

Lydia Newman

Fourth Year Arts Award Outcome Report

2023

Faculty Mentor: Tovah Close

Musical Theatre as Media

I would like to begin by expressing my immense gratitude to the J. Sanford Miller Family. Their contribution to my artistic education has been immeasurable. Through this program, I have obtained professional headshots, built a professional website (<https://www.lydia-newman.com>), and attended Boston Conservatory at Berklee's Three Week Musical Theatre Acting Intensive. I have been able to pursue opportunities that allowed me to grow immensely as an actor, artist, and academic. This past winter break, I was able to use my Fourth Year Arts Award to travel to New York City, where I conducted research for my Media Studies Distinguished Major Program at UVA thesis on Women in Musical Theatre.



While in New York City, I was able to attend performances of *Hadestown*, *Funny Girl*, and *Hamilton*. My thesis research questions are as follows:

- To what extent does the portrayal of women in American historical musicals change the modern day narrative of these women and of women in general?
- To what extent does the portrayal of women in American historical musicals change the modern day narrative of the historical events being portrayed through the medium of musical theatre?

In my thesis, I investigate these questions along with the concept of the diva in American musical theatre, the concept of fandom and online fan behavior, and the impact of musical theatre on American culture. Each of these live musicals addresses at least one of the previous concepts, and I found my attendance at these productions to be invaluable in assessing the significance of American musical theatre. My thesis will be complete on May 3, 2023, and I will be presenting my research and findings to the Media Studies faculty.

Before I traveled to New York City, I asked my mentor, Tovah Close, for recommendations of whom I should interview for my thesis. One of Tovah's former students at NYU, Margaret Hall, is a current graduate student at NYU Gallatin's School of Individualized Study, where she is pursuing a Masters in Musical Theatre History. The information that I gleaned from this interview with Margaret Hall was enlightening, and I find our conversation helpful as I continue to conduct research. While my thesis is not yet complete, I have been using what I learned from this interview in my analysis of musical theatre as an academic discipline. I'm grateful for Margaret's insight and to have had guidance from Tovah in this process. I recorded this interview and purchased an OtterAi subscription to transcribe the recording.

While in the city, I visited the Drama Book Shop, where I purchased a journal and various drama books that would assist me in my analysis of musical theatre as an academic discipline, along with books on feminism in musical theatre.

I am graduating from the University of Virginia this spring and have begun looking for jobs in musical theatre. To facilitate this process and to make searching for jobs easier, I purchased a Backstage.com subscription.

I accomplished all of the goals that I had outlined for myself in this endeavor. I studied Broadway performances, interviewed a musical theatre expert, and obtained research materials. I cannot thank the J. Sanford Miller family enough for their contribution to my artistic education, and I am so grateful to Tovah Close for her mentorship.

FINAL BUDGET:

Travel

Travel Cost for Train Tickets to and from New York City	\$211
Travel Cost for Ubers within New York City	\$156.13

Housing and Meals

Cost for Hotel in New York City for 3 nights	\$625.53
Cost for Meals in New York City for 4 days and 3 nights	\$255
Cost for Interview Meal with Margaret Hall	\$54

Tickets

Tickets for <i>Hamilton</i>	\$186.25
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Tickets for <i>Funny Girl</i>	\$435.66
Tickets for <i>Hadestown</i>	\$210

Research Materials

OtterAi Transcription Subscription	\$16.99
Research Materials– books by Stacy Wolf and Sherri Sanders, renowned musical theatre scholars and historians.	\$154
Journal for interview notes	\$13

Backstage

1-year subscription to Backstage.com at \$16.66/month	\$199.92
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Total:

Budget Income, Funding, or Other Awards

Income Item: MAS Fourth Year Arts Award	\$2,500
Income Item: Personal Contribution	\$17.48
Total	\$2,517.48