitudes. Gringoire also introduces the concept of social progress, a notion that will not be achieved by the end of the musical. He sings: "Les poètes et les troubadours / Ont chanté des chansons d'amour / Qui promettaient au genre humain / De meilleurs lendemains" (the poets and troubadours / sang songs of love / that promised to human kind / a better tomorrow). Here, Gringoire establishes the need for social justice but puts it off until tomorrow, doing little to work to achieve it. While man attempts to ascend to the stars during the time of the cathedrals, he neglects to improve the human social situation on Earth beyond expressing a hope that it will come about. As the musical unfolds the Gypsies will protest this attitude, and Gringoire will observe and comment on both the efforts of the Gypsies to seek justice and the attempts

²⁸⁸ Anna-Teresa Tymieniecka, *Passions of the Earth in Human Existence, Creativity, and Literature*, *Analecta Husserliana*, v. 71 (Dordrecht; Boston: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2001), 11.

of Frolo to reject them. At the end, however, justice will not be achieved, and the outcasts will have to wait until tomorrow, as the better world that Gringoire forecasts is no closer than the cosmic bodies that symbolize it. The musical speaks loudly to the racial situation in 1990s France, as much of the 1990s was characterized by racial prejudice and violence against immigrants; while things were beginning to look better in 1998, France was far from the better world presaged by poets and troubadors. Gringoire's song is a plea for this better world and establishes the foundation of the musical to be a concern with social justice.

In *Evita*'s "High Flying Adored," Che exhibits the same tendency that Don Quixote and Gringoire demonstrated to use the stars to reflect a character's ambitions, specifically Eva Perón's rise from her humble beginnings to the heights of power, but does so critically. The song, which is heard in Act 2, follows the celebration of Perón's election to the Presidency during which Che was removed by henchmen for criticizing Eva and Juan Perón's authenticity. As Eva exits from the balcony of the Casa Rosada and the adoration of her followers, Che sings sweetly: "you were just a backstreet girl / Hustling and fighting, / Scratching and biting / High flying, adored."²⁸⁹ The lyrics reveal her beginnings in poverty, her pluck, and how far she made it. The music is whimsical, and exudes a feeling of the high-flying tricks of circus acrobats, as it gently soars up and back down. Che *crescendos* as he sings "did you believe in your wildest moments / All this would be yours / That you'd become the lady of the night" and reaches the top of this ascension as he asks: "Were there stars in your eyes when you crawled in at night? / from the bars, from the sidewalks." The vocals at this point lose their sweetness, and instead

²⁸⁹ Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, *High Flying Adored* (from *Evita* Original London Cast Recording), with David Essex (MCA Records, 1978). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

become powerful and demanding. In this lyric Che employs the shining stars as symbolic of Eva's ambition, even when she had few resources. The stars symbolize Eva's ambition to soar to the great heights of fame that she has now achieved, and the music emphasizes her desire to climb to those heights. Che's description of Eva's ambition brings to mind Margaret Thatcher's rise to the position of Prime Minister in Britain in the late 1970s suggesting that the ambition featured in *Evita* was not a singular occurrence nor restricted to the musical theatre stage.

In *Les Misérables'* Act I song "On My Own," Eponine employs the stars to create a fantasy landscape in which she aspires to see her dreams realized, but it is only temporary, as that dream world and her achievement of her desires fades when day dawns. Unlike Cosette and Marius Eponine does not get to be with the one she loves, so she creates a fantasy landscape under the stars in which she can imagine that Marius loves her in return: "Sometimes I walk alone at night when everybody else is sleeping" [...] "The city goes to bed and I can live inside my head."²⁹⁰ At night, the dreams only realized in her head can seem more real. But it is only in the darkness that she pretends to be with Marius in the way she craves: "In the darkness / The trees are full of starlight, / And all I see is him and me for ever and forever [sic]." The stars create a fantastical landscape in which her dreams come true, but as soon as they disappear ("when the night is over") she is alone ("he is gone [...] the trees are bare and everywhere the streets are full of strangers"). As stars typically represent dreams, aspirations, and ideals, as well as excellence, Eponine's reference to the stars follows in this tradition. The stars here are

²⁹⁰ Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, *On My Own (from Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast Recording)*, with Frances Ruffelle, Audio CD (Relativity, 1998). Subsequent quotation will be from this recording.

bittersweet, as Eponine can be happy at night only in her dreams, experienced in the mysterious starlight. The stars shine down, giving her a chance to live out her dreams, but her desires are unattainable in reality.

The moon is also employed to emphasize the height of characters' goals. *Man of La Mancha*'s Padre employs moonlight to highlight the impossibility of Don Quixote's ideals when he sings the tender "To Each His Dulcinea." The Padre has recently arrived with Dr. Carrasco at the inn and has observed Don Quixote in his madness.²⁹¹ The Doctor expresses his intention to continue trying to cure Don Quixote, and left alone onstage the Padre ponders that intention: "The cure. May it be not worse than the disease." He begins to sing of the importance of having ambitions. The song is a reflection on Don Quixote's concept of a Dulcinea, the sweetest lady, as well as the benefit for any man of having a Dulcinea. The Padre begins singing simply and sweetly with only a simple bass rhythm under him. He starts by wishing "To each his Dulcinea" with whom "A man can do quite anything, / Outfly the bird upon the wing, / Hold moonlight in his hand." As he sings his volume swells up and down, specifically on the last line of the verse. The Padre uses moonlight to depict just how wonderful a Dulcinea can make a man's life: with her, he can do greater things than he could ever do solo; indeed, he can do impossible things like holding moonlight.

As he continues, the Padre uses the moon again to characterize the impossibility of Don Don Quixote's ideal woman (Dulcinea) and *crescendos* upward slightly as he sings: Yet if you build your life on dreams / It's prudent to recall, / A man with

²⁹¹ Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion, *To Each His Dulcinea (from Man of La Mancha Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Robert Rounseville, Audio CD (MCA, 1987). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

moonlight in his hand / Has nothing there at all. / There is no Dulcinea.” By the time he arrives at “There is no Dulcinea” he has dropped back down to the volume and pitch at which he started the song and every verse. He employs the impossibility of holding moonlight in one’s hand to parallel the impossibility of Don Quixote’s dream of Dulcinea, and, indeed, the impossibility of all of Don Quixote’s illusions. Given Plato’s proposal that the moon was characterized by “profound imperfection,” and Juliet’s condemnation of the moon for its inconstancy, the Padre’s selection of moonlight as emblematic of the impossibility of Don Quixote’s quest is powerful.²⁹² The moonlight symbolizes both the extraordinary grandeur of Don Quixote’s ideals and the physical impossibility of achieving them. In emphasizing how impossible such perfect ideals are the Padre, nevertheless, reveals the desirability of aiming for them. Even if one never achieves them, it seems that, by aspiring to make the world a better place, by trying for the impossible perfection, one may make small steps towards progress. In 1960s America, the Padre’s assertion regarding the importance of having high ideals was expressly relatable.

In addition to the stars and moon, musical theatre characters also invoke the sun as symbolic of characters’ high ambitions. In the Act II song of *Hamilton*, “Burn,” Eliza sings of Alexander’s adultery scandal, employing the imagery of the sun and the mythological tale of Daedalus and Icarus to comment on Hamilton’s ambition and how far he has fallen. The song follows “The Reynolds Pamphlet” song in which the scandal of Hamilton’s infidelity is made public. In her pain Eliza pulls out the letters from

²⁹² Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, 158; Shakespeare, *Romeo and Juliet*.

Hamilton that she has saved. As she sings, she confronts the scandal as well as the adultery and the destruction of her relationship with Hamilton.

The staggered addition of instruments at the opening of the song builds its instrumental and emotional intensity. The song starts out with a series of four *arpeggios* plucked on a harp; the first one starts on note B4 (the B above Middle C) and ascends up to G5; the second one starts on note A-Sharp-4 and rises up to G5; the third and fourth jump back up to start on B4.²⁹³ This phrase repeats twice, and then Eliza begins to sing. As she sings, a piano takes over the same chord progression, playing just the first note of the chord in the bass clef. When Eliza sings “You and your words,” the other instruments of the orchestra join the piano. At the chorus, “the world seemed to burn,” violins join the orchestra. This instrumentation provides a building intensity that facilitates a complexity of sound, and creates a feeling of forward momentum in the melody, even as the accompaniment stays fairly simple in the rhythm and notes used. As Kenneth P. Langer contends, in musical works, new material introduces intensity as thin textures build toward thicker ones, and tension is increased.²⁹⁴ The instrumentation in “Burn” illustrates this theory.

The intensity of the instrumentation emphasizes the melody in Eliza’s vocals, especially when she employs the sun as symbolic of Hamilton’s disgrace. In her ire, Eliza quotes her sister, Angelica’s, letter, asking “Do you know what Angelica said / When she

²⁹³ “Nerding Out With *Hamilton* Musical Director, Alex Lacamoire,” *Vulture*, accessed March 26, 2018, <http://www.vulture.com/2016/01/hamilton-alex-lacamoire-interview.html>; Miranda Lin-Manuel and Soo Phillipa, “Burn,” *Musicnotes.com*, March 16, 2016, <https://www.musicnotes.com/sheetmusic/mtd.asp?ppn=MN0161860>; Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Burn (from Hamilton Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Phillipa Soo (Atlantic Records, 2015). Subsequent references to music are from this recording; The Oxford English Dictionary defines an *arpeggio* as “the employment of the notes of a chord in rapid succession instead of simultaneously.” “Arpeggio, N.,” *OED Online* (Oxford University Press, n.d.), <http://www.oed.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/view/Entry/10945>.

²⁹⁴ Kenneth P. Langer, *A Theory For All Music: Book Four* (Brass Bell Books, 2018), 30.

read what you'd done? / She said / 'You have married an Icarus / He has flown too close to the sun.'" As in the myth of Icarus, the sun here symbolizes the great heights to which Hamilton sought to soar and the risks of ambition. Alexander Hamilton rose too far and was consumed by his ambition, forcing him to publish the *Reynolds Pamphlet* detailing his scandalous relationship with another (also married) woman to avoid complete ruin.²⁹⁵ Alexander Hamilton rose so high that he was burned by his fame and the resulting hubris, and the sun symbolizes both the heights of his rise and the danger of rising too high.²⁹⁶ While the sun provides life-giving light and warmth, it also possesses destructive potential; without our protective atmosphere, the sun could significantly alter human life on Earth.²⁹⁷ Correspondingly, J. C. Cooper asserts that throughout literary and artistic history the sun has been represented as "vivifying or destructive."²⁹⁸ In *Hamilton: the Revolution*, Lin-Manuel Miranda reveals in a footnote that Hamilton biography author "Ron Chernow found a letter from Angelica [Schuyler Church] to Eliza [Schuyler Hamilton] that says pretty much" what Eliza sings in the musical; the original Angelica Schuyler Church also invoked the myth of Icarus.²⁹⁹ The symbolism of the sun is not so much a brain-child of Miranda's but of the original historical characters that the musical brings to life, suggesting that the mythology of Icarus and the sun is essential to describing Hamilton's rise and subsequent fall from grace. Eliza concludes the song singing: "I hope you burn." It is significant that the song is titled burn; not only is Eliza

²⁹⁵ Miranda and McCarter, *Hamilton*, 225.

²⁹⁶ H. David Brumble, *Classical Myths and Legends in the Middle Ages and Renaissance: A Dictionary of Allegorical Meanings* (London, New York: Routledge, 2013), 177.

²⁹⁷ Eric McLamb, "Earth's Greatest Threat: The Sun and Its CMEs," Ecology Global Network, May 1, 2014, <http://www.ecology.com/2014/05/01/earths-greatest-threat-cmes/>.

²⁹⁸ Cooper, *An Illustrated Encyclopaedia of Traditional Symbols*, 162.

²⁹⁹ Miranda and McCarter, *Hamilton*, 238. Chernow was the author of the book off which the musical was based. For more information see "Hamilton."

burning her letters, but Hamilton has been burned by his actions, and the employment of the sun and Icarus' fate symbolically emphasize his rise and fall.

In the most famous song from the musical *Evita*, "Don't Cry for me Argentina," Eva uses the sun to symbolize her ambition to make something of herself: "I had to let it happen, I had to change / Couldn't stay all my life down at heel / Looking out of the window, staying out of the sun."³⁰⁰ Although she simultaneously assures her adoring fans that she loves Argentina and never sought out wealth for wealth's sake, she also indicates that she could not stay humble and unnoticed; she had to step out into the sun, the light of public attention and adoration. Using the brightest cosmic body to describe the light into which she stepped reveals not only the high degree of power and adoration that fame offers but also the extent of the risk that she took stepping out into the public's attention. Kevin Todeschi asserts that the light of the sun is often associated with the attention of the public eye, as he maintains that the sun often correlates to "being in the limelight or being in a great position."³⁰¹ She could easily, like Alexander Hamilton, have been burnt by that intensity.

Beautiful as the Sun: Cosmic Bodies as Symbols for Characters' Passion

This section explores the ways in which cosmic bodies serve as symbols for the height of human emotions toward other humans. Common phrases demonstrate humanity's tendency to use the cosmos in describing the boundless heights of love, such as "love you to the moon and back." Michael Ferber contends that a person's beloved is often associated in literature with a star: "because he or she stands out among all

³⁰⁰ Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, *Don't Cry For Me Argentina (from Evita Original London Cast Recording)*, with Elaine Paige (MCA Records, 1978). Subsequent quotations come from this recording

³⁰¹ Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 248.

others.”³⁰² In the instances explored in this section, the characters are so enamored of another that they use the brilliant cosmic bodies to describe the person they love or desire.

In “Ces diamants-là” (These Diamonds) from Act I of *Notre Dame de Paris* stars are used to highlight the enchantment of love and desire. In the line of duty Phoebus, the Captain of the Guard, has recently met the lovely and mysterious Gypsy Esmeralda, but shortly thereafter he sings a classic love duet with his fiancée Fleur-de-Lys. Phoebus compares his beloved to the stars: “Tes yeux de tourterelle / Sont pour moi / Les étoiles étincellent / Dans le ciel / Moins que ces diamants-là” (the stars in the sky glitter less for me than your turtle dove eyes).³⁰³ Like many lovers in literature, Phoebus finds his love even more enchanting than the stars.³⁰⁴ As the song continues with mutual expressions of love, Fleur-de-Lys sings: “celui que mon coeur aime” (the one my heart loves) and they both sing “Ne cherche plus l’amour / Il est là / Il est là pour toujours / Je le crois” (do not look for love anymore / It is here / It is here forever / I believe it). They express their love for each other, and yet Phoebus will stray. Phoebus will become enchanted by the Gypsy, Esmeralda, and will try to seduce her, and while he will claim witchcraft as the cause of his actions, he will be distracted from Fleur-de-Lys, and not by the stars. No matter how entrancing his fiancée was originally, outshining the stars for him, Phoebus turns away from her to Esmeralda.

³⁰² Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 202.

³⁰³ Richard Cocciante and Luc Plamondon, *Ces Diamants là (from Notre Dame de Paris Original Paris Cast Recording)*, with Patrick Fiori and Julie Zenatti, trans. Rebecca Holley (Pomme Musique, 1999). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

³⁰⁴ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 202.

