

Capturing Attention, The First Ten Minutes

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Have you ever heard the beginning of a story, or had a taste of something delicious, that immediately hooked you and left you wanting more? I have encountered this phenomenon on multiple occasions with the opening numbers of musicals. In just five minutes I find myself deeply enthralled and invested in a story hoping to discover more about this different world I have just been introduced to. The aim of my project is to discover what makes these opening numbers so effective at capturing the imaginations and hearts of an audience, and how to replicate or improve on these opening numbers, in my work, or perhaps within your creations.

Over the last year or so I began a journey to discover what exactly can lead to the many iconic and impressive opening numbers that I have heard in my life. There is minimal research on what makes the opening of musicals successful or powerful, so for my research I focused on primary sources such as the musical itself, and interviews with the creators of these musicals. While my research started out directly correlated to what exactly can make an opening number good. It quickly evolved as I began to explore the topic. I found the topic to be far more nuanced than I had initially believed, as sometimes opening numbers only fulfilled a few small roles and the second or even third number was used to cover topics that are often covered by opening numbers of a musical.

I began my research with an extremely broad idea of researching musicals on Broadway. Musicals have always fascinated me because on the surface they are ridiculous. People do not usually burst into song or dance so making a form of entertainment based entirely on the concept of consistently bursting into song or dance is a little unusual. As I continued my research I realized that what fascinated me about musical theatre was the ability of a musical to tell stories and to so easily involve an audience that might be far removed from the stakes of the story.

When I compare musical theatre to other forms of storytelling, I am consistently impressed by musical theatre's ability to move a plot and give powerful backstory and development to its characters so easily. In particular, I found that musical themes and motifs were particularly powerful tools that could swiftly allow me to recall or connect pieces of information back to one another. While musical motifs obviously occur in other forms of media such as motion pictures and television series, I find them especially poignant within musical theatre, as within a musical the same basic motif can be used hundreds or thousands of times within the musical in dozens of different ways to evoke countless ideas without becoming stale or boring.

As I continued my research I decided to focus on storytelling within musicals. As I read and listened through interviews with various composers, I realized that within a musical, every song must accomplish something for the plot. This can be done in a variety of ways. Some of the important tasks that a song might accomplish are to develop a character, develop a relationship, establish a goal, or issue that needs resolving, set a scene, or move the plot along.

As I listened to more musicals and compared them to other forms of media, I realized a major advantage of musical theatre is the ability to transcend time or space, even within a grounded or otherwise realistic plot. A song can give the audience a deep and private view into the mind of a specific character without them having to reveal their desires or goals to other characters in the story. During the junior capstone block, I began to think more specifically about the opening numbers of musicals and how these were particularly impactful and interesting within the context of musical theatre. During that block, I began to focus my view on the opening numbers of musicals.

As I continued to delve into my research, I realized that because I was interested in the storytelling of the musical, I needed to look at more than just the first number. I decided to increase my field of view to include the first couple of numbers as I felt that this number allowed for the establishment of more overall substance to the plot of each musical. Ultimately, I decided I would focus on the first ten minutes of a musical, that way I could also cover topics such as musical transitions and focus on the connections between different pieces.

As my process continued I realized that there is little to no research on the topic of opening numbers. Due to this I needed to gather evidence in order to start focusing my ideas. To create a foundation for my work I chose to listen to and read the lyrics of many opening numbers. After doing so I began to try to identify what these numbers had in common as well as some key differences between them. After this I decided to categorize opening numbers into five different styles. To create these categories I looked at the lyrical contents of the song as the main focus while still trying to keep musical ideas in mind during my analysis of each piece.

The first style of opening number that I was able to identify was the establishing number. These types of opening numbers are commonly used to set up or create the world within a musical. This type of opening can set the literal setting of the musical such as the time and place in which the story occurs. Examples of this are “Arabian Nights” from *Aladdin*(2011), “Welcome to the Rock” from *Come From Away*(2013), and “Opening Up” from *Waitress*(2015). This style of opening does more than just describe the setting. “Opening up” allows the audience to be given a quick tour of the set of the musical, directing their attention to specific parts of the stage and helping to give dimension and depth to the stage. <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Waitress: Original Broadway Cast Recording.” DMI Soundtracks.

