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If/Then: An Exploration of Multiverse Theory and of the Consequences of our Actions

In the middle of October my family brought me into New York City to see If/Then on Broadway. While I knew that the show had been performing extremely well, I knew next to nothing about the plot. With nothing but the cover of the playbill to go by, I went into the show with an open mind, and ended up being floored by how much I enjoyed it. The show opens up with a retrospective delivered by the main protagonist, played by Idina Menzel. She sings about how the smallest choices can impact our lives permanently, and we then see the first scene. In the scene she ends up getting asked to make a relatively simple decision: choose which friend to leave with. The same scene runs twice; showing the immediate consequences of leaving with either friend. From there, the entire play explores the two parallel universes created by this one decision.

In one universe, the protagonist, named Elizabeth, adopts the nickname “Liz” and settles down with a husband, living a happy, simple home life. In the other universe, Elizabeth takes the nickname “Beth” and becomes a successful businesswoman. Each universe sees vastly different events with the same group of people, and these two completely separate worlds were created by a small, inconsequential decision made early on. Interestingly enough, this concept is discussed in a popular scientific theory known as Multiverse Theory. The theory suggests that, each time a decision with two or more outcomes is made, a universe to correspond with each decision gets created.

Multiverse theory suggests that there are infinitely many universes, and each one has the same people who are put in different circumstances. The theory suggests that, for example, there could be a universe where I’m in one of several different universities other than Stevens, or a universe where I decided to not enter college at all. Likewise, there could be a universe where I’ve won the lottery several times over, or a universe where I’m living on the streets. This idea of parallel universes is shown very well by If/Then.

While it wasn’t the only focus of the show by any means, If/Then did an excellent job of conveying the message that our actions have consequences, and explored how totally different the consequences could be from even small, inconsequential decisions. It was one of my first times on Broadway and I can happily report that I thoroughly enjoyed myself.