In addition to symbolizing lovers' enchantment with each other the stars are also used to symbolize the great height of lovers' joy. Situated near the beginning of Act II in *Notre Dame de Paris*, the song "Les Cloches" features Quasimodo using the stars to symbolize the joy that lovers feel. "Les Cloches," the second song in Act II, starts with Gringoire and Frollo revealing that Quasimodo has not been ringing the bells of Notre Dame Cathedral for three days because, as Frollo sings, "Quasimodo est malheureux. / Quasimodo est amoureux" (Quasimodo is unhappy. / Quasimodo is in love).³⁰⁵ After Gringoire and Frollo establish the situation, Quasimodo sings of all the occasions for which he rings bells, and which bells specifically. The music that supports Quasimodo throughout the song alternates between lethargic or contemplative and driving or relentless. He reveals early in the song that the bells ring no matter the weather and no matter the suffering of man: "Je veux qu'elles claironnent" (I want them to trumpet) "qu'il pleuve ou qu'il vente / Je veux qu'elles resonnent / Dans la joie comme dans la tourmente" (come rain or shine / I want them to resonate / in joy like in turmoil)." The music under these lyrics is languid and meditative. He then lists the occasions for which he rings the bells, the Feast of the Annunciation, Easter, the Feast of St. Valentine, and others, accompanied by the incessant, propulsive music. When he reaches the bell that he has named "la grosse Marie" (the big Marie) and that he rings for "les amants qui se marient" (lovers who marry), he elaborates:

[Q]uand je sonne la grosse Marie / Pour les amants qui se marient / C'est pas que
j'ai la coeur à rire / Je l'aurais plutot a mourir / De les voir si joyeux / [...] de les

³⁰⁵ Richard Cocciante and Luc Plamondon, *Les Cloches (from Notre Dame de Paris Original Paris Cast Recording)*, with Garou, trans. Rebecca Holley (Pomme Musique, 1999). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

voir convoler / De les voir s'envoler / Au milieu des étoiles sous la voute des
cieux. (when I ring the big Marie / For lovers who get married, / I don't have the
heart to laugh, / I'd rather die, / To see them so joyous / [...] To see them marry, /
To see them fly / Among the stars under the vault of heaven).

Here he connects the great joy that the lovers feel with the stars; while humans cannot actually fly to the stars, such a flight is symbolic of the height of lovers' joy. Stars are often coupled with "that which is brilliant or exceptional," as Kevin Todeschi asserts, and they are employed here by Quasimodo to express the intense heights of the married lovers' joys.³⁰⁶ In so doing they emphasize the comparable depths of Quasimodo's despair, since he cannot soar to the stars on lovers' wings. Under the lyrics "Quand Je sonne la grosse Marie" the music is sluggish and soothing, but when Quasimodo sings "de les voir si joyeux" the music abruptly shifts to the swift, percussive theme. The music provides a tone of anger toward lovers who are able to marry, accentuating Quasimodo's frustration. As Patrik Juslin and Renee Timmers have observed, the emotion of anger often corresponds to music that is characterized by the following features: a high volume level, a fast mean tempo, small tempo variability, and staccato articulation, among other elements.³⁰⁷ The driving, relentless music accompanying Quasimodo's singing, as well as the staccato nature of his vocals fits this profile. As a result of the cosmic symbolism and the music, Quasimodo's personal suffering is established contrary to those who are lucky enough to love and be loved in return. In the broader scope of the musical and its critique of hatred toward those who are different, the cosmic symbolism in "Les Cloches" serves

³⁰⁶ Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 243.

³⁰⁷ Patrik N. Juslin and John A. Sloboda, eds., *Handbook of Music and Emotion: Theory, Research, Applications*, Series in Affective Science (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 463.

to spotlight Quasimodo's suffering at the hands of a society that hates those who are different, not unlike the society of 1990s France.

As do the stars, moonlight also symbolizes the height of enchantment that love can provide. In *Wicked* Elphaba and Fiyero sing of their feelings for each other in the Act II song "As Long as You're Mine," using the moonlight to describe the heights of enchantment to which their love sends them. The song follows their escape from the clutches of the Wizard and Madame Morrible, and in it they sing of their love for each other. In the third verse Elphaba and Fiyero reference the cosmos when they sing together: "As long as you're mine / Come be how you want to / And see how bright we shine / Borrow the moonlight." They have been singing throughout the song about taking this moment for themselves, appreciating what they have finally found for as long as they have it, and they employ symbolism to express their emotions. They will shine as bright as the moonlight because they will borrow the moonlight, but not for any extended period of time. Just as the moon's light fades, they believe their love will end, as Fiyero sings "say there's no future for us as a pair." Nevertheless, moonlight is used to illustrate how brightly, albeit briefly, their love may shine. As Elphaba sang earlier in the song, she "could not foresee" such a night spent with Fiyero, even in her "wildest dreamings." Thus, not only does the moon symbolize how brightly their love burns, but also how magical such an evening is for them. Like the two lovers in Elizabeth Bowen's short story "Mysterious Kôr," who find that the streets of London are transformed by the

moonlight into a space of enchantment, Fiyero and Elphaba similarly invoke moonlight to symbolize their enchantment with each other.³⁰⁸

The music creates an enchanting mood and works to accentuate the symbolism in the lyrics. At the end of stanzas (e.g. “you’re with me tonight) the swirling music is accompanied by the piano chords from the opening. When Elphaba and Fiyero sing the chorus lyric “just for this moment,” the instrumentation gains more forward momentum and added percussion, providing greater intensity. This intensity resolves itself at the final lines of the chorus, when it drops mostly away, but then comes back in to accentuate the last line of the chorus: “I’ll make every last moment last / As long as you’re mine.” Each time the chorus is sung, the percussion becomes even more prominent, so that by the time Fiyero and Elphaba sing the third chorus, the music and vocals are at the highest intensity they have achieved in the song to that point. The increase in both the vocal melody and the accompaniment emphasize the intensity of Fiyero and Elphaba’s passion that is a revelation to them in this song.

Natasha, Pierre and The Great Comet of 1812 similarly employs the moon to emphasize one character’s enchantment with another. In the song “No One Else” early in Act I, Natasha sings of the night when she first met Andrey. The song follows Natasha’s failed visit to her in-laws’ house, which was not the joyous meeting Natasha had hoped it would be. The visit concludes with Natasha singing “Oh, they were so awful / Oh, it all hurts so terribly / Andrey / Where are you?”³⁰⁹ Natasha misses her fiancé terribly and

³⁰⁸ I am indebted to Raymond Wilson who discussed the symbolism of the moonlight in “Mysterious Kôr relative to Tom Stoppard’s *Jumpers*. Wilson, “The Disenchantment of the Sky in Tom Stoppard’s *Jumpers*,” 83.

³⁰⁹ Dave Malloy, *Natasha and Bolconskys (from Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812 Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Denée Benton, Gelsey Bell, and Nicholas Belton Audio CD (Reprise, 2017).

reminisces about the night she first met her beloved. After several bars of music, Natasha sings the phrase “the moon,” sustaining the word moon.³¹⁰ Her singing of the word is almost a sweet howl, expressing the yearning that she feels for her absent lover. The music drops out when Natasha sings “the,” and then the piano punches a dissonant chord as Natasha sings the word “moon.” The dissonance draws attention to the word she sings, emphasizing her voice by sounding wrong to the key signature and to the ear. By contrasting the note Natasha sings, the accompaniment distinguishes itself from the note in the vocals and thus gives the note and the lyric that Natasha sings, specific value.

Natasha follows her invocation of the moon with a description of the night that she met Andre: “First time I heard your voice / Moonlight burst into the room / And I saw your eyes.” While this lyric establishes the time of her first meeting with Andrey as nighttime, it also establishes the magic of the moment in which she met the man she fell in love with. As the moon tends to be associated with love and romance, her reference to the moon in a song in which she sings of her yearning for Andrey is more significant than simply setting the time and place of the scene. It is notable that it is the voice of her love that ushered the moonlight into the room; the magical night was created by the presence of moonlight, but the moonlight was summoned by the sound of Andrey’s voice. As writer Johnna Rizzo notes, the eyes are heavily involved in falling in love.³¹¹ The emphasis on Andrey’s eyes accentuates Natasha’s emotional pull to him. Later in the song Natasha sings of her love for Andrey and further describes the romantic tone of her

³¹⁰ Dave Malloy, *No One Else (from Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812 Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Denée Benton. Audio CD (Reprise, 2017). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

³¹¹ Johnna Rizzo, “Can Eye Contact Make You Fall in Love?,” *The Guardian*, June 1, 2017, sec. Intimacy secrets for all, <http://www.theguardian.com/intimacy-secrets-for-all/2017/jun/01/can-eye-contact-make-you-fall-in-love>.

first meeting with him: “I love you I love you / Oh the moon / Oh the snow in the moonlight.” Again, Natasha associates her passion for Andrey with moonlight. The vivid and magical-looking landscape created by moonlight on snow reflects the magical charm of her first meeting with her fiancé. Here the moon serves to symbolize the thrill Natasha experienced the first time she fell in love, which is, after all, a singular experience. When Natasha meets Anatole (with whom she will become enamored despite her engagement to Andrey), there is no mention of any cosmic body, even though she is fascinated by him as well. Natasha’s actions are not unlike Phoebus’ behavior in *Notre Dame de Paris*, as both Natasha and Phoebus stray from their first love, which they have both used a cosmic body to describe; perhaps, then, even a human as enchanting as the moon or the stars is not enough to make a lover remain faithful.

In the “Love Montage” from *Les Misérables* Cosette employs the moon to highlight her passion for Marius, whereas Marius uses the sun. The “Love Montage” is made up of three tunes that follow on the heels of each other: “I Saw Him Once,” “She has Burst Like the Music of Angels” and “In My Life.” Cosette sings the first tune: “I saw him once, / Then he was gone / We were like dreamers at night / Who meet as in a trance then part again! / Two phantoms in the shadows of the moon / Can people really fall in love so soon?”³¹² Here the moon provides cover but also mystery for the two lovers, making the meeting seem unreal. Indeed, Cosette felt like a dreamer in a trance and marvels at the intensity of her feelings as well as the swiftness with which they overcame her. The darkness of the night is not threatening but enthralling, and Cosette

³¹² Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, *Love Montage (Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast)*, with the Original London cast, Audio CD (Relativity, 1998). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

employs the moon to depict the mysteriousness of these new feelings as well as what the two characters are feeling for each other. As Anthony Stevens asserts, the moon is often considered mysterious and beautiful.³¹³ For Cosette the nighttime is full of mystery and possibility, but it is also something more permanent. It is notable that she later sings of the moment in the moonlight as “her destiny.” The music that precedes Cosette’s melody is sweet and flowing, possessing a romantic quality offering a preview of the melody that Cosette will sing. When she begins to sing, however, the music drops down to simple accompaniment, allowing her voice to be the focus and only providing slight instrumentation. When *Les Misérables* moved to Broadway, Cosette’s portion of the “Love Montage” explored here was cut, leaving only the “In My Life” section of the song for her to express her attraction to Marius and removing the reference to the moon. Removal of the first third of the “Love Montage” robs Cosette of expression of the passion she feels due to her love for Marius and makes “In My Life” seem unmotivated. The cosmic symbolism is integral to communicating her passion for Marius and for deepening her character.

Later in the “Love Montage,” Marius employs the sun to highlight the power that Cosette has over him, singing “She has burst like the music of angels the light of the sun! / And my life seems to stop.” Marius invokes the symbolic “splendor” that Anthony Stevens connects to the sun to illustrate how blinded he is by Cosette.³¹⁴ Indeed, his love is so strong that she is all he can see, and her great power over him is like the power of the sun over the earth and humans. The music *crescendos* into Marius’ opening lyrics and then, as he sings, the music provides a complementary accompaniment that mirrors his

³¹³ Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 136.

³¹⁴ Stevens, 135–36.

melody; the instrumentation is lush and sentimental, employing soaring strings and magical-sounding chimes from the percussion section. Mervyn Cooke has identified in film music “sentimental string underscoring for intimate dialogue scenes.”³¹⁵ The strings in “Love Montage” are employed to a similar effect.

Marius’ employment of the sun to describe Cosette breaks with a gendered tradition, as it is often the moon that is associated with the feminine, and the sun, as Anthony Stevens asserts, is in most cultures “masculine and linked to the Father.”³¹⁶ Marius and Cosette subvert these gendered identifications. As Marius, usually a focused, studious rebel committed to a cause, has been arrested by his vision of Cosette, the more powerful cosmic body of the sun more adequately symbolizes the power Cosette possesses to capture Marius’ attention. As Cosette has been cosseted much of her young life the mysterious enchantment of the moon is more apt to describe her newfound fascination for Marius, and hence the moon is a more applicable symbol for her to employ. In any case both Marius and Cosette employ a cosmic body of light as symbolic of the intensity of their love for the other, challenging and extending the traditional gendered associations with the sun and the moon as they do so.

Whereas the previous instances of cosmic bodies as symbolic of the intensity of characters’ amorous attraction have been largely positive, in *Man of La Mancha*, Aldonza (Don Quixote’s Dulcinea) references the stars to express the force of her disenchantment with love in the song “It’s All the Same.” The song is the first time Aldonza sings, and

³¹⁵ Cooke, *A History of Film Music*, 96.

³¹⁶ See Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 175; Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 136.

she sings in response to the muleteers' demands for food, wine, and Aldonza.³¹⁷ She responds in a jaded manner: "One pair of arms is like another," and "I'll go with you or with your brother, / It's all the same." Aldonza is certainly cynical towards love as a result of her life experiences: "So do not talk to me of love, / I'm not a fool with starry eyes." Aldonza utilizes the cosmic bodies as they are found in romantic instances, as in "Ces diamants là" and "Les Cloches" explored previously, but she does so ironically. She mocks the concept of having stars in one's eyes, that is of being so blinded by the sparkle of something that one ignores the reality of the situation. The song appears early in the musical, when Aldonza has first appeared, and introduces her cynical use of the stars as a foil for Don Quixote's hopeful outlook. Despite her assurance of her clear vision, by the end of the musical Don Quixote's comparatively "starry-eyed" quest will change Aldonza's negative outlook on the world and on the stars, and she will become just as delighted by Don Quixote's quest as lovers often are by their partners.

In the second half of *Man of La Mancha* the muleteers' song "Little Bird" references the moon to symbolize another negative aspect of love: the end of relationships. Two of the muleteers sing about how they have lost love: "Beneath this tree, / This cinnamon tree, / We learned to love, / We learned to cry; / For here we met / And here we kissed, / And here one cold and moonless night / We said goodbye."³¹⁸ It is significant that on the night that the love between them ended, the moon was also absent from the scene. The vocals and the accompaniment in the song are gentle and

³¹⁷ Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion, *It's All the Same* (from *Man of La Mancha Original Broadway Cast Recording*), with Joan Diener and the Original Broadway Cast, Audio CD (MCA, 1987). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

³¹⁸ Mitch Leigh and Joe Darion, *Little Bird* (from *Man of La Mancha Original Broadway Cast Recording*), with the Original Broadway Cast, Audio CD (MCA, 1987). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

sentimental, like a love song to a lover, rather than a vaguely suggestive song to a prostitute, as is actually the case.

In “Tu vas me détruire” (“You will destroy me”) from *Notre Dame de Paris*, sung by Frollo, the moon symbolizes another negative aspect of love: the temptation of the flesh. The song, appearing in Act I after Esmeralda’s prayer to the Virgin Mary for protection, is a list song soliloquy. Frollo expresses his obsession with Esmeralda as sinful for a man in his position, a sin that will lead to his damnation. He sings “Cet océan de passion / Qui déferle dans mes veines / qui cause ma déraison” (“this ocean of passion / that runs in my veins / that causes my madness”).³¹⁹ He combines nature metaphors and the fiery speech of a sermon when he sings: “Moi qui me croyais l’hiver / Me voici un arbre vert / Moi qui me croyais de fer / Contre le feu de la chair” (“I who believed I was as cold as winter / Am now a green tree / I who believed I was iron / Against the fire of the flesh”). The entire song has a repetitive, cyclical quality; the vocals and especially the music return and return to the point at which they began, and this reoccurrence establishes not only the list song nature of the song but also Frollo’s incessant soul-searching, which causes him to return repeatedly to the declaration “Tu vas me détruire” (You will destroy me).