These establishing numbers easily segued into the welcome to our world style of opening. This type of number sets the stage for the inciting incident that begins the entire show. These numbers establish the status quo of the world within the musical so that it can be broken and set into motion the musical's events. Examples of these openings are "Hello" from *The Book of Mormon*(2011), "The Heat is on In Saigon" from *Miss Saigon*(1989), "Rent" from *Rent*(1994), "Tradition" from *The Fiddler on the Roof*(1964), "Omigod you guys" from *Legally Blonde the Musical*(2007), and "Prologue: Into the Woods" from *Into the Woods*(1986). There is often a large amount of overlap between the establishing opening number and the welcome to our world opening number. The biggest difference between the two is that while establishing numbers tends to be in musicals that only take place in a few different locations, welcome to our world numbers are more common in larger scale musicals that may take place on a far larger scale.

The next common type of opening I identified is a style that introduces one or more characters and is used to establish a main character and their interests and goals. Examples of this type of opening are "Heaven on Their Minds" from *Jesus Christ Superstar*(1971), "More than Survive" from *Be More Chill*(2015), and "Good Morning Baltimore" from *Hairspray*(2002). This type of opening is especially useful at quickly developing the plot of the musical by quickly establishing the goals, motives, and thoughts of a character. I decided to call these types of openings character numbers.

The fourth type of opening number is used to establish the emotional tone and setting of the musical and to provide a basic idea of what to expect from the show. Some examples of this style of opening are "The Whole Being Dead thing" from *Beetlejuice*(2018) "Road to Hell" from *Hadestown*(2016), and "Alexander Hamilton" from *Hamilton*(2015). I decided to call this type of opening spoiler openings.

The final opening that I was able to identify is openings that are loud, big, and memorable, designed to shock or impress the audience and immediately grab their attention. Some examples of these openings are “No One Mourns the Wicked” from *Wicked*(2003), “Ex-Wives” from *Six*(2017), and “The Circle of Life” from *The Lion King*(1997). These type of openings are often used in advertisements for the musical and are performed at awards ceremonies. I decided to call this style of opening the big bang opening number.

Besides these five styles of musical theatre openings, I found some numbers that don't fall into a category, and many more including many of the songs listed above that fall into multiple categories. Thanks to the time I spent categorizing styles of musical opening numbers I was able to gain a much better understanding of what the goals of the openings of a musical were.

Due to the overall rather broad scope of what an opening number needs to encompass, I have realized through my research that many opening numbers go through numerous rewrites, and some wind up using subsequent numbers to fill gaps that may be left by the initial number. This is especially common in musicals that are sung all the way through. For example, in *Hadestown*, while “Road to Hell” is the opening number, “Any Way the Wind Blows” was originally the opener, and the segue into that song as well as into the beginning of “Come Home With Me” are both critical parts of the opening and according to Anais Mitchell are all worth being considered part of the opening number. <sup>2</sup>

While considering Anais Mitchell's explanation of the process of creating her opening number, I began to realize that what makes an opening number good is largely dependent on the rest of the musical and the story you want to tell. If the opening number is fantastic and

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<sup>2</sup> Mitchell, Anais. *Working on a Song*. Plume, 2020.

memorable but leaves the audience with the wrong impression of a character or fails to impart to them the information necessary for the story to continue, then it will be a failure. During the early runs of *Hadestown*, audiences found it difficult to connect to Eurydice and Orpheus. This was a major issue as having an audience unable to empathize with the two main characters of the show made much of the remainder of the musical fall short for audiences. In particular, the audience struggled to understand Orpheus with audiences reporting that he came off as either arrogant or foolish rather than the intended perception of Orpheus as talented and kind, but naïve.<sup>3</sup>

To solve this issue Anais Mitchell merely changed a few lines with the biggest changes being a couple of lyrics added. Mitchell changed the script by changing Hermes from a role that mostly supported the side of Hades to a mentor figure for Orpheus. This change allowed Orpheus's naivete and oddities to be better understood by the audience. By having Orpheus's first encounter be preceded by Hermes, Mitchell was able to endear Orpheus and Eurydice to the audience.<sup>4</sup> During Orpheus's brief conversation with Hermes, Hermes warns Orpheus "Don't come on too strong," which is comedically followed by Orpheus's first words to Eurydice which are "come home with me." This minor change makes the bluntness of the statement feel much more earnest and allows Orpheus to come across as honest and passionate rather than self-absorbed or narcissistic.<sup>5</sup> This piece of information is an excellent piece of proof that highlights just how important the opening of musical can be, as just a few small changes completely changed how Orpheus was perceived.

