

# Harry's Broadway Adventure

Recollection and Recommendation, 2017 Summer

Preface:

I was interning at Goldman Sachs in the summer of 2017. Staying in the NYC area, I went to many (9) Broadway shows during my spare time. Never a fervid theater goer, I fell in love with this breathtaking style of performing arts. Here are some of mine brief reviews of the shows.

## Cats 猫

Costume/stage/lighting: 3/5

Music/choreography rendition: 4/5

Story: 4/5

Overall: 3/5

Brainwashing songs: The Overture, Memory

One sentence summary: A bunch of cats sing about themselves and choose one amongst them to reborn into a new life.

I watched Cats for the first time in middle school in the music class, where this was the only musical I ever enjoyed. The first Broadway show I chose to watch, Cats brought back some good *memory*. Since this is a classical play, the props and costumes are quite ordinary, while the music by ALW is truly a masterpiece. Every song is catchy and underlines different personalities of each cat. "*TOUCH ME, IT'S SO EASY TO LEAVE ME*", in particular, was more than enough for me to shed tears. The dancing, on the other hand, is much less a spectacle (though critics might disagree).

In a nutshell, if you watched Cats before and want a faithful revival, or if you love Memory the song, or if you love classics (like Phantom), you will like Cats. Otherwise, there are better shows out there.

## The Wicked 魔法坏女巫

Costume/stage/lighting: 5/5

Music/choreography rendition: 5/5

Story: 4/5

Overall: 5/5

Brainwashing songs: No One Mourns the Wicked, For Good, No Good Deeds, As Long as you are Mine, Defy Gravity

One sentence summary: Two girls pursuing separated courses with intertwined destiny, with one end up being recognized as the Wicked and the other as the Good.

The ticket for the Wicked is on the expensive side, but it is worthwhile to get a good seat. The Wicked is unarguably one of the best Broadway shows out there. When I reached the grandiose Gershwin Theater seeing the majority of the audience were young girls, I presumed this show to be somewhat girlish 少女心. While this statement might not be false, the story of the Wicked of the Oz was far deeper than this. The story involves various elements of selfishness, hypocrisy, propaganda, racism and the fragileness of friendship. It is the kind of the show where you need days to peruse on to get the value out of it. TLDR, this is by no means a play for kids.

The music in the Wicked is extremely pleasant. While the original singers Kristen Chenoweth and Idina Menzel in my opinion could never be surpassed, most songs are a joy to the ears. The flourish costumes and props also explain for the price.

In a nutshell, the Wicked is funny, artistic and insightful. It made me ask the question: how is this ridiculous setting from the world we have nowadays? If you could only go to one Broadway show and are not short on budget, consider this one.

## Kinky Boots 长靴妖姬

Costume/stage/lighting: 5/5

Music/choreography rendition: 5/5

Story: 5/5

Overall: 5/5

Brainwashing songs: The Most Beautiful Thing in the World, Land of Lola, Sex is in the Heels, Hold me in your Heart, History of Wrong Guys

One sentence summary: A desperate shoemaker meets a drag queen and realized their common traits while helping each other through the toughest times.

TL:DR: this is MY FAVORITE Broadway show.

The day I watched Kinky Boots, NYC was pouring in a thunderstorm. After arriving at the theater all soaked, my mood was already dampened while I left my jacket and backpack on the neighboring seats to dry. 2.5 hours later, I was not much dryer – I cried a lot during the show!

Some say Kinky Boots is about transgender or queer, but to me the core is the self-identity and expectation, including but not limited to sexual. The story develops with how Charlie and Lola's self-identities clash with others (including their fathers', or co-workers) and reconcile amongst themselves eventually.

The music in Kinky Boots is notably upbeat and catchy. A song like Land of Lola made me hyperventilating, while soliloquies like Hold me in your Heart left me tearful. However, it was the dance that defines this play. A tall black man dancing in bright red high heels is not only a spectacle, but also an extremely artistic godsend.

If you can watch only one Broadway show and want a two-digit ticket price, watch this "six feet of irresistibility".