Frollo employs the light of the moon in reference to the Gypsy with whom he is enamored: « Je m’enflamme et me consume / Pour les yeux d’une étrangère / Qui ont bien plus de mystère / Que la lumière de la lune. » (I am enflamed and consumed / By the eyes of a stranger / That have more mystery / Than the light of the moon). The light of

³¹⁹ Richard Cocciante and Luc Plamondon, *Tu Vas Me Détruire* (from *Notre Dame de Paris Original Paris Cast Recording*), with Daniel Lavoie, trans. Rebecca Holley (Pomme Musique, 1999). Subsequent quotations will come from this recording.

the moon shines at night, when man's deepest fears and desires can disclose themselves, and as the light of the moon might be fascinatingly mysterious, Esmeralda is captivating to Frollo. He employs the moon as it is traditionally invoked, as feminine and as symbolic of his sinful desire and yearning. The light of the moon is also accompanied by the threats of the night, and so too Frollo sees Esmeralda as threat: the peril of giving in to mortal sin (in Frollo's theology). The result, Frollo fears, of succumbing to the mystery of the Gypsy will be his damnation, and as the musical unfolds, his fears are realized, but not in the way that he might have expected. As he rails against the sans-papiers Gypsies and simultaneously lusts after Esmeralda, he is torn by duty and his mortal urges, creating inner turmoil for himself and exterior trouble for Esmeralda. The relationship between the cosmic symbolism and religion in this song is intriguing, as the cosmic symbolism is set in direct opposition to the good of Christianity, and the allure of what the cosmic body symbolizes is described using fiery religious speech.

In "Beau Comme le Soleil," from early in Act I of *Notre Dame de Paris*, Esmeralda and Fleur-de-Lys compare the man they love to the sun, relating him to the brilliant beauty and power of the sun and foreshadowing the negative effect he will have on Esmeralda's life. After learning from Gringoire that the name Phoebus means sun, Esmeralda uses the sun to describe Phoebus' beauty in a love song: "Je sens l'amour qui s'éveille / Au fond du moi / Plus fort que moi / Il est beau comme le soleil" ("I feel the love that awakens / deep inside me / stronger than me / he is beautiful like the sun").³²⁰ The music is simple and repetitive, allowing the vocals to soar above it; as the vocals rise

³²⁰ Richard Cocciante and Luc Plamondon, *Beau Comme le Soleil (from the Notre Dame de Paris Original Paris Cast Recording)*, with Hélène Ségara and Julie Zenatti, trans. Rebecca Holley (Pomme Musique, 1999).

in pitch and volume, so does the music, but never does it come close to overpowering the vocals or outshining the vocals. After Esmeralda sings her verse, Fleur-de-Lys joins her in singing about the brilliance of Phoebus. The music is exactly the same for Fleur-de-Lys and Esmeralda, connecting the two women in their love of Phoebus. The choice to associate the chevalier (knight) with the sun reveals Esmeralda and Fleur-de-Lys' fascination with Phoebus but also the harm that he can cause them, specifically Esmeralda.

Overall the phrase “Il est beau comme le soleil” is repeated eight times throughout the short song; it begins each verse, and is repeated at least once later in each verse, securely centering the idea in the song and the women's relationship with Phoebus. For both these women, Phoebus is as bright and all-consuming as the sun, a powerful cosmic body that has the ability to give life but also to destroy through intense heat. The sun tends to be considered a powerful entity, in Anthony Stevens' words “the supreme cosmic power,” and Michael Ferber notes that its life-giving power is “fundamental to earthly life.”³²¹ While the sun provides life, however, it also possesses the power to destroy life, as explored relative to Alexander Hamilton previously. Esmeralda and Fleur-de-Lys' election of the sun as the cosmic body with which they associate Phoebus highlights not only the powerful pull that he has for the two women in his life, but also the potentially destructive effect that power can have on their lives, especially for Esmeralda. The song establishes the love triangle between Phoebus, Esmeralda, and Fleur de Lys that will cause much of the turmoil in the story and that will lead to Esmeralda's doom as she (like Icarus in Greek mythology, and like *Hamilton's* title character) will be

³²¹ Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue*, 135–36; Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 209.

burnt up by coming too close to Phoebus. The sun powerfully foreshadows Esmeralda's coming turmoil and downfall in this love song to the handsome knight, a song which employs a very powerful cosmic body to describe the intensity of both her feelings and the dire consequences of her passion.

You Outshine the Morning Sun: Cosmic Bodies as Symbols for Exceptional Nature or Power of Human Characters

This section examines instances in which musical theatre characters look to the cosmos to symbolically describe the exceptional nature of other characters. This usage reminds us of King Louis XIV's adoption of the sun as "an emblem" of his power and prestige, and Roman emperor Nero's production of coins on which the pairing of the image of himself and the sun symbolized his authority.³²² In his discussion of Plato's *Republic* James Notopoulos claims that the sun often stands for the best of humanity, writing that the sun "by its very nature lends itself to symbolizing the highest."³²³ In the instances in this section, the individual shines so brilliantly that the singer must look to the cosmos to describe the greatness of the person.

The gentle, sentimental song "Dear Theodosia" from Act I of *Hamilton* offers a particularly potent example. Nestled between King George's "What Comes Next," and "Non-Stop," "Dear Theodosia" is a song that virtually stops the action, and allows two titans of American government (Aaron Burr and Alexander Hamilton) to reflect upon their newborn offspring; as a result the feel of the song has a tone significantly different

³²² "Louis XIV Facts & Summary," History.com, accessed March 22, 2018, <http://www.history.com/topics/louis-xiv>; "Louis XIV - Palace of Versailles," accessed April 18, 2014, <http://en.chateauversailles.fr/history/court-people/louis-xiv-time/louis-xiv-/louis-xiv/a-monarch-by-divine-law>; Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, 259.

³²³ James A. Notopoulos, "The Symbolism of the Sun and Light in the *Republic* of Plato. II," *Classical Philology* 39, no. 4 (1944): 223, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/266557>.

from the songs that surround it. The song starts with a light, repetitive piano vamp, which is joined by strings to create a sentimental feel. Aaron Burr establishes the parents' belief that their children's acts will amaze them, singing "we'll give the world to you / And you'll blow us all away."³²⁴ Alexander Hamilton must use the sun to describe his son's brilliance: "Look at my son. / Pride is not the word I'm looking for / There is so much more inside me now / O Philip, you outshine the morning sun." Kevin Todeschi asserts that dawn is often "associated with the start of something new" and "a new beginning."³²⁵ The use of the morning sun is significant, as the song is all about the potential of newborn children, but also of the recently born American nation, with which Burr and Hamilton's children will "come of age." The American nation, Theodosia Burr, and Philip Hamilton are fresh and vibrant, and as full of power and potential as is the morning sun. The pausing of the action to reflect upon the greatness of these two children and the similar greatness of the American nation powerfully relates the energizing birth of children to the exhilarating naissance of the nation which dominates the narrative. Reflecting on the three births emphasizes the energy surrounding the creation of America and the brilliant potential the fresh nation possessed, a freshness that continues to permeate the narratives that Americans tell, especially during the leadership of the first African American president.

In the "Finale" of *Pippin*, the Leading Player also employs the sun as symbolic of the potential for greatness. The song follows Pippin's departure from Catherine's house in a renewed search for his purpose in life. As Pippin appears to be at his most

³²⁴ Lin-Manuel Miranda, *Dear Theodosia (from Hamilton Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Lin-Manuel Miranda and Leslie Odom, Jr. (Atlantic Records, 2015). Subsequent quotations will come from this recording.

³²⁵ Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 84.

vulnerable, the Leading Player intercepts him and, as he has been doing throughout the musical, attempts to seduce Pippin to take part in the Troupe's awesome finale, using the sun to convince him. He tells Pippin: "Think about the sun, Pippin / Think about her golden glance / How she lights the world up, / Well, now it's your chance. / With the guardian of splendor / Inviting you to dance / Pippin / Think about the sun."³²⁶ The Leading Player encourages Pippin to identify with the sun, not as he is, but as he could be. The Leading Player uses the grandeur of the sun in the sense that Michael Ferber does, as an overwhelming phenomenon, and he invokes its grandeur to convince Pippin of his own potential magnificence.³²⁷ Pippin does not yet possess that grandeur, but strives to. The music accompanying the Leading Player's lyrics is basic piano chords, but in between lyrics, when he pauses, a flute plays, sounding like a morning bird greeting the potential of the day with its song. It is as if the bird is greeting Pippin's dawning potential. After the Leading Player sings the opening lyrics, the Troupe of actors entice Pippin to join them through tempting whispers of "it's time."

The song goes on to remind Pippin how boring his everyday life is, and then seeks to entice him into the show-stopping final act. The Leading Player sings again "Think about your life Pippin," accompanied by another member of the Troupe who sings "days are tame and nights the same," further reminding Pippin how dull his life is. Enticing Pippin towards greatness, the Leading Player adds "Think about the beauty in one perfect flame" relating the fire of the rising sun to the final act that he is enticing Pippin to take part in. The music then picks up tempo, with a tambourine providing a driving beat, and

³²⁶ Stephen Schwartz, *Finale (from Pippin Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Ben Vereen and the Original Broadway Cast, 2000. Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

³²⁷ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 209.

the Troupe of actors alternate between singing energetically to Pippin to “think about” his life, and of “the dreams” he’s had, and encouraging him to “think about the power and glory” “at hand” if he partakes in their finale. Although he comes close to being enticed to destruction, Pippin is ultimately not seduced by their epic final act. As a result of the “Finale,” Pippin returns to Catherine, concluding that although he “never came close,” they (he and she together) “nearly came near” to achieving the purpose and greatness he has been seeking. Pippin, despite the allure of distinction through fame, forsakes his search for his extraordinary purpose and accepts the next-best thing. The sun and greatness are too far away, and Pippin settles for something more attainable. This resolution is a significant break from the previous instances explored, as Pippin ultimately does not choose greatness, like Eva Péron and Alexander Hamilton. Rather, he chooses ordinary happiness instead of fleeting notoriety. In an era partially characterized by self-focused pursuits, as the 1970s were, *Pippin* features a main character who abandons his quest for his great purpose and settles for anonymous happiness. The cosmic symbolism brightly spotlights what he rejects.

Whereas in the previous instances the cosmic body has symbolized the greatness of a character, in Act II of *Pippin* the peasant character, Catherine’s song, “I Guess I’ll Miss the Man,” uses the sun to symbolize the greatness of other men in contrast to Pippin’s failings. Pippin has left her to search for his life’s purpose, and out of heartbreak she begins to sing about her unexpected feelings for him. The instrumentation is a gentle guitar and piano accompaniment with the occasional light percussion instrument added.³²⁸ The music serves to accompany but not overpower the vocal melody. In the

³²⁸ Stephen Schwartz, *I Guess I’ll Miss the Man (from Pippin Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Jill Clayburgh, 2000. Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

second verse of the song, the accompanying music increases slightly in intensity as she sings “Some men are heroes / Some men outshine the sun.” In describing brilliant humans, Catherine employs the dazzling imagery of the sun to describe the best that men can be. While the song at first suggests that she sees Pippin as a hero or at least as a good man, she finally reveals that Pippin was neither of these, singing: “This man wasn’t one.” It is as if the music and cosmic symbolism express the grandeur of these men, so that Pippin’s contrasting nature is highlighted even more starkly.

“For Good” from *Wicked* offers an instance in which a comet symbolizes the great power that one character has had over another. Near the end of Act II, Glinda and Elphaba sing about how much they have been influenced by each other, and Glinda employs the imagery of a comet in orbit to symbolize how powerful Elphaba’s influence on her has been. Glinda has come to the castle where Elphaba has taken refuge after standing up to the wizard to convince her to let Dorothy go; the song serves as Glinda and Elphaba’s final farewell to each other. Elphaba tries to convince Glinda to do the right thing, singing “Now it’s up to you.”³²⁹ In response Glinda sings of how much she has been influenced, even irrevocably changed, by knowing Elphaba: “I know I’m who I am today, / Because I knew you.” She sings of just how strongly she has been influenced by Elphaba using, among other symbols, the trajectory of a comet as symbolic for her life before she met Elphaba: “Like a comet pulled from orbit, / As it passes a sun [...] who can say / If I’ve been changed for the better? / But because I knew you / I have been changed / For good.” Here, Elphaba’s influence has been as strong as the gravitational pull of a comet hurtling through space; indeed her influence has been strong enough to

³²⁹ Stephen Schwartz, *For Good (from Wicked Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel, n.d. Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

pull a comet from its path, symbolically speaking. The use of a comet is intriguing, as comets have been assumed to portend doom, but here, while neither Glinda nor Elphaba are certain whether the change is for the better or for the worse, the impact seems primarily positive: “I’ve heard it said, / That people come into our lives, / For a reason. / Bringing something we must learn, / And we are led, / To those who help us most to grow / If we let them.” She expresses more faith in Elphaba’s influence than the concept of fate, singing: “Well I don’t know if I believe that’s true, / But I know I’m who I am today, / Because I knew you.” She references a comet to emphasize the power of that influence. *Wicked* reveals that destiny and fate continue to be meaningful concepts in American culture despite the faded appeal of astrology and in this instance have been merged with an increased understanding of the scientific reality of comets to create a powerful symbol of how much influence one character had over the other.

Conclusion

In symbolizing the height of human ambition, musical theatre characters are equally likely to turn to the stars and to the sun, as out of six instances (of eighteen explored in this chapter) they turn to the stars three times and the sun three times. One instance invoked the moon as symbolic of the impossibility of a character’s ambition; this use of the moon speaks in intriguing ways to the traditional literary use of the moon as inconstant (e.g. in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*) or imperfect (according to Plato). *Man of La Mancha*’s use of the moon complicates these negative associations by connecting the moon’s inconsistency with grand impossible ideals that might make the world a better place were they achievable. The moon in the musical puts a positive spin on “inconstancy” that literary tradition has previously denied it.

Interestingly, no one cosmic body stood out distinctly as more likely to symbolize love. Characters singing of love turned to the moon five times, the stars four times, and three of the instances utilized the sun, suggesting that for musical theatre characters, there may be no one iconic entity primarily associated with love. Cosette's use of the moon to define the mysterious new emotions she feels upon meeting Marius contradicts the literary tradition of the moon as inconstant, as she sees the moment that she met Marius, which she compares to lovers meeting under the moon, as her destiny. Destiny implies a permanency, thus challenging the unreliability of the moon. Moreover, Cosette and Marius extend and challenge the traditional gendered associations with cosmic bodies, as they switch the genders generally associated with the moon and sun.

This analysis revealed that for musical theatre characters, the sun is the most compelling symbol of a character's greatness. When musical theatre characters employed a cosmic body as symbolic of a character's personal greatness, seven of the eight instances employed the sun; in one instance a comet served as symbolic of a character's exceptional power. Similar to the use of comets as symbols in *Great Comet*, *Wicked's* use of a comet extends and challenges the traditional literary use of comets as portents of doom; here the comet portends change for characters but this change is not perceived as harmful.

While most of the symbolism addressed in this chapter described or referred to a character in positive terms, there were instances in which cosmic symbols reinforced negative traits. In the section that explored human ambition, Eliza used the potentially destructive power of the sun to describe Hamilton's fall from grace. The section regarding the symbolism of love revealed the most negative connotations: Aldonza used

the stars to symbolize the false promises of love; Frollo used the moon to symbolize the risk of giving in to lust; the muleteers used the moon to symbolize the loss of love, and Esmeralda's comparison of Phoebus to the sun foreshadowed her destruction as a result of his actions. There are echoes of Chapter Three in these negative connotations, as the prospectors of *Paint Your Wagon* pined over love lost and the absence of cosmic bodies in the face of their suffering, as do the muleteers in this chapter. In only one instance, "Guess I'll Miss the Man" from *Pippin*, is the symbolism invoked to describe greatness in opposition to the lead character, as a means to highlight his shortcomings.