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<sup>3</sup> Mitchell, Anais. *Working on a Song*. Plume, 2020.

<sup>4</sup> Mitchell, Anais. *Working on a Song*. Plume, 2020.

<sup>5</sup> Mitchell, Anais. *Working on a Song*. Plume, 2020

After discovering this wonderful piece of information, I decided to change the focus of my research yet again. I was astounded by how incredibly influential such tiny changes to an opening could be on the overall reception an audience has for an entire musical. This intrigued me and so I decided to focus on what exactly can make an opening number so impactful, as well as how the storytelling form of a musical is different from other similar art forms.

This change in my focus began to take hold during summer break and so I decided to do a deep listening analysis of several musical opening numbers. The first musical I chose to analyze was *Jesus Christ Superstar* I looked at the first two numbers “Heaven on Their Minds” and “What's the Buzz,” For some context “Heaven on their Minds” is one of the most recognizable songs from the musical and is sung by Judas Iscariot. The song reflects Judas’s mental state and his deep frustrations and worries about the rising popularity of Jesus as the Messiah. His conflicting emotions are put on full display and his struggle to weigh his wish to survive and his loyalty to Jesus is shown through the song. I chose this musical because I believe that “Heaven on their minds is an excellent character song, that introduces the audience to the complex character that is Judas in a compelling manner.

“Heaven on Their Minds” contains a powerful and intense rhythm and an easy-to-remember rising ostinato that is used to represent Judas’s concern and his conflicted thoughts. The ostinato is repeated in the musical and the repetition of the riff allows the audience to swiftly recall the opening and associate later scenes with Judas’s doubts regarding Jesus’s decisions. One particularly powerful instance occurs when Jesus is receiving 39 lashes.<sup>6</sup> During each of the lashes, the repetitive sound of the ostinato is heard by the audience signaling to them that Judas was right, and that things had gone too far and become too dangerous.

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<sup>6</sup> Lloyd Webber, Andrew, 1948- composer. *Jesus Christ Superstar : a Rock Opera*. New York :Decca, 1970.



Aside from the ostinato, the song begins with a heavy focus on rhythm and builds quickly with additional instruments joining into the song after each cycle of the ostinato. The song is in the key of D minor, which allows for dissonance and makes the song sound introspective and tense. The song stays in a minor key but occasionally moves into the key of E minor during the bridge section, keeping the piece engaging for the audience. <sup>7</sup>

The lyrics of the song reflect Judas's fears regarding the actions of Jesus and his followers. The lyrics take the form of a plea with Judas effectively begging Jesus to listen to his warning. Judas explains that he truly has their best interests at heart. The lyrics explore Judas's doubts. However, Judas's warnings are ignored, and Jesus continues to risk the anger of the Roman empire. <sup>8</sup>

The vocal element of "Heaven on Their Mind" is greatly taxing and requires a powerful singer with a broad range to be performed. The song goes from lower notes up to extremely high notes requiring a belting technique to sing. The music often leaves lots of room for the actor playing Judas to improvise and add their own musical style and sound to the piece creating their version of the song with their musical choices and the vocal riffs they may choose to create.

"Heaven on Their Minds" is an up-tempo and exciting introduction to the musical that quickly grabs the audience's attention. Additionally, it sets the tone for the musical and provides an incredible amount of insight into the state of mind of Judas and provides the audience with an excellent understanding of exactly what Judas wants. "Heaven on their Minds" falls into the character song style of opening, but also covers a little bit of the establishing number and also fits into the big bang style of opening due to the over-the-top vocals.

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<sup>7</sup> Lloyd Webber, Andrew, 1948- composer. *Jesus Christ Superstar : a Rock Opera*. New York :Decca, 1970.

<sup>8</sup> Lloyd Webber, Andrew, 1948- composer. *Jesus Christ Superstar : a Rock Opera*. New York :Decca, 1970.

