

Column by Lily Collins, staff person at Kirkland Town Library and Clinton High School senior.

Although I may not be able to sing (or act... or dance) to save my life, I absolutely love musicals! Broadway shows are closed through the end of the year, but there quite are a few ways to enjoy musicals right at home. Firstly, you can listen to the soundtrack. Most can be found on Youtube or Spotify, but we also have quite a few available in our CD collection.

Some musicals have been made into movies, so you could watch *RENT* or *Mamma Mia* on DVD. Although these are made for the screen and not the stage, the spirit remains the same! Movie adaptations break down some of the common barriers to seeing musicals live — everything from the price and location to the limited timeframe when the original cast is still performing. Because of those factors, a lot of musical theatre fans often have to sate themselves with soundtracks and the sources that inspire many musicals- books!

For many musicals, this is quite easy because books are very closely tied to the show. Some are inspired by them, like how *Hamilton* was inspired by Ron Chernow's biography of the same name, while others are direct adaptations like the *Percy Jackson Musical*. Additionally, most musicals have a book written about them that has all the songs along with insights into the creative process and more!

*Hamilton: the Musical* follows the life of Alexander Hamilton. Lin-Manuel Mirarda, the writer and former star of the show, wrote the musical after being inspired by Ron Chernow's biography- titled *Hamilton*. For the musical theatre fans who have already somehow gotten bored of the musical on Disney +, reading the original source material gives a very interesting insight into how the musical was created. For more direct information, readers can also check out *Hamilton: A Revolution*, which details the writing and creation process for *Hamilton*.

*Venice* is a musical that I recently discovered and quickly fell in love with! The plot loosely follows Shakespeare's *Othello*, but in a dystopian Venice, California. The strongest connection comes in with the song "Let out the Light", which directly quotes 5.2 from the original source material. The musical is incredibly energetic and entertaining!

There have been several attempts made to adapt the *Percy Jackson* novels. The first were two movies modeled after the first two books of the series, but they didn't go over well. Even the author himself said he never watched the movies because he read the scripts and knew it would

not be a good representation of his books. The musical, however, is a different story. It remains true to the books (as much as is possible for the stage) and has some fantastic songs on the soundtrack. The fantasy and lore of the books translate very well to the stage, and is very fun to listen to.

*Natasha, Pierre, and the Great Comet of 1812* is based on *War and Peace* by Leo Tolstoy- at least, 70 pages of it. The entirety of the musical takes place during book eight, focusing on Natasha's dalliance with Anatole while Pierre is searching for existential meaning. To be fully transparent, I have not read the entirety of *War and Peace*, but I was so fascinated that only 70 pages of a novel could produce such a rich and complete story that I did read that section. I personally really enjoy when direct lines from the musical are taken from the source material, so singing the melodies to the lines in my head while reading was very fun!

Musicals are a very dynamic form of entertainment, and although they can be enjoyed on their own, there are many ways to supplement them. Looking at the source material for musicals and finding the little bits of inspiration that lead to certain lines in the musical can give you a lot of insight into the book and the show. And if you've already read and enjoyed any of the books mentioned above — try giving the musicals a listen!