The use of cosmic symbolism in these incidents reveals characters' natures, great or destructive, and allows for a deeper understanding of them. The symbolism also provides a profound understanding of character relationships as it indicates the emotional connection between characters and effectively establishes the major tensions and conflicts of the musicals by identifying character emotions and relationships. These nuances in how cosmic symbols are employed to accentuate human exceptionalism reveal contradictions not only in the characters but in the characteristics that humans often consider great: while characters may possess great qualities, those qualities are sometimes accompanied by threat of destruction or failure. While greatness may appear desirable, power and ambition have negative aspects, and unbridled quest for greatness may be seen as a serious character flaw. There are important connections between musical theatre's use of the sun and moon to symbolize character greatness and ambition and that of Classical Western civilizations. The wisdom of Plato, the myth of Icarus, and the imagery of Ancient Rome all are echoed in musical theatre's use of symbolism in this way, suggesting that though cultures and times may change significantly over the

millennia, the human tendency to invoke the sun and moon symbolically has remained remarkably consistent.

The type of characters who sing to the cosmos mark how integral the symbolism is to communicating the story, as it demonstrates characters' ideals, passions, and relationships. Most often it is lead characters who reference the cosmos to symbolize human excellence. The symbolism introduces details necessary to understanding the journey of the protagonist and thus the story that unfolds. In only two instances did a secondary or ensemble character sing to the cosmos (the Padre in "To Each his Dulcinea" and the Muleteers in "Little Bird"), while the other seventeen instances featured a lead character. Apparently, singing of the greatness of another character, especially in a romantic setting, is not often a communal activity. Male characters appear to be slightly more likely to invoke the heavens to describe the greatness of another human than are female characters, as male characters did so a total of fifteen times and female characters a total of eleven times.

Finally, in relation to the trajectory of the narrative, characters tended to apply cosmic bodies roughly as equally in Act II as in Act I. Eleven of the instances occur in Act I, with two of these opening the musical, and eight occur in Act II. (Only one musical, *Man of La Mancha*, does not have two acts and is a one-act musical as written). It appears that musical theatre characters are likely to sing to the cosmos as symbolic of human excellence in Act II only slightly less than they are in Act I. The symbolism then is elemental in setting up the relationships between characters or character motivations that drive the narratives.

Of the eighteen instances, only one features the body in the title of the song (“Beau Comme le Soleil”), and only one other features it in the title of the musical (*Great Comet*). This circumstance might suggest that this function, symbolizing characters’ exceptionalness, is not as central to the musicals as the function explored in chapter three, but the phenomenon is still prevalent and important in elucidating characters and relationships and, in some cases, advancing the plot. These musical theatre characters look up to symbolize the exceptional nature of humanity, to highlight the grand ambitions of characters, to emphasize the intensity of human passion or love, and to symbolize a character’s exceptional nature or power.

CHAPTER 5: THE COSMOS AS A SYMBOL OF TIME AND MORTALITY

One song before the sun sets
 Glory
 On another empty life.

-Jonathan Larson, *Rent*

The instances analyzed in this chapter feature musical theatre characters invoking cosmic bodies as symbols of human mortality relative to the immortality of the universe. In these representations characters face either the relentless passage of time, their own mortality, or another character's death. In this chapter I explore two sub-functions; in the first, characters employ the cosmic bodies to symbolize the passage of time; in the second, characters use them to accentuate human mortality versus the relative permanence of the cosmos. This chapter is largely inspired by Robert Pinsky's exploration of Thornton Wilder's use of "the stars of chalk or fire" as representative of mortality and "the brevity of life" in *Our Town*, as well as Anthony Stevens' discussion of the ways in which our mortality is still ever present with us as it was for our early ancestors and its manifestation in the symbols we continue to use.³³⁰ Table 3 below tracks the incidents, by show and thematically, that are analyzed in this chapter.

³³⁰ Pinsky, *Thousands of Broadways*, 55; Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue*, 168–69. For more on Stevens' exploration of the archetypal symbols of mortality, see the second sub-function explored in this chapter.

Table 3: Chapter Five: The Cosmos as Symbol of Time and Mortality

Musical	Function		
	Symbol of Passage of Time	Symbol of Human Mortality	
<i>Hamilton</i>	“What’d I Miss?”	Sun	
<i>Fiddler on the Roof</i>	“Sunrise, Sunset”	Sun	
<i>Les Misérables</i>	“At the End of the Day”	Sun	
	“Empty Chairs at Empty Tables”	Sun	
		“Come to Me”	Evening Star
<i>Evita</i>		“She’s a Diamond”	Star
		“Oh What a Circus”	Sunset
<i>Pippin</i>		“Glory”	Sunset, Moon
<i>Rent</i>		“One Song Glory”	Sunset
<i>Notre Dame de Paris</i>		“Danse mon Esmeralda”	Universe

Sunrise, Sunset: Passage of Time

Cosmic bodies like the sun, moon, and stars have long been markers of the passage of time, as they habitually trace the same patterns across the sky at roughly the same moment each day. Indeed, their movements are cyclical, and due to their predictable changes through the seasons (as in the case of the sun and the solstices and equinoxes) or the month (as with lunar cycles) human culture has long used them as markers for time.³³¹ Henry Chase Brearley discusses humans’ implementation of the sun to tell the time, using the term “regular succession of day and night.”³³² The course of the

³³¹ Harry Chase Brearley, *Time Telling Through the Ages* (Doubleday, Page & Company, 1919), 106.

³³² Brearley, 15.

sun has been defined by Anthony Stevens as “an age-old symbol of the human life-cycle,” and “our primordial clock,” and Michael Ferber adds that “[t]he day and the year are natural units of time determined by the sun.”³³³ The stars, too, have been used for orientation both in space and time; as Ferber notes they are often used “to tell direction and time of year.”³³⁴ Humans have also related the movements of extra-terrestrial bodies not only to agrarian tasks necessary to life, but to religious rites, as the existence of Stonehenge and other such sites suggest.³³⁵ Musical theatre characters follow in this millennia-long tendency to look to the sky as a marker of the passage of time.

In “What’d I Miss” from Act II of *Hamilton*, the sun symbolizes the forward march of time heedless of human endeavors. Thomas Jefferson references the sun as symbolic of the passage of time that has occurred during his long absence from America, as well as the forward march of time regardless of the actions (revolutions) of humans. The song opens with an establishment of the date in the lyrics, 1789, as well as the conflict about to happen regarding the foundation of a national bank and the absorption of states’ debts into a national debt, as Aaron Burr sings: “not so fast someone came along to resist him [Hamilton], pissed him off until we had a two-party system.”³³⁶ The ensemble furthers the action by singing “Thomas Jefferson’s coming home” and “lord he’s been off in Paris for so long.” Once he has been introduced, Thomas Jefferson references the sun singing:

³³³ Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 136; Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 212.

³³⁴ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 204.

³³⁵ Champion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, 19, 24.

³³⁶ Miranda and McCarter, *Hamilton*, 15; Lin-Manuel Miranda, *What’d I Miss? (From Hamilton Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Daveed Diggs, Leslie Odom, Jr., Okieriete Onaodowan and the Original Broadway Cast (Atlantic Records, 2015). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

France is following us to revolution / There is no more status quo / But the sun
comes up and the world still spins. / I helped Lafayette draft a declaration, / Then
I said, I gotta go. / I gotta be in Monticello, now the work at home begins... / So
what'd I miss?

His inclusion of the daily revolution of the earth and the perpetual rising of the sun emphasizes both that he has been gone for a time, and that time and politics back in America have continued to move forward in his absence. The imagery of the sun rising and the world still spinning stresses the continuous forward march of time despite the seemingly grand efforts of humans to change the world through revolutions, as America has done, and France has begun.

The music accompanying Jefferson's invocation of the sun further emphasizes the forward march of time relative to the grand acts of humans. The music involves echoes of cannon fire from the percussion section, which conjures a memory of the momentous events that the characters have been involved in, but quiet enough that the major events are memories in comparison to the forward advance of time. The effect is that the cosmic symbolism is foregrounded, and the human events fade into the background. In light of the grand events of the musical, the employment of cosmic symbolism to indicate the relative insignificance of humans in the time and scope of the cosmos is notable. The song introduces a new antagonist in Hamilton's life but also puts the men's individual stories into perspective relative to the forward march of time and history. It reveals what Ernest Becker terms "the expendability" of humans "in nature."³³⁷ Given that the musical is at least partly about the memory of history, as Ben Brantley observed, it is notable that

³³⁷ Ernest Becker, *The Denial of Death* (New York, NY: The Free Press, 1973), 52.

the cosmic symbolism indicates the ephemeral nature of individual human life on earth, while it simultaneously marks which human deeds get remembered by history.³³⁸ History only records selected human events; many others are left behind by the forward sweep of time and fade from memory when the generation that witnessed them dies. Thomas Jefferson's inclusion of the daily spinning of the earth highlights this forward march of time relative to even the achievements of his day.

The sun again symbolizes the passing of the years in "Sunrise, Sunset" from *Fiddler on the Roof*. Before Tzeitel and Motel's wedding Tevye and Golde reflect on how fast the years have flown.³³⁹ Tevye opens the song querying: "Is this the little girl I carried, is this the little boy at play?"³⁴⁰ Golde responds "I don't remember growing older, when did they?" Between stanzas, an accordion ascends chromatically upward giving certain moments a feel of moving forward. As they reach the chorus, the ensemble joins them -first Tevye and the men, then Golde and the women, and they all sing the chorus together:

Sunrise, sunset / Sunrise, sunset / Swiftly flow the days. / Seedlings turn overnight
to sunflowers / Blossoming even as we gaze. / Sunrise, sunset / Sunrise sunset /
Swiftly fly the years / One season following another / Laden with happiness and
tears.

The music accompanying the chorus is repetitive and cyclical, returning always to where it began, and provides a feel of moving around in circles while simultaneously staying in

³³⁸ Brantley, "Review."

³³⁹ Gerald Martin Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle*, vol. 2 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 693.

³⁴⁰ Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick, *Sunrise, Sunset (from Fiddler on the Roof Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Julia Migenes, Zero Mostel, Bert Convy, and Maria Karnilova (Masterworks Broadway, 1972). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

place, much the way the world spins on its axis every 365 days. Humans, however, generally stay in one place for years, going through the same daily motions as the world spins. The residents of Anatevka employ the age-old symbol to emphasize the unrelenting forward movement of time, whether humans notice their lives passing or not. Their acknowledgement here of the unrelenting forward passage of time and their failure to note what they have when they have it echoes Emily's final speech in *Our Town* and her conversation with Mrs. Gibbs and Simon Stimson. In this singular moment, however, the characters pause to reflect on the momentous occasion and the brevity of life. The participation of the other villagers in singing the chorus makes the passage of the seasons and the aging of humankind communal concerns: everyone is touched by time as everyone present is touched by this union.

After the chorus, Tevye, Golde, Perchik, and Hodel sing short solos or duets, individually reminiscing about the passage of time and the upcoming wedding. Tevye asks "What words of wisdom can I give them?" Perchik and Hodel muse about their potential nuptials: "is there a canopy in store for me?" The characters here wonder about the future even as they ponder the unnoticed passage of time. It is as if they have not learned to notice the moment, rather they are always looking forward, as humans so often are. The song ends after the final singing of the chorus; the ensemble performs a *ritardando* toward the end of the second chorus (starting on "laden with") that draws out the words "happiness and tears" at the conclusion of the song. That the chorus concludes the song emphasizes its main theme: the passage of time and major and mundane human life events within the passage of time. The accordion ends the song ascending chromatically upward and extending past the vocals as the singers hold their final note.

This is one moment in which the characters, usually busy about their everyday lives, pause and reflect upon the brevity of their life and the unceasing flow of time. The song is bittersweet, as it occurs just before a joyous occasion (wedding) but also taps into the sadness of parents sending their children out into the world. Its use of cosmic symbolism indicates just how little time parents have with their children and, by extension, how little time each human has on this earth. In a musical characterized by tradition and changes to tradition, a focus on the forward march of time emphasizes the lack of control Tevye and his neighbors will have over their fate as the musical progresses.

Much as “Sunrise, Sunset” used the sun to highlight the forward march of time “At the End of the Day,” from Act I of *Les Misérables*, employs the sunrise as symbolic of the perpetual and repetitively cyclical nature of life, especially a life spent working hard just to make ends meet, and is explicitly pessimistic. The song opens in Montreuil several years after the encounter between Valjean and the Bishop. The opening instrumentation is big and bold, with strings, chimes, and horns, and provides a feel of a new start. The music emphasizes the introduction of a new city and new characters, and the ensemble of poor workers reference the dawn, traditionally symbolic of a fresh start and new hope. They are not, however, optimistic about the new day. They sing of their unending hardships: “At the end of the day you’re another day older / And that’s all you can say for the life of the poor.” They continue: “at the end of the day you’re another day colder” and “the winter is coming on fast, ready to kill.”³⁴¹ Here they reveal the lack of forward momentum that the poor experience: they can never get ahead and they are lucky

³⁴¹ Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, *At the End of the Day (from Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast Recording)*, with the Original London Cast, Audio CD (Relativity, 1998). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

if they can put a roof over their heads and survive another day. They also sing “one day less to be living” and “One day nearer to dying.” It is not clear whether they are dreading death or seeking it as an end to their suffering, but death is what they have to look forward to in a life that moves nowhere and instead circles back around each day to be repeated. The music and the vocals are repetitive, harsh, and grating, and the beat is incessant, providing an aural iteration of the demoralizing nature of their lives.

As they reach the chorus the poor invoke the dawn, but not as a hopeful time of day: “At the end of the day there’s another day dawning, / And the sun in the morning is waiting to rise.” Here, the expected appearance of the sun is not hopeful. Although, as Kevin Todeschi contends, the sun often connotes “a new beginning” or “a fresh perspective,” here it signifies a tiresome continuation of the previous day and all the others before that.³⁴² The ensemble highlights the ceaseless forward march of time that continues regardless of their suffering. As they sing, the music shifts from the repetitive instrumentation and soars upward in both scale and volume, but by the end of the chorus (on the lyric “and the waves crash”) the music becomes repetitive again. The ensemble’s use of the cosmic symbolism accentuates the perpetual suffering of the poor and the unchanging world that remains the same day to day, never altering for them, except through death. The song is integral to the dramatic action as it introduces Fantine and the beginning of her downfall; by the end of the song she is fired from the factory for having a child out of wedlock, which forces her into prostitution and eventually death as she struggles to provide for her child; despite all of that the uncaring world continues to march forward.

³⁴² Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 84.

Like the ensemble of poor Marius employs the imagery of dawn, but not a hopeful dawn, in the mournful “Empty Chairs at Empty Tables” from Act II of *Les Misérables*. “Empty Chairs” follows the women of Paris singing of the “schoolboys” who died on the barricade, and how “Nothing changes, Nothing ever will” as the days go “turning, turning, turning / Through the years.”³⁴³ Following that song, Marius, healed from his injuries, similarly reflects upon the death of his comrades on the barricade in “Empty Chairs at Empty Tables.” The song begins with an echo of the melody picked gently on a guitar, which is joined by strings droning quietly on harmonic notes.³⁴⁴ After several bars, Marius begins singing: “There’s a grief that can’t be spoken. / There’s a pain goes on and on. / Empty chairs at empty tables / Now my friends are dead and gone.” He sings of his compatriots, dead on the barricade from which he was saved, displaying a significant amount of survivor’s guilt, but also clarity regarding the ideals for which they fought. He sings “Here they talked of revolution” and “Here they sang about “tomorrow / And tomorrow never came.” The word ‘tomorrow’ here possesses two meanings; in one instance, it is symbolic of the new world for which Marius and his colleagues fought; in another, it is symbolic of his colleagues’ death. The just world for which they fought never saw the light of day, and Marius’ friends never saw another sunrise. The song continues and the music swells as Marius’ vocals *crescendo* up in volume and pitch until Marius and the orchestra abruptly reach the highest volume and pitches of the song: “The very words that they had sung / Became their last communion.”