However, what makes the opening of *Jesus Christ Superstar* so effective is that we are immediately able to empathize with Judas. “Heaven on their Minds” quickly transitions into “What’s the Buzz” in which Judas and the other disciples attempt to ask Jesus for a plan or explanation of how to proceed. However, Jesus is dismissive and is more interested in talking to Mary Magdalene. Judas is frustrated as he feels that what Jesus is doing is hypocritical and goes against what they had been teaching. Jesus immediately lashes out at Judas and criticizes and dismisses him as failing to understand. This scene can create a powerful inciting event as Judas feels abandoned and hurt by Jesus. Judas’s anger at being scorned and betrayed by Jesus leaves him vulnerable to doubts and to the plans of the Pharisees leading to his betrayal of Jesus and setting into motion the full plot of the musical.<sup>9</sup> The amount of information conveyed to the audience in just ten minutes is astounding and further encouraged me in my research as I realized that Andrew Lloyd Webber was able to set up the main motivations for a character, as well as their relationship with other important characters all within ten minutes.

The next musical I chose to look at was *Miss Saigon*, the first two songs are “The Heat is on in Saigon” and “The Movie in My Mind.” *Miss Saigon* is an incredibly powerful musical that covers the story of an American soldier and a Vietnamese woman who fall and love and are married but are tragically separated during the fall of Saigon. It is a brutal and intense depiction, of war and racism that forces the audience to confront realities that they would otherwise avoid. I chose it because as a person of Asian heritage it is important to me, and I also feel that the transition between “The Heat is on in Saigon” and “The Movie in My Mind” is extraordinarily effective at setting the tone for the musical.

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<sup>9</sup> Lloyd Webber, Andrew, 1948- composer. *Jesus Christ Superstar : a Rock Opera*. New York :Decca, 1970.

“The Heat is on in Saigon” serves as an intense introduction to the world of *Miss Saigon*. The song begins with a rowdy and excited feeling as the Engineer and the bar girls entertain the American soldiers. While the scene is sexual, the music and the scene are initially fun and exciting reflecting the escape from the realities of war that the soldiers are hoping to experience. The song plays around with the conflicting emotions and desires of the soldiers and the bar girls. It also helps to display the cultural clash and the racism shown in the interactions between the Vietnamese bar girls and the American soldiers whom they have relationships with.<sup>10</sup>

Additionally, the sexual nature of the lyrics helps to show the more exploitative nature of the relationship between the soldiers and the bar girls. The song then shifts from the sexual nature of the election of which girl will be Miss Saigon, to the disillusioned and depressed Chris, and then yet again to Kim who is young and still full of hope in defiance of her situation. Chris is immediately enamored with Kim setting the stage for them to fall in love. Then as the song begins to wind down Gigi is elected as Miss Saigon and given to John, Chris’s best friend. Miss Saigon serves as a metaphor for the character's temporary escape from their bleak existence during the war; however, both the illusion of safety and escape and the newly elected Miss Saigon herself are quickly shattered at the end of the song and the transition into “The Movie in My Mind.”<sup>11</sup>

What makes “The Heat is On in Saigon” so spectacular is the quick shifts between which characters are singing and therefore their perspectives. When the soldiers sing they are searching for an escape and their descriptions of the girls and Saigon depict them as exotic and an easy escape from the war. Despite this, they consistently mention the ongoing problems and are

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<sup>10</sup> Schönberg, Claude-Michel. *Miss Saigon : Cameron Mackintosh Presents a Musical by Alain Boublil & Claude-Michel Schönberg*. [Place of publication not identified] : Milwaukee, Wis. :Alain Boublil Music ; H. Leonard, 1991.

<sup>11</sup> Schönberg, Claude-Michel. *Miss Saigon : Cameron Mackintosh Presents a Musical by Alain Boublil & Claude-Michel Schönberg*. [Place of publication not identified] : Milwaukee, Wis. :Alain Boublil Music ; H. Leonard, 1991.

unable to completely distract themselves. The Engineer and the girls are desperate to convince the Americans to get them a visa and see the soldiers as an escape. Ironically both sides see the other as an escape from their hellish lives and yet neither can get their wish.

The illusion of pleasure and safety is quickly destroyed at the end of the song when Gigi asks John to take her to America. John suddenly erupts and pushes her away in anger, frustrated that she has destroyed his temporary escape. The engineer swiftly intervenes and brutally strikes Gigi, reprimanding her and assuring the Americans that everything is fine.<sup>12</sup>

The opening defies the audience's expectations and forces them to confront the brutality of the situation and the clear desperation of Gigi to escape. This also forces the audience to confront the racism and inability of the American soldiers to treat the bargirls as human beings, and what a massive issue the mistreatment of the Vietnamese people was during the war. This choice is a brilliant way to prepare the audience for the darkness of the story of *Miss Saigon*, and immediately pulls them into the desperation of the character, preventing the audience from distancing themselves.

