# Curtain Call: Giving Tired Shows a Final Bow

BY MICAIAH PRICE

"To be, or not to be," is one of the most famous quotes of the 16th and 17th centuries in the theatre realm. However, for theatre geeks all around the world today, the question proposed is "To be on Broadway, or not to be." For years, audience members have been arguing whether certain shows should be given the opportunity to take their bow on a Broadway platform. While each show has its ups and downs, the individual reasons for disagreement are to be chosen by each viewer. These shows may have gone for extreme amounts of time, inappropriate content, or a confusing and aging plot line.

Setting the stage for controversy, we have the classic, thrilling place where hip hop and musical theatre come to life: *Hamilton*. Through the past 10 years, this show has brought in over $1 billion in total Broadway gross revenue. However, the criticism written is more valuable than $1 billion, including the vigorous opinion of myself. The show frequently mentions topics of slavery, sexism, and racism, which tend to disgust the viewers rather than create zeal. As well as harsh topics, the show tends to criticize moments in American and English history by adding excessive scenes over Alexander Hamilton's views on slavery, adding rap which is seen as inappropriate for historical matters, and misrepresentation of America's morals.

Scene change number one transitions into the dispute of *&Juliet*, one of the most recent hits of 2022 and to continue. This diverse show has won many major awards during its West End run, but has it won the hearts of all spectators alike? Not according to many students from the Louisville district.

Senior Jesse Reed, a future theatre major, said, "I don't like *&Juliet* because the producers don't respect the talent of the arts and instead prioritize big figure names like Charlie D'Amelio that didn't earn their roles to draw in crowds."

Viewers have disliked this show for reasons including its undeveloped characters, its bland plot, its shallow feminist message, and some critics detest the way the modern interpretation of Shakespeare's original *Romeo and Juliet* has been downplayed. As well as agreeing with these anonymous opinions, this show has brought more of an unnecessary modernization to the theatre. Instead of highlighting true literature, such as *Into the Woods*, *Hairspray*, or *Something Rotten*, this show creates a bad look toward the Broadway ideals.

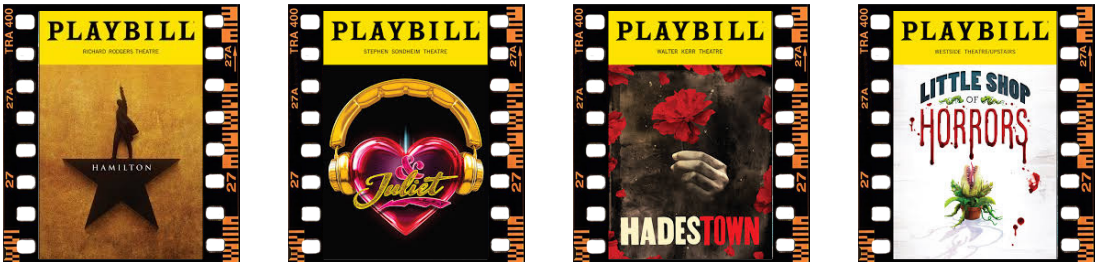
Now resetting the show, we move onto shows that should be praised for their debuts and long runs. The first scene offers a strong, original production that has brought jazz and theatre to life: *Hadestown*. While some viewers may argue that *Hadestown* is overdone or way too popular, it offers an original storyline of Greek Mythology, which explores themes of depression, love, doubt, and pain. The story incorporates a thick plot, developed characters, and music.

While some on the contrary argue that *Hadestown* isn't appropriate for the family, it is far more clean in terms of language than most shows and rarely has too much violence for one scene. From a personal standpoint, this show is truly heartwarming with a combination of older ideology and more realistic themes. This show is truly an original.

To finish out strong, we have the classic, *Little Shop of Horrors*. Throughout its over 40 years, this wonderful entertainment has brought joy and laughter to crowds through live theatre and a simple movie in your home. *Little Shop of Horrors* brings a tragic, unrealistic plot to life through developed characters, a heartwarming message, and bits of humor in between. For freshman Jack Kilton, this show has been one of the main shows that has influenced him into the theatre world.

Kilton said, "*Little Shop of Horrors* blends reality and fun. This show is definitely my favorite show; it's like an escape route from the real world."

As the lights fade and the curtain drops, the real conclusion is not what other people say, but merely your own preferences. While each show has its pros and cons, the real decision comes down to the audience. Do you want to associate yourself with a show that criticizes the government, isn't entertaining, or offensive? Do you want to pay hundreds of dollars for a show that lacks interest? The choice is yours. So the next time you hear "To be, or not to be", just open the playbill for yourself and conclude whether this show owns a place on your stage.




**ACT IT OUT. The following shows listed include *Hamilton*, *&Juliet*, *Hadestown*, and *Little Shop of Horrors*. These 4 shows either are or were very popular choices on Broadway.**