³⁴³ Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, *Turning (from Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast Recording)*, with the Original London Cast, Audio CD (Relativity, 1998).

³⁴⁴ Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, *Empty Chairs at Empty Tables (from Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast Recording)*, with Michael Ball, Audio CD (Relativity, 1998). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

The orchestra then drops back down when Marius sings “On the lonely barricade at dawn,” and all but the guitar and strings abandon him. Here dawn does not signal renewed vigor and hope, but the sobering reality of dead young men on the barricade, the barricade that symbolized all their hopes for a better tomorrow that “never came.” The music emphasizes the lack of potential that this particular dawn brings with it, as it plunges back down following a moment of high emotional and musical intensity. Unlike most dawns, this dawn does not bring hope, and its mournful invocation indicates the despair that Marius and the citizens of Paris face following the rebellion. With the death of Marius’ compatriots and their cause, the world did not stop turning, and dawn rose despite the pain of the small humans.

Tell the Universe: The Brevity of Human Life Compared to the Longevity of the Cosmos

The analyses in this section take their inspiration in part from Robert Pinsky’s analysis of *Our Town* in which he identified the stars as representative of human mortality, which has been a major concern to humanity since at least around the time that farming was initiated.³⁴⁵ Around this time humans gained an awareness that life ends, and the inevitability of mortality for humans became an almost unbearable realization. Indeed one of the major impulses behind the creation of religion was the reality of mortality, as Antonius Robben contends: “[o]f all sources of religion, the supreme and final crisis of life – death – is of the greatest importance.”³⁴⁶ Religions attempted to both determine what comes after death and to celebrate life through specific rituals. The reality of death affects

³⁴⁵ Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 168.

³⁴⁶ Antonius C. G. M. Robben, *Death, Mourning, and Burial: A Cross-Cultural Reader* (John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 79.

modern humans as much as it affected our early ancestors, but modern humans tend to find a solution in denial and avoidance for as long as they can.³⁴⁷ Whatever advances we have made in healthcare and science, humans are still mortal, and concerns with death are still with us no matter how much we try to put off the inevitable. Musical theatre characters illustrate this human preoccupation with death.

In *Les Misérables*' Act I song, "Come to Me," the Evening Star foreshadows both the coming nighttime and Fantine's death. The song occurs after Fantine narrowly escapes arrest by Javert for prostitution; she is saved by Valjean's intervention and sent to the hospital for a gentler death. As Fantine is on her deathbed, she sings to her absent daughter, whom she hallucinates seeing at play in the evening. The song opens with the orchestra playing the main melody on strings and chimes.³⁴⁸ Fantine then begins to sing the melody: "Cosette it's turned so cold," and the instruments shift to echo her. Fantine continues "soon it will be night. / Come to me, Cosette, the light is fading. / Don't you see the evening star appearing?" The evening star, as it is in the evening sky, is the advance guard of dusk, coming before nightfall, and presaging the coming night.³⁴⁹ For Fantine, the nighttime means more than just the end of a normal day; Fantine is dying, and, as it has long been for humans, the night is symbolic of her death.³⁵⁰ The chill that she feels is both the chill of dusk and the chill of death.³⁵¹ Dying characters also often feel that the light is fading, and while in Fantine's fever-induced vision the light might

³⁴⁷ Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue*, 168.

³⁴⁸ Claude-Michel Schonberg and Alain Boublil, *Come to Me (from Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast Recording)*, with Patti LuPone and Colm Wilkinson, Audio CD (Relativity, 1998). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

³⁴⁹ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 206.

³⁵⁰ See Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue*, 142; Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 53.

³⁵¹ "How Dying Works," HowStuffWorks, January 12, 2009, <https://health.howstuffworks.com/diseases-conditions/death-dying/dying.htm>.

actually be fading, the growing darkness is also symbolic of her dying. The evening star, then, foreshadows not just a single day's end, but Fantine's eternal night.

Later in the song, Fantine sings "There's a darkness that comes without a warning." The darkness that she means is the often-unannounced darkness of death. It is intriguing that Fantine invokes the evening star, and not just the darkness of nighttime, as symbolic for her coming eternal night, as the use of a star provides a glimmer of light despite the darkness. Perhaps that bit of light offers hope as Fantine transitions into eternal nighttime. The star also provides a warning of the coming night (her coming death) and though she denies it at first, she does finally take the opportunity to place her daughter in Valjean's care. The evening star, then, offered her advance warning and the opportunity to come to terms with her death and to settle her earthly affairs. The music toward the end of the song maintains some of the lightness provided by the strings, suggesting that although Fantine will not survive, there may be hope for her daughter. Fantine dies on her final lyric: "And tell Cosette I love her. / And I'll see her when I wake..." With her dying lyric, Fantine transitions into the darkness of eternal sleep. Interestingly, the melody that accompanies Fantine's lyrics "Come to me" through "wake you in the morning" is the same melody, albeit transposed up the octave a bit here, that Eponine sings when she imaginatively lives out her fantasy under the starlight, as explored previously in chapter three. Both women, when faced with the sad reality of their lives, turn to the stars, and their shared melody reveals this connection that transcends time, generations, and locations.

As the evening star in "Come to Me" foreshadows death, the imagery of a fading star foreshadows Eva Perón's fall from power, from health, and ultimately from life in

“She is a Diamond” from Act II of *Evita*. The elite of Buenos Aires object to Eva Perón’s meddling in power, singing “it’s all very well to a certain extent for the lady at the side of the president to show an interest in affairs,” and Perón responds angrily, defending Eva.³⁵² Perón then shifts into singing about how important Eva is to the morale of Argentina’s poor, singing again in the style of the rest of the musical: “But on the other hand, she’s all they have / She’s a diamond in their dull gray lives.” The music is sentimental, featuring a flute and then strings with only a muted bass beat from the drum set. Finally, Perón remarks upon Eva’s future: “But on the other hand, she’s slowing down” and “I would not advise those critics present to derive any satisfaction from her fading star.” Here, Perón refers to the traditional belief of astrology that people’s stars can rise, meaning that they will move toward fame, good fortune, health, good luck, and all manner of beneficial things.³⁵³ The opposite, a fading or falling star, is also applicable as the wheel of fate turns and fortune changes.³⁵⁴ Given that Eva is battling cancer, and will be forced to step back from public life and, eventually, die as a result of her disease, the fading star is invoked as symbolic of her failing health and dwindling time on earth.

“Glory,” from the musical *Pippin*, uses both sunset and moonlight to symbolize death in battle. The song occurs after the battle when a temporary peace has descended on the battlefield. The Leading Player sings of the recent victory that Charlemagne has seen in battle: “Glory! Glory! / Praise be to Charles our Lord / Triumphant is his sword.”³⁵⁵

The opening music and lyrics trumpet Charlemagne’s glory, and then the song transitions

³⁵² Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, *She Is a Diamond (from Evita Original London Cast Recording)*, with Joss Ackland (MCA Records, 1978). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

³⁵³ “Rising, Adj.,” Oxford English Dictionary online, accessed April 9, 2018, <http://www.oed.com.proxy.mul.missouri.edu/view/Entry/166302>.

³⁵⁴ John H. Arnold, *History: A Brief Insight* (New York, NY: Sterling Publishing Co., 2000), 26.

³⁵⁵ Stephen Schwartz, *Glory (from Pippin Original Broadway Cast Recording)*, with Ben Vereen and the Original Broadway Cast, 2000. Subsequent quotations will come from this recording.

into a number characterized more by movement than by vocal prowess. The lyrics do, however, continue to communicate the bloodlust of battle, as when the Leading Player sings: “Blood is red as sunset.” Here, he compares the fascination of spilled blood in battle with the sun at sunset, a comparison that makes sense based on the color of the two objects, but also employs one of the most dramatic cosmic moments of the day to symbolize the consequences of battle. Sunsets are often symbolic of death, and as Michael Ferber has noted, the Greek mythological kingdom of Hades was “located in the far west, where the sun sets.”³⁵⁶ Ferber relates William Wordsworth’s description of death as friends having passed “from sunshine to the sunless land” to this traditional association.³⁵⁷ Kevin Todeschi agrees that sunset “might correspond to” death in literature and Mark O’Connell et. al. contend that sunset and death are linked symbolically as “the disappearance of the sun each evening” makes it “a potent symbol of death.”³⁵⁸ In this instance the Leading Player uses the sunset to symbolize both the end of life and the life blood that has been lost by the soldiers killed in battle. The music accompanying these lyrics is characterized by a seductive, syncopated, jazzy rhythm that evokes forward momentum even as it repeats itself. The seductive quality of the music reveals the allure of a death in battle that can result in a moment of glory as spectacular as the setting sun.

The Leading Player also sings of the sword, using the dark light of the moon to describe it: “Steel is cold as moonlight.” As it has in previous instances, featured in Chapter Three, the moonlight possesses a certain amount of enchantment, but in this

³⁵⁶ Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 209.

³⁵⁷ Ferber, 209.

³⁵⁸ Todeschi, *The Encyclopedia of Symbolism*, 249; Mark O’Connell, *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Symbols, Signs & Dream Interpretation* (New York: Metro Books, 2010), 124.

instance is associated with a morbid, violent quality. The same music that accompanied the lyrics of blood and sunset accompanies the music of steel and the moon. The song is all about the spectacle of battle and the wonder of the glory and violence that is battle and victory in battle. Here, moonlight has little to do with love (as explored in previous instances), but has much to do with the romantic allure of battle, violence, and victory in battle. Further, the imagery of a sword (silver steel) calls to mind the silvery glow of the moon at night. Moonlight is often described as silvery, and as ‘cold,’ apt associations with the romantic allure that is combat with a sword.³⁵⁹ Moreover, by using the moon, the symbolism of nighttime and darkness is invoked, adding the connotation of death to the song, as darkness and nighttime are often associated with death.

It is significant that although sunset is used to emphasize the passing of a soul, the sun is not used to describe the inanimate steel used to kill in battle. While battle may be fiery and exciting, it also carries with it a darkness; the somber reality of mortality that is symbolized best by dusk and moonlight. As *Pippin* premiered in the shadow of the Vietnam War and two years after the Kent State massacre, the morbid repercussions of war were palpable, and the musical critiques the sexualized allure of battle using the sunset and moonlight to do so.

Early in Act I of *Evita* Che, like the Leading Player of *Pippin*, references the sunset to symbolize death. In “Oh What a Circus” Che introduces the situation in Argentina following the death of Eva Perón and uses the sunset to symbolize the outlandish pageantry surrounding her death. The song occurs directly following the opening of the musical and reveals the announcement of Eva’s death and nationwide

³⁵⁹ See for example Stevens, *Ariadne’s Clue*, 137; Ferber, *A Dictionary of Literary Symbols*, 128.

mourning for the first lady. In response to the pageantry and performance following Eva's death, Che sings "Oh What a Circus." He describes Eva's "exit," her death, as "quite a sunset."³⁶⁰ The use of such a bright, fantastic, and yet routine cosmic event reveals the extent to which the people of Argentina have been blinded by Eva's performance, at least to Che's mind. Further the cosmic symbolism demonstrates how performative Eva's passing was; indeed, the song is titled "Oh What a Circus" and the situation in Argentina following Eva's death is certainly a flamboyant show of grief and mourning, as Che asserts, singing:

Oh what a show / Argentina has gone to town / Over the death of an actress called
Eva Perón / We've all gone crazy / Mourning all day and mourning all night /
Falling over ourselves to get all of the misery right.

The word choice here emphasizes the performativity of the ceremonies around Eva's death; people are "falling over" themselves to "get all of the misery right," suggesting that there is an amount of emotion one must display in response to Eva's passing, and the country is trying its best to perform rather than experience its grief. The sun demonstrates just how much of an event Eva's life as well as her death was; Che employs the brightest cosmic body that humans can see and its most spectacular event of the day to describe Eva's fame and its end. The use of a sunset adds another layer to Che's account of the pageantry around Eva's death. Though different every time, the sun sets routinely every day and is something of a common occurrence. The quotidian regularity of the sunset suggests that no matter how brightly Eva shone in life, she is mortal like all humans and must pass eventually into the anonymous darkness of death.

³⁶⁰ Andrew Lloyd Webber and Tim Rice, *Oh What a Circus* (from *Evita Original London Cast Recording*), with David Essex (MCA Records, 1978). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

In Act I of *Rent*, Roger's "One Song Glory" evokes the sun as symbolic for the end of his life and the urgency he feels to leave behind a legacy. Mark has recently asked Roger if he would like to go "see Maureen's show in the lot" "or come to dinner;" Roger turns him down, and then Mark tells the audience that Roger has AIDS.³⁶¹ Mark leaves, and Roger strums his guitar and sings "I'm writing one great song before I..." After a few bars that sound like Puccini's "Musetta's Waltz" (as Mark will tell Roger later), he hits a sour note, and out of frustration begins to sing "One Song Glory." The song starts with the melody plucked on an electric guitar. Roger begins singing "One song, glory, one song before I go, glory, one song to leave behind." Anthony Stevens speaks to this impulse to have some part of us somehow survive death, maintaining that our inevitable mortality constitutes "a major impetus to the religious belief that a non-physical part of us can survive after death."³⁶² Of course, people often mean the soul, but this search is frequently extended to non-conscious objects, like publications and works of art, that allow the creator to outlast his short lifetime. Roger embodies this search for a 'non-physical part' of himself, a song that he will create as a legacy.

As he moves forward in the song, the music accompanying him gradually *crescendos*, gently adding more instruments as it does so. Roger continues: "Find glory behind the cheap colored lights, one song before the sun sets, glory, on another empty life, time flies, time dies." As he sings "time flies, time dies," his vocals reach a new intensity in volume and pitch, expressing his angst about his impending mortality; when he breaks into the chorus, the instrumentation abruptly *crescendos* into full swing. Here

³⁶¹ Jonathan Larson, *One Song Glory* (from *Rent Original Broadway Cast Recording*), with Adam Pascal (Verve, 1996). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

³⁶² Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue*, 256.

Roger invokes the imagery of a sun setting to symbolize his fairly imminent mortality, and while he never refers directly to his death, he references it symbolically, using the sunset and the concept of time dying. The image of an imminent sunset powerfully creates a sense of urgency for him to achieve one memorable thing before he is out of time. One important thing to note is that though the sun sets reliably and predictably, death is not as predictable; the only thing humans can predict about death is its eventuality. Roger implicates the unpredictable certainty of mortality as he agonizes over making his mark before his time runs out, before his sun sets. Later in the song, the lyrics “find glory in a song that rings true, truth like a blazing fire, an eternal flame,” further emphasize why Roger must write one good song before he dies. The song that he will leave behind him will live on even as he is doomed to die, and in that way he will achieve a kind of immortality, despite dying young. In the shadow of the AIDS epidemic that ravaged the theatre community in the 1980s, extinguishing the lives of multitudes of talented artists, Roger’s angst regarding his legacy and his pending mortality gains even more potency. And yet, twenty-plus years later, his concern with mortality and his legacy is no less potent, because humans are still mortal and are still unable to pierce the veil to see what there is after death.