What makes the beginning of *Miss Saigon* particularly poignant is that rather than allowing the audience to catch their breath, they are swiftly sucked into the next song "The Movie in My Mind" a particularly poignant and beautiful character song. While "The Heat is on in Saigon" provides the audience with the perspective of the soldiers, "The Movie in My Mind" gives deep and powerful insight into the minds of Gigi and Kim, as well as the other Vietnamese bargirls. "The Movie in My Mind" is an exploration of escapism and dives into the imaginary lives that Gigi and Kim hope to live in which provides a sharp contrast to the harshness of their current situations. The surreal style of the music and the romantic lyrics transport the audience to

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<sup>12</sup> Schönberg, Claude-Michel. *Miss Saigon : Cameron Mackintosh Presents a Musical by Alain Boublil & Claude-Michel Schönberg*. [Place of publication not identified] : Milwaukee, Wis. :Alain Boublil Music ; H. Leonard, 1991.

their world of dreams. However, the lyrics also reflect their understanding of reality and their realization that they may never escape their current situation, despite this they still dream of the movie in which they are swept away by a young soldier and taken to a better life.<sup>13</sup> The song's melancholic sound and longing lyrics are mixed with more brutal lyrics such as “they kill like men they die like boys” making a powerful impact on the audience instantly causing them to sympathize with the girls.

The song then takes on a cyclical nature with the girls singing that although they understand that nothing will change, they can't help but imagine a better life each night. Gigi's line that “I know there's nothing in their hearts, but every time I take one in my arms it starts” is especially poignant and adds to the tragedy of their situation. Additionally, “The Movie in My Mind” has a strong melody that reoccurs throughout the musical. This musical link provides an easy way to remind the audience of the tragic situation and emphasize the tragic situation of the characters in later scenes. Kim and Gigi represent two sides of the same coin, with Gigi being more experienced and ready to give up, while Kim is still hopeful and believes in her ability to change her fate. The cyclical nature is made more clear by this as, despite Gigi's experience, she still sees the “movie” in her mind just the same as the innocent Kim.

*Miss Saigon* is an especially important musical to me as it is one of the very few musicals that involve Asian culture, sounds, and people. The racism that Kim and the others experience is something I have experienced in my life, albeit not to the same extent. This type of experience is something that I feel is often downplayed by non-Asian communities. I think the beginning of *Miss Saigon*, forces the audience to come face to face with an uncomfortable topic such as exploitation and racism. It provides powerful and believable examples that force the audience

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<sup>13</sup> Schönberg, Claude-Michel. *Miss Saigon : Cameron Mackintosh Presents a Musical by Alain Boublil & Claude-Michel Schönberg*. [Place of publication not identified] : Milwaukee, Wis. :Alain Boublil Music ; H. Leonard, 1991.

into an experience that they otherwise would have difficulty being able to understand or see. The ability to instantly capture an audience's attention, even with something they might not necessarily want to see is incredible and deeply motivates me in my research of the first ten minutes of a musical.

The final musical that I chose to take a deep dive into is *Hadestown*. *Hadestown* is a beautiful retelling of the story of Orpheus and Eurydice, that fuses their tragedy with the story of Hades and Persephone. I chose this musical because it is my favorite and also an excellent example of the spoiler opening. Something I found particularly interesting while researching *Hadestown*, was the absurdly large number of motifs and reoccurring themes within the show, and even more impressive is that almost all of them are introduced within the first three songs. The first song in *Hadestown* is "Road to Hell" which is a rich musical blend of jazz, folk, and blues. It uses an upbeat and repetitive yet interesting rhythm that works as a march. The song introduces the common theme of repetitive songs that sometimes even venture into call-and-response style pieces. The rhythmic style in which Hermes narrates and sings throughout the musical is especially noticeable in "Road to Hell." Hermes does a spectacular job of drawing the audience into the story and the song.

