A History of the American Musical Theatre  
Wendy Rouder, Facilitator

Week 1 - What is musical theatre?: a semi-personal definition; 1750-1900 (English origins; foreign imports in the 19th century: the “blonde bombshells”, “legs, legs, legs,” the Black Crook, America loves Gilbert and Sullivan); The Minstrel Show--America’s own indigenous musical theatre; and then the immigrant character sings and stars are made)

Week 2 - Early 20th Century: European musical theatre conventions by America composers; George M. Cohan America’s first great all-around musical theatre man and his notions of “American greatness”

Week 3 - America’s Great Musical Milestone

Week 4 - The 1930s: Silly plots and great music on Broadway (with one Big Exception)

Week 5 - 1940s: the Rodgers and Hammerstein revolution

Week 6 - The Ripening of the Golden Age

Week 7 - More Golden Age: Who Can Get Enough?

Week 8 - Did the Golden Age die (rock and rap musicals)? Some of your favorites or some of mine

Note 1: At about 10 or 15 minutes before each class I will try to have a musical slide show playing. Nobody needs to pay attention to it if you have anything else you would prefer to do (check email, greet a friend, etc). I will simply have this “mini-show” for those who are musical theatre junkies such as myself and cannot get enough in the limited time for the class.

Note 2: I have requested that this class be held in a windowless room. When the lights go out, the room should be very, very dark. Just as in many theatres, if you cannot make curtain time, it would be best to try to wait by the door until it opens (which I will try to have our class assistant do about 10-15 minutes into the start of class when I will try to remember to have the lights come on for a few minutes for latecomers). And unless the church has a contrary policy, you are welcome to snack (but the room will be very dark so don’t miss your mouth).

Note 3: I have acquired the material for this class in the past and this class will be an “encore” showing of a past OLLI presentation so you are welcome to repeat but most of the material will also be a repeat.