At the end of Act II of *Notre Dame de Paris* the final song, “Danse mon Esmeralda” references the universe in opposition to the mortality of the characters.³⁶³ The song follows Esmeralda’s execution by hanging at the hands of Frollo, and portrays Quasimodo’s response to her death, characterized by both anger and sadness. Quasimodo mourns Esmeralda’s death and sings of his eternal love for her: “Quand les années auront

³⁶³ Stephen Citron, *The Musical from the Inside Out* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1997), 203.

passé / On trouvera sous terre / Nos deux squelettes enlacés / Pour dire à l'univers /
 Combien Quasimodo aimait / Esmeralda la Zingara" (when the years have passed / They
 will find us in the Earth / Our two skeletons intertwined / To tell the universe / How
 Quasimodo loved / Esmeralda the Gypsy).³⁶⁴ The emotionally moving, albeit morbid,
 imagery beside, Quasimodo proclaims his love for Esmeralda not to other humans, not to
 the world, but to the entire universe (a synonym for the cosmos). Such a proclamation
 accentuates his undying love for Esmeralda and provides it with a permanency that
 mortal humans can never achieve, as the cosmos will be around much longer than any
 one generation of humans. The music accompanying his singing starts out faintly,
 allowing for his vocals to shine, and then builds slightly to include a finger-picked guitar.
 As the music builds, instruments are added throughout the song, as Quasimodo's vocals
 similarly *crescendo* throughout until it seems as though his grief is ripping from him and
 ascending to the heavens. As his volume progressively increases through the song,
 Quasimodo expresses his pain through the way he sings the song, giving his pain an aural
 manifestation that is heart-rending to hear.

Quasimodo does more than set the universe as a witness of his love; he expresses
 his view of the afterlife as one in which his greatest wish will come true up among the
 stars: "Laissez mon âme s'envoler / Loin des misères de la terre / Laissez mon amour se
 mêler / à la lumière de l'Univers" (Let my spirit fly / Far from the miseries of the earth /
 Let my love mingle / With the light of the universe). It is not clear what he considers the
 "light of the universe;" presumably he is referring to the stars and other bright cosmic

³⁶⁴ Richard Cocciante and Luc Plamondon, *Danse mon Esmeralda (from Notre Dame de Paris Original Paris Cast Recording)*, with Garou, trans. Rebecca Holley (Pomme Musique, 1999). Subsequent quotations are from this recording.

bodies, but he could also be referring to Esmeralda's soul, as stars have traditionally been associated with souls.³⁶⁵ Like Gringoire's view of humankind's ambitions in "Lune" (explored in chapter 3), Quasimodo perceives of his afterlife as ascending to the stars and finally achieving in death that flight that more fortunate lovers experience in life. Quasimodo's expressions have much in common with Plato's concept of the soul, as "originat[ing] in the stars, to which it returns after death."³⁶⁶ Following Plato, Quasimodo sees himself ascending to the stars after death. Given that Plato's ideas would inform many Western thinkers, this is a fascinating genealogy. Plato's concept of the ascending soul may also have been seen as allied with the belief in "vertical movement between all three cosmic levels of Heaven, Earth, and Underworld [that] recurs in mythical traditions from the earliest times to the present day," as Anthony Stevens has indicated.³⁶⁷ Quasimodo's wish to ascend to the cosmos, then, is not a new concept in Western religious thought. What Quasimodo adds to this millennia-old archetype is the wish to ascend to the stars, rather than to a religious location as in Heaven. Importantly, Quasimodo believes that in the afterlife, he will be able to soar to the stars, as he could not in life. Finally, Quasimodo reaches the main body of the song singing "Danse mon Esmeralda, / Chant mon Esmeralda" (Dance my Esmeralda, / Sing my Esmeralda) a motto he will sing five more times, *crescendoing* each time. He is accompanied by orchestration that adds instruments, until eventually even electric guitars accompany him. Every time he sings "danse mon Esmeralda, chant mon Esmeralda," the words following these lyrics are slightly altered, as in the second time Quasimodo sings them "Laisse moi

³⁶⁵ Campion, *A History of Western Astrology Volume II*, xiv.

³⁶⁶ Campion, xiv.

³⁶⁷ Stevens, *Ariadne's Clue*, 49.

partir avec toi, / Mourir pour toi n'est pas mourir" (Let me go with you / Dying for you is not dying). Here, he begs to depart with his beloved but he adds that to die for her is not to die. Many of the beliefs about the afterlife that Quasimodo has expressed in the song emphasize the benefits for him of passing into eternity; perhaps finally to be with his beloved would not be to die, but to find new life. Quasimodo's view of the afterlife is a view rather different from Frollo's perception of what is to come after death (heaven and hell). Unlike Frollo, who adheres to a Christian view of the afterlife, Quasimodo sees his afterlife in a differently spiritual vein, giving the stars and the universe the power that the Christian religion has typically assigned to its concept of God.

Conclusion

From these ten instances (counting the two instances in "Glory" as one) of cosmic bodies as symbolic of the passage of time or human mortality in musical theatre, some conclusions may be drawn. The sun was the only cosmic body to which characters turned to symbolize the passing of time (all four instances). This usage seems apt, as the visual movement of the sun across the sky has been used for millennia to reckon the passing of the days. In referencing their impending mortality relative to the permanence of the cosmos, however, characters were only slightly more likely to turn to the sun (three instances) than the stars (two instances); the moon and the universe each appeared once as a symbol of human mortality. While the sun dominated the first sub-function, a greater variety of cosmic bodies are used when symbolizing characters' mortality. The instances in which the sun symbolizes death continue a literary tradition inherited from the Ancient Greeks and William Wordsworth, among others, of sunset being associated with death. Despite the explicitly Christian setting of *Notre Dame* (the title itself expressly evokes

the Roman Catholic faith), Quasimodo's expression of the belief that the soul ascends upward to the universe after death challenges the traditional Christian definition of the afterlife, which has dominated Western culture for the last millennia, in favor of Plato's classical vision of souls ascending to the stars.

The type of characters who most frequently sing to the cosmos reveal how integral the cosmic symbolism is to communicating the story, as it reveals characters' emotions regarding their mortality and purpose while living, often providing major motivation for characters. Overall it was the leads who sang to the cosmos regarding the passage of time or their impending mortality, as eight leads (out of ten instances) sang to the cosmos; two leads invoked the cosmos as symbolic of the passage of time and the other six sang of mortality. One lead (Marius) sang to the cosmos regarding both the passage of time and mortality, holistically connecting the two sub-functions. Of the two leads who used the cosmos as symbolic for the passage of time two were male, and the other two instances were characterized by lead male and female characters singing with ensemble characters. As humans have done for millennia musical theatre characters use the sun to mark the passage of time and in so doing reveal their relationship with time. The characters who sing of the passage of time highlight the important revelation for all humans: one, time marches on and leaves all but the greatest of humans eventually forgotten in its wake, and two, the passage of time is experienced differently depending on the quality of the situation in which the humans find themselves. Not only does this symbolism reveal the connections between twentieth/twenty-first century humans and their pre-horology ancestors, but it reveals musical theatre's immediacy to what it means to be human. That musical theatre speaks boldly to the real-life experiences of humans

regarding time and mortality affirms the powerful way in which musical theatre can speak to and move audiences.

Of the eight males who invoked cosmic bodies to symbolize mortality two sang of a dying female character, one sang of dead male characters, one sang of his own death, and one sang of both his and his female lover's death. The female character who sang to the cosmos did so to symbolize her own pending mortality. It appears that it is often main characters who are preoccupied with their mortality and invoke cosmic bodies; this suggests that the cosmic symbolism is integral to communicating the anxiety that protagonists experience regarding their own or a close friend or lover's mortality. Cosmic symbolism heightens the representation of these characters' emotions around their or their loved ones' pending deaths. Using cosmic symbolism to reflect upon individual characters' mortality also conjures images of the mortality of the human race and extends the anxieties and ambitions of these characters to humans generally, placing each mortal human in relation to the eternal cosmos and invoking quandaries regarding purpose. As each of us is mortal, however much we attempt to ignore that fact, our fears and anxieties are directly mirrored in these characters' interactions with their mortality.

Two ensembles sang to the cosmos: the poor in "At the End of the Day" and the villagers in "Sunrise, Sunset." In one of these instances ("Sunrise, Sunset"), however, the leads were also singing to the cosmos, making the song a full community event. The scarcity of communal recognition of time and mortality relates to the reality that every human ultimately experiences death alone. While mortality connects all humans and religious rites often make death a community affair, ultimately death is a personal, isolating, experience.

Of the ten instances only one song included the cosmic body in the title of the song. Notably, two songs use the word glory in the title, and yet they appear in this chapter about mortality rather than in chapter four about human exceptionalism. This suggests that there is a significant amount of risk, from personal injury or collateral damage, in striving for glory; such striving gives the concept of glory a morbid tenor, associating it with the mortality that accompanies it. In musicals that engage with glory as a central theme, the cosmic symbolism highlights the risk and damage associated with the quest for glory.

Five musicals were represented in this section; of these five, two premiered in the 1970s and two premiered in the 1990s. This repetition within decades suggests that there may have been something about the 1970s and 1990s that tended to place artists in a morbid frame of mind. Certainly the continuation of the Vietnam War into the 1970s brought home the reality that a generation of young men was being decimated. Moreover, the oil shortages and hostage crises around the world did not place humans at ease regarding the world. Similarly, the 1990s witnessed the continuation of the death toll from AIDS that had begun in the 1980s as well as the First Gulf War and were characterized by increased anxiety as a result of globalization and the pending end, not only of the century but also the millennium.

In relation to the trajectory of the narrative, characters tended to apply cosmic bodies roughly equally as often in Act I and Act II, with six instances occurring in Act I and four in Act II. In sub-function one, the passage of time, instances occurred equally in Act I as in Act II (two in each), and in sub-function two, death versus the survival of the cosmos, instances were only slightly less evenly spread as four instances occurred in Act

I and two in Act II. These structures suggest that fears of mortality are what drive particular musicals. Certainly mortality explicitly drives the actions of Pippin (in *Pippin*) and Roger (*Rent*) but the reality of mortality underpins, even if implicitly, all the musicals in this chapter. As explored briefly above, it may be that the appearance of mortality in musicals is more due to the general status of humans as mortal than it is specific to any particular storyline, but in plots that portray a character's ill-health or passing, the cosmic bodies are integral to establishing the plot and mood of the musical. Musical theatre illustrates Anthony Stevens' assertion that mortality, as it was for our early ancestors, is still ever-present in our symbols.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

This study reveals the prevalence and significance of the use of cosmic symbolism in twenty and twenty-first century musical theatre. It contributes to the burgeoning field of musical theatre scholarship and increases our understanding of musical theatre as a genre that is not merely entertaining, but holds the potential to address and illuminate serious social issues and the most profound questions of human existence. This examination of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre may shed light on why musical theatre appeals so widely and reaches so many people on different levels.

The fourteen representative musicals analyzed included forty instances of cosmic symbolism, at least one per work and at times up to seven in an individual musical. The extent to which musical theatre creators use cosmic symbolism, and the degree of consonance between its apparent meanings for characters (and therefore, by implication, contemporary musical theatre audiences) and meanings historically derived from the cosmos in other art forms, is striking. Also notable, however, are the ways in which the use of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre veers from the traditional uses. Chapter One introduced the goals and methods of this study. In Chapter Two each musical's production team, plot, and cultural context were summarized. Chapter Three explored instances in which characters looked to the cosmos for comfort in three ways: seeking a witness of their experiences, seeking an assurance of a cosmic plan, and seeking hope. Chapter Four examined instances in which the cosmos symbolized the exceptional nature of characters, including: ambition, passion, and power. Chapter Five explored instances in which characters invoked cosmic bodies to symbolize the passage of time and mortality.

This analysis has shown that cosmic symbolism is a powerful means of communicating characters' traits, ideals, ambitions, relationships, and fears, and that it effectively elucidates the themes of the musicals in which it appears. It provides a deeper understanding of musical theatre as an artistic style, the issues with which musical theatre often engages, and the common concerns of humanity. What follows is a more detailed discussion of the particular ways in which these instances of cosmic symbolism contribute to the aesthetic, cultural, and social significance of the works in which they appear as well as how they correlate and deviate from tradition.

Summary and Discussion of Findings

I undertook this project to increase understanding of how cosmic symbolism functions within representative musical theatre works and to contribute to the larger scholarly conversation around humans and the cosmos, with implications for theatre artists and scholars as well as academics and practitioners in related fields. My research for this study was guided by several questions: Under what circumstances do cosmic symbols appear and what is the effect of their appearance? Where in relation to the narrative does the symbolism appear and what does that reveal about its role in the musical? How does cosmic symbolism contribute to the creation of character, mood, and the emotional content of these works? How does it contribute to the work's larger themes and meanings?

The stars, moon, and sun are the primary cosmic bodies musical theatre characters reference. The meaning of each cosmic body varies depending upon the context in which it is used and these variances reveal cosmic symbolism's role in elucidating character and relationships. The stars possess numerous connotations; they are variously invoked as

witnesses of characters' suffering (once), guides for characters (four times), as symbolic of the high ambitions of characters (three times), symbolic of the high passion and joy of lovers (twice), symbolic of the blindness of love (once), and symbolic of impending death (twice). When characters seek comfort or attempt to describe an extraordinary human character they most frequently invoke the stars. These twenty and twenty-first century associations are similar to those attributed to the stars by Neolithic humans, playwrights of Ancient Greece and Ancient Rome, and Christian artists of the Middle Ages, among others. Just as St. Augustine equated the stars with exaltation and beauty, musical theatre characters invoke the stars to symbolize human excellence. As ancient seafarers looked to the stars for guidance in the absence of maps and landmarks lit by the sun, musical theatre characters look to the stars for spiritual guidance and comfort. Echoing astrology, the characters often look to the cosmos for assurance of and guidance along a cosmic plan. In other instances, however, the function of stars veered from tradition. The representation of stars as "unfaithful" for example, breaks with tradition as it is generally the moon that is associated with inconstancy, and the stars were depended upon as reliable navigational guides (through the seas and through life).

The sun is variously invoked in search of hope (twice), as symbolic of the height of characters' ambition (once), as symbolic of the enchantment of love (twice), symbolic of a character's potential (twice), symbolic of a character's greatness or exceptionalism (once), symbolic of the passage of time (three times), and symbolic of death (three times). The sun is the most frequently referenced cosmic body when characters seek uplift in the form of hope, or when they face mortality. The tendency to link the sun with mortality and the passage of time veers from the sun's typical association with growth,

hope, and warmth, but this symbolic use of the sun emphasizes humans' relative insignificance and ephemerality relative to the cosmos. Notably, in two instances the sun also symbolizes the destructive power of the person whom it favorably symbolizes. This two-fold symbolic meaning of the sun is significant, as it connects to the reality of the actual physical power of the sun as provider of life through giving heat and light to growing things, but also as destroyer of living things through sunburn, heatstroke, and drought. The sun (and what the sun symbolizes) is not perceived as an entirely benevolent power. At times, it is used to describe traits not valued by a character, as well as unhopeful dawns. These tendencies are significant breaks with tradition as historical figures such as Roman Emperor Nero and French King Louis XIV tended to associate the sun with desirable qualities, and dawn is traditionally seen as a hopeful fresh start, a new day full of promise.

The fewer references to the moon (eight) render it less significant than the stars and sun. Characters more often invoke the moon when struck by the mystery of another person or of an emotion; in only one instance did the moon serve as a witness to human experience. It serves as symbolic of the enchantment of love twice, and is invoked once each as a witness to human suffering, as symbolic of the impossibility of a character's ideals, as symbolic of the threat of passion, as symbolic of the consequences of battle, and on one occasion its absence was symbolic of the loss of love. Musical theatre's use of the moon complicates the traditional literary evocation of the moon as inconsistent; Cosette pairs the moon with the concept of destiny, giving the moon a permanency that Shakespeare denied it, and the Padre in *Man of La Mancha* connects the moon with the grand, albeit impossible, ideal goals of Don Quixote, giving the impossibility of holding

moonlight an idealistic quality, shifting the inconstancy of the moon to a positive note, and complicating the symbolic meaning of the moon. The gender associated with the moon is subverted as Natasha in *Great Comet* and Cosette in *Les Misérables* use the moon to refer to male characters, despite its traditional association with the feminine.

