The International Afterlife of a Broadway Musical

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Production Website

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INTRODUCTION

Broadway is no longer contained within just the 12 blocks and 40 theatres in New York. It has become a "brand" that is well-known and exported across the entire world. However, while lots of eyes and ears are on the Great White Way, the theatre industry has hardly examined this mechanism of international business and Broadway's cultural impact.
Through international touring and international productions, each musical theatre piece has become a "brand" of its own created a global network of audience.
In this essay I propose that a better understanding of the transnational networks of international theatre touring is critical to placing Broadway within larger theatrical and cultural systems.

This visualization uses weekly Broadway performance data from the Broadway League and international touring data from [...] to follow the global distribution of [how many] Broadway musical titles through [time] and across continents to see the dynamics of cultural transmission, to visualize how a market or a musical brand has grown, and more importantly, to understand the motivation behind this global distribution.

LITERATURE REVIEW & RELATED WORK

AusStage is well-characterized as a project of data collection that has been collaboratively driven by research. The data models used by it were devised, tested, and refined by a team of theatre researchers from around Australia. Over the years, collaborative research developed across multiple facets of AusStage, drawing the activities of the project and its application along many lines of inquiry. These include linking to bibliographic resources in collections; mapping the distribution of performance events through space;8 exploring the "value ecology" of support, infrastructure, and relationships in the performing arts; revealing changes in company programming and repertoire choices over time; digitizing photographs and videos of performance; and interrogating archival practice in the performing arts.

Caplan's review of the digital humanities in theatre studies draws attention to the need of sharing information about digital projects in theatre research around the world, including Nic Leonhardt's call for a global "hub" regarding digital projects, databases, and online resources throughout the world. Beyond knowing "what's out there" is the need to share data among digital projects, to build "interconnected" databases of performance that, in Caplan's vision, could span "the globe."

Existing work on this topic is very limited and generally ineffective – look into concert touring examples.
Some visualizations cover reasonably sized datasets but lack any type of fluid interactivity. Views are static and the level of granularity in most of the views does not allow interesting trends to emerge.
Some visualizations focus on a hub-and-spoke type visualization. Although geographically accurate, these visualizations emphasize an uninteresting part of the data. Users are not interested in the paths travelled by artists between venues. (This likely is more reflective of flight paths and highway locations.)

No visualizations that was found online attempt to visualize theatre touring data that I aggregate and visualize in this project – not domestically let alone internationally.

Given the scarcity of scholarly projects history with digital research, I began to expand my scope of intellectual inquiry in an uncharted field of research.

Contribute to creating a new database that amalgamate world touring data for Broadway musicals.

DESIGN STUDY

Three visual perspectives:

Aggregated View
Geographical pattern of the distribution
Understanding trends & motivation
Does success on Broadway mean success abroad?
Does musicals of book or adaptation increase familiarity and in turn success of the title aboard?
Other qualitative attributes could include: female/male lead cast; genre/themes

Title Perspective
Timing of title popularity: Eg. The original Broadway production of Chicago opened on June 3, 1975. It received mixed reviews and encountered multiple setbacks during its run. However, the 1996 Broadway revival was jaw-droppingly successful and thus began its international life.
Visualizing lifeline of the title
How has it been received across the world over time?

Market Perspective
Timing of market emergence: Europe has been online for a long time with Broadway touring / local production; yet, Asia has only been online for a short time.
Is a certain market more welcoming of English versions or local language version?
Is there a seasonal trend of Broadway touring in a certain area?