## Chicago 芝加哥

Costume/stage/lighting: 3/5

Music/choreography rendition: 4/5

Story: 4/5

Overall: 4/5

Brainwashing songs: All that Jazz, Cell Block Tango, We Both Reached for the Gun

One sentence summary: Two murderesses went on a roller coaster of fighting for fame and survival.

If you have watched the 2002 Oscar-winning movie adaption, you would have already known how good Chicago is. The story dwells on the corruption of judiciary system and society in general in Chicago, exposed through the eyes of Velma and Roxie, who fanatically crave for fame even more than their own life, literally. If you have read The Great Gatsby, which also jeers at the jazz age, you would find some similarities. Because of the extremely satirical nature of the play, I felt that the performance even felt short to fully unravel it.

The dance and sexy costumes in Chicago are the highlights, provocative yet artistic. The music is, of course, jazz heavy, with the band in the foreground and the conductor interacting with the actors! Chicago is a show that you just have to watch if you like musicals.

## School of Rock 摇滚学校

Costume/stage/lighting: 3/5

Music/choreography rendition: 3/5

Story: 3/5

Overall: 3/5

Brainwashing songs: Stick it to the Man, Finale

One sentence summary: A desperate unemployed wanna-be rock star assembles his band made up with elementary school kids.

The plot is easy as that. The exciting part is what the narrator said before the beginning of the show: "Many ask: 'Do the kids play the rock instruments themselves?' The answer is YES!" It is really thrilling to see small kids playing lead guitar and drums so well, and I just can't stop rooting for the little girl who played the bass! As someone who ran a band in high school, I emphasize with it in many aspects.

Though the music is composed by ALW who composed for Phantom of the Opera and Cats, the music in The School of Rock is somewhat mediocre. The riffs are somewhat humdrum but maybe it's because the taste of a hardcore metalhead is hard to satisfy.

## Groundhog Day 土拨鼠之日

Costume/stage/lighting: 5/5

Music/choreography rendition: 3/5

Story: 5/5

Overall: 3/5

Brainwashing songs: None?

One sentence summary: A pompous weather reporter is forced to repeat the same day over and over again until he does everything right.

It is a rare case where a musical is adapted from a movie. I love the movie Groundhog Day very much, and the play by no means disappointed me. It made several very interesting changes to the movie with outrageously creative staging effects (yes I'm talking about the police car chasing scene!!). The one thing it could do better is the music, which is unfortunately crucial for a Broadway musical.

If you have watched the movie, check this out, you will be surprised! If not, watch the movie first.

## The Book of Mormon

Costume/stage/lighting: 5/5

Music/choreography rendition: 5/5

Story: 4/5

Overall: 5/5

Brainwashing songs: You and Me, Sal Tlay Ka Siti

One sentence summary: Two Mormon preachers arrive at an African village or help overcome the ordeal of a warlord by sharing their creeds.

I promise this play is 10x more interesting than it sounds like. As the most R-rated play I have ever watched, The Book of Mormon is a crude masterpiece. Focusing on the bloody boarder between religion and war, the play satirizes the idealism of certain churches. Through a vivid yet somewhat uncouth storytelling, the characters are complete and real. If you find crude languages, sex and violence inappropriate for a music, this play might not be for you. Otherwise, it's highly recommended.

## The Waitress

Costume/stage/lighting: 3/5

Music/choreography rendition: 4/5

Story: 4/5

Overall: 4/5

Brainwashing songs: None?

One sentence summary: A café waitress had an epiphany of life and romance through making pies.

I would not have known that this play exists had my friend travelling from California had not told me she flew 5 hours just for this. All I knew before I walked in the theater door was that this play is written by Sara B. who sang "Brave", and that it's about a waitress. Since the play largely focused on the life dilemmas of the three waitresses, which in the heroine's case was domestic violence and unplanned pregnancy, it needs to be reasonably disturbing, and it was. In particular, the rendering of the heroine's belligerent husband was fantastic. Though somewhat cliché, the story was upbeat and funny. The "sex scenes" were the most hilarious I've ever seen. Most notably, the cast for the three waitresses had an unbelievably powerful voice, and the music was exhilarating.

A hidden gem, that's what *The Waitress* is.