A comet, which appears in two instances, is invoked to witness the height of human emotion (in *Great Comet*, to mark the extent of Pierre's change), and (in *Wicked*) to emphasize the degree of one character's influence over the other. The use of these two comets deviates from the traditional use of comets in art and literature to portend disaster; instead they mark changes that had already happened. While neither character is sure what the future holds for them, they do not see doom presaged by the comet. This shift in the meaning of comets may be the result of a reduction of superstition's foothold in Western culture and general greater awareness of the laws and findings of science.

The type of characters who sing to the cosmos most frequently reveal how integral the cosmic symbolism is to communicating the story. In the instances analyzed in two of the three chapters (three and four), lead characters more frequently reference the cosmos than secondary characters or ensembles; in those explored in chapter three (cosmic symbols as comforting), however, ensembles more frequently sing to heavenly bodies than do leads. This circumstance suggests that seeking comfort from the heavens may be a more communal activity than reflecting upon the greatness of another, which may highlight individual traits, or on mortality, which perhaps reflects the fact that we all die alone. Two antagonists sing to the cosmos: Javert in *Les Misérables* and Frollo in *Notre Dame de Paris*. Javert's invocation of the stars speaks to the breadth of *Les Misérables*'s theologies, and an antagonist and protagonist who are morally complex.

Frollo's invocation of the moon, on the other hand, reaffirms his adherence to church doctrine, adding depth and significance to the antagonist of the musical. In their songs both Javert and Frollo are working through a dilemma, and it is significant that they, as antagonists, get a song in which to do so; through it their humanity is revealed, making them both more fully realized characters.

There are similarities in the placement of cosmic symbolism within the musicals, as well as the way in which cosmic symbolism intersects with the narrative of the musical. All three sub-functions tend to feature references to cosmic bodies slightly more often in Act I than in Act II. This placement suggests that the concerns often connected with the cosmos (desires, fears, awe, etc.) are important in establishing the narrative of the musicals in which they feature, and so often appear early in Act I. A significant number occur in Act II, however, suggesting that cosmic symbolism is also sometimes needed to engage with characters' emotions as the musical progresses and the action changes. Indeed the symbolism often serves to advance the narrative. This is the case with Javert's suicide in *Les Misérables*, which occurs when his stars abandon him, with Mama Murphy and Alice's "Sun is Gonna Shine" in *Bright Star* as the song prepares the characters for the uplift of Act II, with Don Quixote's "Impossible Dream," in *Man of La Mancha*, which sets him up for disillusionment but inspires Aldonza to change, and with the chorus of poor workers in "At the End of the Day," which triggers Fantine's downfall. The centrality to the action of the narrative suggests that the cosmic symbolism is integral to the musical.

When the symbolism does not advance the plot, it instead communicates something about the characters or their relationships, defining conflicts and affinities that

deepen our understanding of both. This is the case, for example, in many of the instances analyzed in chapter four, specifically “High Flying Adored,” “To Each his Dulcinea,” “Ces diamants-la,” “Les Cloches,” “Love Montage,” and “Dear Theodosia,” among others. Chapters three and five also feature instances that divulge character or relationship, as in “The Great Comet of 1812,” “Stars,” “Sunrise, Sunset,” and “One Song Glory,” among others. Characters frequently invoke the cosmos in extreme emotional states, and are far more likely to invoke it (twenty-three instances) in times of tribulation or suffering than in times of joy (eight instances). Their supplication of the cosmos or invocation of cosmic bodies reveals their emotional state and often offers them the opportunity to work through their feelings. There are also instances featuring intense emotional expression, and in these occurrences the manner of singing evokes an emotional cry thrown up to the heavens. In chapter three Pierre’s reference to a comet illustrates the height of his emotion, and Gringoire’s vocality evokes a cry to the moon; in chapter four Natasha’s voice is a sweet howl to the moon; in chapter five Roger’s vocality expresses his angst about creating one good song before he dies, and Quasimodo intones his heartbreak into his singing. The music and the particular interpretation of the score by the original production cast often serve to emphasize the cosmic body as well as the character’s journey through the narrative. There are also nine instances that do not fit neatly into either joy or tribulation, but express a more reflective mood; examples include “Le Temps des Cathédrales,” “She is a Diamond,” and “Glory.” In these instances something about the character’s journey or experience is communicated using the symbolism.

The correlation of music and cosmic symbolism indicates significant similarities between characters. Esmeralda and Fleur-de-Lys sing the same melody in the same song, connecting both of them in their love for Phoebus, as well as his power (destructive or beneficial) over them; both sing to the sun but each experiences different endings by the final curtain despite their similar affinity for Phoebus, and their fates were foreshadowed by the symbolism in their song. Javert and Valjean are also connected by music, and their natures are contrasted, further highlighting Javert's unwavering theology as expressed in "Stars" and emphasizing Javert's inability to change as opposed to Valjean's growth. Fantine and Eponine are also connected through music, as Fantine's death song is echoed in Eponine's song of living her dreams under the starlight. The connection of Eponine with Fantine extends the suffering of one generation to the next, suggesting that the women of Paris are correct when they assert in "Turning" that "nothing changes, nothing ever will."³⁶⁸ Though featured in chapters four and five, both sing to the stars from a certain need, even though neither receives what they seek: Eponine does not get the man she loves, and Fantine does not survive to see her daughter. Connecting characters allows for a deeper understanding of their similarities and differences which in turn identifies both the conflicts between them and the major themes of the musicals.

Similarities between characters from different musicals, as revealed by the cosmic symbolism and music, demonstrate commonalities in musical theatre's use of cosmic symbolism as well as common themes and concerns across the canon of musical theatre. Quasimodo and Eponine are similar in that they are the unrequited lovers who never get to experience the love they crave and both sing to the cosmos in their pain. In both

³⁶⁸ Schonberg and Boubil, *Turning (from Les Misérables 1985 Original London Cast Recording)*.

Quasimodo and Eponine's cases they do not receive happiness because their love is not reciprocated and the endings of their stories are strikingly similar: in Quasimodo's case, his love dies, thus ending his hopes; in Eponine's case she dies, ending any hopes she had. They both reference the cosmos relative to their wishes to be with their beloved, and are both robbed of happiness in this life as a result of unrequited love and death. One significant difference is that Quasimodo believes he may find happiness after death; Eponine expresses no such hope as she dies. There are also similarities between the muleteers of *Man of La Mancha* and the prospectors of *Paint Your Wagon* as both sing of love lost and the cosmos' abandonment of them. It is notable that in both instances, it is an ensemble of men who sing to the heavens; without their loves they have bonded together with other men as a community of sorts. This use of ensemble suggests a need for community as well as an incompatibility between romantic love and community: when musical theatre characters become involved in a romantic relationship their songs revolve around their love interest; when they no longer have a love interest they often return to community. It is also important to note that Quasimodo's supplication to the universe to witness his love in "Danse mon Esmeralda" featured in chapter five is similar to instances in chapter three when Gringoire, Pierre, and many other characters look to the cosmos to witness their suffering; yet Quasimodo is facing something more profound than injustice and confusion; he is facing eternity.

Across many of the fourteen works, there are characters who search for their purpose in life and involve the cosmic bodies as symbolic in that search. Pierre invokes a comet as symbolic for how moved he is when he finds his purpose. On his quest to find his *raison d'être* Pippin is almost seduced by the Leading Player's symbolic use of the

sun. Roger invokes the sunset as symbolic for the decreasing amount of time he has to find his purpose, highlighting the urgency he feels to write one good song. Pierre, the miners in *Billy Elliot*, Javert, Don Quixote, Pippin, and Roger all in some way seek their purpose in life and in the cosmos, even though they do so in different circumstances.

Cosmic symbols often illuminate the musical's concern with social justice and human rights. At least four instances featured outcasts who do not achieve justice by the end of the musical. In *Notre Dame de Paris* Quasimodo invokes cosmic symbolism to emphasize his suffering and Gringoire references the stars in a song that speaks of making the world a better place, connecting the cosmic bodies with the high ideals of social justice. The poor in *Les Misérables* and the striking miners in *Billy Elliot* sing to the cosmic bodies in their time of suffering. In *Les Misérables* the suffering of the poor establishes a cause for which the revolutionary students in Act II will take up arms. *Billy Elliot*'s miners take up their own cause, fighting for justice and a better life for their community. *Evita* features outcasts, portraying Eva as one of them who rises far from her beginnings. Here the cosmic symbolism serves to illustrate her ambition to rise above her roots in oppression, becoming an emblem of salvation and hope for her people.

There are also similarities in the uses of music to highlight the cosmic symbolism. The most prevalent is the use of repetitive or cyclical music to mark a lack of forward momentum, as in "Lune," "Aquarius," "Stars," and "Tu vas me détruire," among others, or a tendency to circle around in one place, as in "Let the Sunshine in," "The Impossible Dream," and "Sunrise, Sunset." At times, the repetitive, cyclical music enhances a feeling of anticipation, but this use appears to be exclusive to incidents explored in chapter three. In several instances the way the lyrics are sung evoke the emotion that the character feels,

as with Natasha (“No One Else”), Gringoire (“Lune”), the cast of *Bright Star* (“Sun is Gonna Shine”), the Tribe of *Hair* (“Let the Sunshine in”), and Don Quixote (“The Impossible Dream”), among others. The music and the manner of singing communicate important information regarding the characters’ emotional status and the amount of growth the character experiences in the song.

The cosmos has long been associated with religion, as Gods were often linked to specific cosmic bodies, the placement of religious sites frequently correlated to specific positioning of the stars, moon, and sun, and Christian iconography included cosmic bodies in both biblical imagery and artistic representations of Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and the twelve Apostles. This study, however, reveals a loosening of this connection, especially in relation to Christianity. Only five of the instances invoke cosmic symbolism in direct association with religion or spirituality. In “Danse mon Esmeralda” Quasimodo sees his afterlife as spiritual, but not as specifically Christian; given the heavily Christian context of *Notre Dame de Paris* his view of the afterlife seems more secular than religious. “Aquarius” invokes the spirituality of New Age religions. Javert uses the stars to affirm his Christian theology in “Stars.” Gringoire opens a Catholic musical with cosmic symbolism that is more secular than Christian. Frollo invokes the symbolism of the moon as contrary to the righteousness of his Catholic faith. *Notre Dame de Paris* and *Les Misérables*, the two works analyzed that most overtly evoke Christian belief or culture diverge in their religious rhetoric. Despite the religious nature of the period in which it is set, *Notre Dame de Paris* takes a much more secular tone than does *Les Misérables*. Javert sings to the stars from a theological impetus, but most of the characters in *Notre Dame de Paris* sing to the cosmos from a secular perspective.

Notably, both antagonists (Javert and Frollo) utter lyrics that resound with fiery religious sentiment. Regarding protagonists, however, only the protagonist of *Les Misérables* (Jean Valjean) clings to Christian religious sentiment; protagonists of *Notre Dame de Paris*, Quasimodo and Esmeralda, are concerned with secular matters. Most of the other musicals make no direct connection between the cosmic symbolism and religion. While the symbolism in musical theatre certainly exists within the shadow of centuries of correlation with religion, it appears that the cosmic bodies in musical theatre have taken on mostly secular associations.

In several instances, characters' implementation of the cosmic bodies reveals their infatuation with glory even if they do not use the term glory. Eva, in "Don't Cry for Me Argentina," and Hamilton, as asserted by Eliza in "Burn," come to mind. The word glory, however, appears in two songs featured in chapter five, and the word is situated in the title of the songs, making it a central theme of both songs. The appearance of cosmic bodies relative to glory in chapter five suggests a correlation between cosmic symbolism, glory, and death; Roger seeks glory before his impending death, and the Leading Player sings of the death that comes with glory; in both instances cosmic symbolism is invoked to emphasize the mortality associated with the glory. There appears to be a significant amount of risk associated with glory that characters explored in chapter four only hint at, but with which characters examined in chapter five explicitly engage.

The extent to which musical theatre creators use cosmic symbolism, and the degree of consonance between its apparent meanings for characters (and therefore, by implication, contemporary musical theatre audiences) and meanings historically derived from the cosmos in other art forms, is striking. In musical theatre the cosmos still

symbolizes greatness. This tendency evokes prehistoric practices of associating cosmic bodies with divinity and the cosmos still appears to be seen as spectacular and powerful today as it appeared to ancient humans. While twentieth and twenty-first century humans may not link cosmic bodies to gods in the same way early humans did, they still turn to the glimmering cosmic bodies above them to describe the best of humanity, as explored in chapter four. While human attitudes toward the natural world may be more influenced by science than religion, we still experience awe when we behold the cosmic bodies in the sky and manifest that reverence by associating extraordinary objects and people with them.

Nicholas Campion notes another element of early humans' relationship with the cosmos that musical theatre characters in this study exhibited. According to Campion, early Briton's engagement with it took them "beyond the material world" and "away from" their "oppressive lives to the sky."³⁶⁹ The characters in this study similarly look to the heavens in time of tribulation.

The use of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre confirms a human tendency to look up to the sky for answers, much as people in the Renaissance, Middle-Ages, and ancient times did. Astrology has largely lost favor in our rational, scientific societies, and is often relegated to the entertainment sections of newspapers. Nevertheless, this study suggests that even in the 21st century, humans still look to the cosmos for guidance, for answers, and for hope. Perhaps partly because of our origins in the cosmos (in the big bang), the impulse to look heavenward for answers remains with us even in the twenty-

³⁶⁹ Campion, *The Dawn of Astrology*, 28.

first century, perhaps even bolstered by the scientific discoveries that demystify and yet increase our fascination with the cosmos.

As demonstrated by the plethora of solar references (at least fifteen) Nicholas Campion's assertion that "the daily movement of the sun" is the "fundamental feature of human existence" seems still applicable to modern-day humans, despite how much we artificially light our nighttime. Indeed, several of the characters in this study mark the passage of the day by noting the movement of the sun across the sky (or the spinning of the earth relative to the stationary sun). Other characters who use the sun more symbolically (of human greatness or hope) demonstrate the extent to which the sun is still a major cosmic influence on humans. This circumstance reinforces our continuing relationship with the sun. It is notable that musical theatre characters so frequently evoke this fundamental relationship with the sun and that the sun reveals important relationships between characters as well as integral character traits. In an age when Western urbanized humans are so controlled by digital timepieces and artificial lighting this reminder of our fundamental connection with the sun is grounding.

The instances explored in chapter five indicate how humans use cosmic bodies to confront, reveal, or assuage anxieties about mortality and the passage of time. When facing death musical theatre characters do not generally sing communally; this suggests that the characters have tapped into the reality that each of us ultimately crosses alone the threshold from life into death. While we may still possess religious rites and traditions that mark death as a communal experience, musical theatre characters face their anxieties about death alone, as we all do. Many of the instances in chapter five highlight how concerned humans are with the passage of time, as four of the instances use cosmic

bodies to mark it, much as prehistoric humans marked the passage of the seasons by noting the shifting positions of the stars and keeping track of the lunar cycles.