"Road to Hell" effectively summarizes and hints at the majority of the musical's plots, introducing almost all of the characters, and giving each of them a lyrical or musical motif that will reoccur throughout the story. Two particularly important characters are Eurydice, "the young girl looking for something to eat" and Orpheus, "the poor boy working on a song."<sup>14</sup> These two descriptions effectively summarize what drives the two characters throughout the

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<sup>14</sup> Anaïs Mitchell, et al. *Hadestown (Original Broadway Cast Recording)* Sing It Again Records, 2019

musical. These simple themes give the audience a quick and sturdy grasp of what drives each character.

Eurydice and Hermes are used as more cynical and worldly characters, who are charmed by Orpheus's pure and idealistic music. Orpheus's idealistic and naïve ways of thinking come across in both the lyrics that he sings, and the beautiful and simple melodies that he sings. The song's lyrics are clever and link together, the lyrics manage to rhyme and flow while still telling a detailed and intricate story. It also serves to establish important musical themes such as Orpheus's "la la la la la la" which serves as the basis for the song that he finally completes. After "Road to Hell" finishes introducing the cast, the musical then flows into "Any Way the Wind Blows" a beautiful and poetic song sung by Eurydice and the three fates, with occasional interjections from Hermes the narrator, who serves as the "bridge" between each of the characters according to Andre De Shields, who plays Hermes.<sup>15</sup>

"Any Way the Wind Blows" does an excellent job of linking together Eurydice and the fates, because just as Hermes says "wherever it was this young girl went, the Fates were close behind."<sup>16</sup> The ethereal and dreamlike feel of the song adds to the mystery of the Fates and makes Eurydice's decisions feel more destined. The slow trancelike music is aided by the poetic description of their relationship and the apocalyptic descriptions of the weather and their surroundings. It also provides additional insight into Eurydice's motivation and her deep struggle to simply survive.<sup>17</sup> This sets up a perfect juxtaposition between Orpheus and his idyllic and positive outlook on life and Eurydice's cynical view of the world. The two lovers are opposites,

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<sup>15</sup> "Broadway's Hadestown | Talks at Google." *YouTube*, 8 May 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=foMPZggeAN0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foMPZggeAN0).

Anais Mitchell, et al. *Hadestown (Original Broadway Cast Recording)* Sing It Again Records, 2019

<sup>17</sup> Mitchell, Anais. *Working on a Song*. Plume, 2020.

with Eurydice being so busy trying to survive that she forgets to live, and Orpheus so lost in the wonders of living that he doesn't know how to survive.<sup>18</sup>

Orpheus's forward and innocent nature is aided through Hermes's role as a mentor, his advice for Orpheus helps to provide the audience with context regarding Orpheus' behavior and quickly endears him into their hearts. The third song "Come Home with Me" tells the story of Orpheus and Eurydice meeting. Orpheus immediately falls in love with Eurydice upon seeing her, Hermes reminds Orpheus not to come on too strong. Despite this warning, Orpheus's first words to Eurydice are "Come home with me" The song works as a conversation between the two lovers, with occasional interjections from Hermes. Anais Mitchell stated that "Orpheus is this impossible optimist," and this is swiftly developed through his interactions with Eurydice especially in "Come Home With Me."<sup>19</sup> These three songs are masterpieces. In ten minutes, Anais Mitchell sets up the basic plot, introduces the audience to the main characters, and instantly wins their affection and support for the two lovers. It serves as the perfect foundation that sweeps the audience into the story and allows them to engage with the rest of the musical.

The openings of *Hadestown*, *Miss Saigon*, and *Jesus Christ Superstar*, are quite diverse and each tells its story in a different way. However, there are several common elements within all of the openings. Thanks to my analysis of these three musicals and listening to hundreds of hours of music and several interviews, I was able to isolate these factors and make the claim that these elements serve to create a successful opening. I believe that the first ten minutes should serve as a musical and narrative foundation for the rest of the show, establishing the key musical motifs as well as the desires and motivations of the key characters so that the story can unfold. I

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<sup>18</sup> Mitchell, Anais. *Working on a Song*. Plume, 2020.

<sup>19</sup> "Broadway's Hadestown | Talks at Google." *YouTube*, 8 May 2019, [www.youtube.com/watch?v=foMPZggeAN0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=foMPZggeAN0).



encourage you to listen to these openings and then to their corresponding musicals and try to count just how many musical or narrative themes are repeated later on in the musical. I think the most important thing I learned was that rather than there being one specific way to start a musical, there are a plethora of extraordinary ways to tell stories. What makes musicals so special is how the entire thing can be deeply woven together by music in those first ten minutes.