Like prehistoric humans, who sought influence over the cosmos by engaging in religious ceremonies designed to have an effect, musical theatre characters desire some sort of kinship with the stars and seek to be integral actors in the natural world. Musical theatre characters' tendency to seek for something in the cosmos to witness their experiences reveals that we still seek "kinship and community" with the universe, as Mark Edmonds asserted regarding Neolithic Britons. Instances focused on the passage of time show that humans are still trying to find their place in the cosmos and their relation to the forward march of time. In an age of Facebook and Instagram such a reminder of individual ephemerality is powerfully humbling and important in taking some of the focus outward rather than inward.

The number of instances in which characters look to the cosmos in the dark of the night, or in the metaphorical darkness of emotional pain or social injustice demonstrate the extent to which humans are still uncomfortable with the darkness. It is not clear whether that fear is the direct result of actual threats still realized in the presence of night, as it was for prehistoric humans, or the symbolic association of evil with darkness that modern humans inherited from their ancestors. Humans, after all, are primarily diurnal beings, and while we may attempt to banish the darkness with artificial lights, whenever there is darkness there is the potential for danger. Human anxiety surrounding darkness is exhibited by the musical theatre characters who turn to bright cosmic bodies for comfort, guidance, witness, hope, or foretelling, often at night. Characters such as Javert, the California prospectors, and the British coal miners, mark the human tendency to still turn

to the lights of the nighttime sky in search of comfort and guidance in the face of literal or metaphorical darkness.

There are some significant similarities in musical theatre's use of cosmic symbolism and that of theatre in ancient Greece, largely considered the root of Western theatre and an ancestor of musical theatre. The implementation of a fading star in *Evita* hearkens back to Sophocles' use in *Oedipus at Colonus* of an ascendant star to symbolize rising favor. In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* the marking of the changing of the seasons by the placement of cosmic bodies is similar to the use of the sun to mark the passage of time by the characters of these musical works. Musical theatre characters often use the sun to symbolize greatness and power like the coins crafted by Roman Emperor Nero. Connections to Shakespeare, whose plays have withstood the test of time and cultures, include the use of comets to mark the death of princes but not common folk (*Julius Caesar*), the inconstancy of the moon (*Romeo and Juliet*), and a character's nature confirmed at birth by the position of the stars (*King Lear*). As King Lear blamed the stars for his nature, Ben Rumson similarly sees the cause of his nature in the stars. Perhaps, as in the case of our classical dramatic canon, these musicals will stand the test of time. This discovery of the similarities between musical theatre, Ancient Greek theatre, and Shakespeare's plays offers insight for theatre history scholars and educators about the themes and concepts that continue to speak to humanity.

The fact that musicals originating in Europe and America often exhibit the same connections relative to cosmic bodies reveals the ideas, themes, and anxieties that affect humans generally. Although it seems that in many ways cosmic symbolism may transcend national boundaries, in other instances the symbolism links specifically to

national meta-narratives. The use of cosmic symbolism in *Hamilton* for example evokes American history and the emblems of America in intriguing ways. As Sagan has asserted, nations often seek “something of the power and credibility of the heavens” in their emblems.³⁷⁰ As Deborah Harding has observed, the Founding Fathers of America incorporated cosmic imagery into national emblems like the flag, the presidential seal, and others. *Hamilton* also includes imagery of cosmic bodies, not to symbolize the nation, but to symbolize the major actors in the creation of the nation. In a musical that engages directly with American history and specifically the founding of America, the symbolism reveals particular connections between cosmos and America.

Musical theatre’s inclusion of cosmic symbolism and interest in themes like the purpose and brevity of life shares much with the popular culture impulse of twentieth century America and Europe. The twentieth century saw a prevalence of interest in space in popular culture, specifically television and movies. From the advent of the *Superman* comics (the man of steel born on a different planet, but very much an American hero) to the *Star Trek* television and film series, to the *Star Wars* franchise and cultural phenomenon, American popular culture in the twentieth century was fascinated by space. Europe, too, had its share of popular culture engagement with the cosmos in *Doctor Who* (1963, Britain), *Valérien et Laureline* (1967, France), and others. Not only does musical theatre’s use of cosmic symbolism relate to the long cultural history of humans incorporating cosmic symbolism into their artistic creations, but it correlates to the popular culture of its own time. The fascination with outer space may have been inspired by actual events occurring in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The Space Race

³⁷⁰ Carl Sagan, *Cosmos* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 37.

began in 1957 with the Russians' launch of Sputnik and seriously concluded in 2011 with the end of America's space shuttle program. As a significant component of the rhetoric of the Cold War the Space Race was intricately engaged with the advancement of capitalist American culture but also the concept of the Final Frontier, and Europeans and Americans alike expressed fascination with what might be up in the cosmos as well as where they might fit into it. The interest in Space has not waned following the conclusion of the Space Shuttle program in 2011, as missions to Mars continue to progress and in 2018, NASA launched the Mars InSight lander with the intention of studying the interior of the red planet.³⁷¹ Moreover, movies like *The Martian*, *Independence Day: Resurgence*, and *Star Wars* continue to attract audiences. Space is still an interesting frontier for Americans, and American and European musical theatre exhibits this fascination regarding what is beyond Earth's atmosphere.

Significance of the study

This study extends the long-established tradition of analyzing the meanings of cosmic bodies in art, literature, sculpture, and non-musical plays to the growing field of musical theatre studies. Looking at musicals that span the second half of the twentieth century and the early twenty-first century provides a survey of the use of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre from the early inceptions of the integrated book musical, through the rebellion of the concept musical, the globalization of the American musical art form through the mega-musical, and the continuation of American musicals at the end

³⁷¹ mars.nasa.gov, "NASA's First Mission to Study the Interior of Mars Awaits May 5 Launch," NASA's Mars Exploration Program, accessed July 20, 2018, <https://mars.nasa.gov/news/8332/nasas-first-mission-to-study-the-interior-of-mars-awaits-may-5-launch>; "NASA's InSight Mars Lander," accessed July 20, 2018, <https://mars.nasa.gov/insight/>.

of the twentieth century and beginning of the twenty-first century. This analysis initiates the exploration of the meaning of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre so that theatre scholars, practitioners, and audiences, like scholars and consumers of other disciplines, can gain a deeper understanding of the meaning of cosmic symbolism within musical theatre and the possible implications of its use. For theatre practitioners, who often already incorporate imagery of cosmic bodies into their designs, presumably to establish the setting and time and for the visual appeal, this analysis can provide an understanding of the many symbolic meanings that cosmic bodies can possess and the impact on audiences they may have. Practitioners, then, may more strategically incorporate these symbols into their texts and designs. Finally, by gaining a deeper understanding of the meaning and use of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre, we can gain a deeper understanding of the connections of twenty and twenty-first century humans with their ancestors, connections that may also transcend national or other cultural barriers, including the desires, fears, and concerns that all humans share and the ways in which modern humans have altered their relationship with the cosmos.

As I have suggested in the title of this analysis musical theatre characters invoke cosmic bodies in ways that adhere to the traditional use of cosmic symbolism and ways that contrast tradition. They harmonize with what has come before, blending with but adding complexity to how cosmic symbolism has been used throughout recorded human history. As the Greek term *kosmos* implies, there is an order to the universe, a harmony defined by specific rules.³⁷² Plato defined these rules and laws using musical terms, and as science has uncovered many of these rules humanity's relationship with the cosmos

³⁷² William K. Guthrie, *The Greek Philosophers: From Thales to Aristotle* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1975), 89.

has altered. Musical theatre characters sing to and with the harmony of the spheres and in the process reveal that prehistoric humans' impulse to seek a place within the cosmic order is still salient to modern humans. Looking to the heavens out of fascination, for guidance and comfort, and when facing mortality is in our blood. The prevalence of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre may in part account for its wide appeal: it taps into our most whimsical and romantic notions that we experience as we ponder the vastness of space and time and our place and purpose within it. Against this backdrop, stories of love, intrigue, and suffering play out, and we are comforted, enchanted and exalted. Moreover many of these musicals that employ cosmic symbolism do so in a social justice context, challenging the status quo and envisioning a better future. Cosmic symbolism is a crucial factor in the message these musicals impart, contributing to musical theatre's impact as an instrument for social change as well as a source of entertainment.

Implications for Further Research

This analysis marks the beginning of the exploration of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre. The scope of this dissertation made a comprehensive survey impossible, and a number of works remain unexplored that would seem potentially fruitful (for example, *Big River* and *Carousel*).³⁷³ More in-depth investigation of individual works would also likely prove profitable. Research investigating how the conclusions of this study may relate to uses of cosmic symbolism in other dramatic works, including straight plays and other types of theatrical performance, may also prove fruitful.

³⁷³ See Appendix A for a list of excluded musicals.

Another promising area for future research is the relationship of cosmic symbolism and terrestrial symbolism (symbolism using earth-bound elements like rivers and mountains), as there were some instances in the musicals explored here (“At the End of the Day” and “For Good,” for example) in which both the cosmos and geological features were referenced in juxtaposition. Such an exploration would more fully illuminate the relationship between musical theatre characters’ anxieties, fears, and desires, and the natural world around them, and would also contribute to the larger scholarly exploration of human relationships with the universe and nature. Such a study might take as its starting point Raymond Knapp’s examination of the meaning of the river in *Show Boat* and the symbolic meaning of the land in *The Sound of Music*.³⁷⁴

Other possibilities for further research include an exploration of how designers incorporate cosmic bodies into lighting, costume, scenic, and projection design for musicals, and audience reception studies of cosmic symbolism in musical theatre.

My attempt to discover meanings of cosmic symbolism for musical theatre characters has implications for musical theatre audiences as well as theatre practitioners. What audiences perceive and how they respond to these encounters with cosmic bodies in musical theatre warrants further investigation. What seems apparent, however, is that the millennia-long tendency to look to the cosmos for a better understanding of life on earth has greatly affected musical theatre and will presumably be with us for a long time to come.

³⁷⁴ Knapp, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, 2005, 230–39.

APPENDIX A: TABLE OF INSTANCES ANALYZED IN THIS STUDY

Musical	Function		
	Comfort (Ch 3)	Exceptionalism (Ch 4)	Time/Mortality (Ch 5)
<i>Paint Your Wagon</i>	“I Talk to the Trees”		
	“Wand’rin’ Star”		
	“They Call the Wind Maria”		
<i>Fiddler on the Roof</i>			“Sunrise, Sunset”
<i>Man of La Mancha</i>		“The Impossible Dream”	
		“To Each His Dulcinea”	
		“It’s All the Same”	
		“Little Bird”	
<i>Hair</i>	“Aquarius”		
	“Let the Sunshine in”		
<i>Pippin</i>		“Finale”	
		“I Guess I’ll Miss the Man”	
			“Glory”
<i>Evita</i>		“High Flying Adored”	
			“She’s a Diamond”
			“Oh What a Circus”
<i>Les Misérables</i>	“Stars”		
	“Javert’s Suicide: Soliloquy”		
		“Love Montage”	
			“At the End of the Day”
			“Empty Chairs at Empty Tables”
			“Come to Me”

Musical	Function		
	Comfort (Ch 3)	Exceptionalism (Ch 4)	Time/Mortality (Ch 5)
<i>Rent</i>			“One Song Glory”
<i>Notre Dame de Paris</i>	“Lune”		
		“Le Temps des Cathédrales”	
		“Ces diamants-là”	
		“Les Cloches”	
		“Beau Comme le Soleil”	
		“Tu vas me Détruire”	
			“Danse mon Esmeralda”
<i>Wicked</i>		“As Long as You’re Mine”	
		“For Good”	
<i>Billy Elliot</i>	“The Stars Look Down”		
<i>Hamilton</i>		“Burn”	
		“Dear Theodosia”	
			“What’d I Miss?”
<i>Bright Star</i>	“Bright Star”		
	“Sun is Gonna Shine”		
<i>Natasha, Pierre and the Great Comet of 1812</i>	“Great Comet of 1812”		
		“No One Else”	

APPENDIX B: ADDITIONAL INSTANCES OF COSMIC SYMBOLISM³⁷⁵

Musical	Instance	Cosmic Body
<i>Oklahoma!</i>	"People Will Say We're in Love"	Stars
<i>Carousel</i>	Character: Starkeeper	Stars
<i>Annie Get Your Gun</i>	"You Can't Get a Man With a Gun"	Sun
	"I Got the Sun in the Morning and the Moon at Night"	Sun
	"They Say it's Wonderful"	Moon
	"Doin' What Comes Natur'lly"	Moon
<i>Hair</i>	"Good Morning Starshine"	Sun/moon?
	"What a Piece of Work is Man"	Firmament
<i>Jesus Christ Superstar</i>	"Jesus Christ Superstar"	Star
<i>Evita</i>	"On this Night of a Thousand Stars"	Stars
<i>Cats</i>	"Memory"	Moonlight
<i>Les Misérables</i>	"Prologue 1: Look Down"	Sun
<i>Big River</i>	"Worlds Apart"	Stars, Sun, Sky
<i>Starlight Express</i>	"I Am the Starlight"	Starlight
	"Starlight Express"	Starlight
<i>You're a Good Man Charlie Brown</i>	"Night Scene-Underscore"	Star
<i>Shrek</i> TYA version	"When Words Fail"	Moon

³⁷⁵ This list represents all the instances I have discovered thus far.

APPENDIX C: TIME FRAME OF COSMIC SYMBOLISM USE³⁷⁶

(Includes instances explored in this study and other instances from Appendix A)

Decade	Show (year)	Cosmic Body
1940s	<i>Oklahoma!</i> (1943) <i>Carousel</i> (1945) <i>Annie Get Your Gun</i> (1946)	Star Star Sun, Moon
1950s	<i>Paint Your Wagon</i> (1951)	Stars
1960s	<i>Fiddler on the Roof</i> (1964) <i>Man of La Mancha</i> (1965) <i>Hair</i> (1968)	Sun Stars, Moon Planets, Moon, Sun, Firmament, Starshine
1970s	<i>Jesus Christ Superstar</i> (1971) <i>Pippin</i> (1972) <i>Evita</i> (1979)	Star Sun, Moon Stars, Sun
1980s	<i>Cats</i> (1982) <i>Les Misérables</i> (1985) <i>Big River</i> <i>Starlight Express</i> (1987)	Moon Stars, Sun, Moon Stars, Sun, Sky Star, Sun?
1990s	<i>Rent</i> (1996) <i>Notre Dame de Paris</i> (1998) <i>You're a Good Man Charlie Brown</i> (revised) (1999)	Sun Stars, Sun, Moon, Universe Star
2000s	<i>Wicked</i> (2003) <i>Billy Elliot</i> (2005)	Comet, Moon Stars
2010s	<i>Shrek TYA</i> (2013) <i>Hamilton</i> (2015) <i>Bright Star</i> (2016) <i>Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812</i> (2016)	Moon Sun Stars, Sun Comet, Moon

³⁷⁶ This list represents all the instances I have discovered thus far.

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VITA

Born and raised in Colorado, Rebecca has a special connection with the land and the sky and loves to be outdoors and feel the wildness of nature, as long as she can come inside when it gets too wild. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Theatre and History from the University of Colorado in Boulder in 2011, where she also earned her Master of Arts in 2014. Before and during graduate school she worked in the Denver Metro area as a non-AEA stage manager. Her Master's thesis explored cosmic symbolism in musical theatre, looking at selected, individual musicals and their use of cosmic symbolism. In 2014 she moved to the University of Missouri to pursue her PhD in Theatre and continued to work in the community as a non-AEA stage manager. Her other research interests include musical theatre history pedagogy, specifically a focus on emphasizing the work of female artists and artists of color in musical theatre, the work of the Irish women's Theatre Company: Charabanc, the intersection of nature and theatre, and anything having to do with musical theatre.

Rebecca also works as a sound designer and choreographer. She seeks to take her ten years of experience in ballet, her experienced competing in Scottish Highland dance, and her more than fifteen years of experience playing acoustic musical instruments to contribute to the telling of stories on stage.