

# BROADWAY

Bulletin

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## “La La Land” Sparks Dividing Opinions

**Warning:** This article contains spoilers for *La La Land*.

The talk of the town in films this year has been *La La Land*, released in the United States in Dec. 2016. The film has received attention from film critics and Academy voters but the reviews of ordinary cinema goers have stood out most.

Reminiscent of Old Hollywood films, *La La Land* has made movie goers skeptical from both sides of the spectrum: those who enjoy dance numbers randomly intertwined in a film and those who would rather stick with strictly acting. *La La Land* is a movie musical yet is treated very differently than the likes of *Grease*, *An American in Paris*, and *Singin’ in the Rain*.

*La La Land* is a film that take inspiration from Old Hollywood, but interweaves modern 21st century cinema that Academy Award film watchers, in particular, are fond of. Typical dancing and singing numbers are included, such as the opener “Another Day of Sun” and “A Lovely Night” sung by



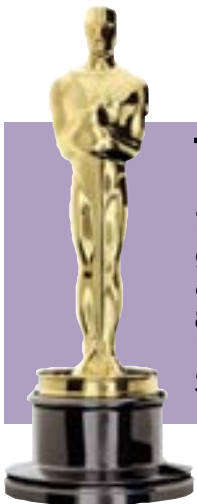
Wikimedia Commons

Mia (Emma Stone) and Sebastian (Ryan Gosling) dance together in a scene located in Griffith Park from the film “La La Land.”

Mia (Emma Stone) and Sebastian (Ryan Gosling), presenting the idea of perfection

in weather, love, and life, typical of Old Hollywood films. The music and dancing

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### The Awards

- 7 Golden Globes**—a record number of wins for a single film in Golden Globes history
- 6 Academy Awards** (out of 14 nominations)
- 8 Critic’s Choice** (out of 12 nominations)
- 1 Screen Actor’s Guild Award**—awarded to Emma Stone for Outstanding actress in a leading role

Source: PopSugar.com and Latimes.com

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# Pit Orchestras: The Underdogs of Musical Theatre

Actors, singers, and dancers onstage are generally considered as the “stars” of a theatrical production. But what about the instrumental music playing underneath them? The harmonies that play along with the singers’ melodies should not be overlooked. Otterbein University music majors and instrument players, Margot Marshall-Goetz and Olivia Nichol, give the Broadway Bulletin readers an inside look on the ins and outs of being a member of a pit orchestra.

It all started at their local schools for these two musicians. An academic setting was where both Marshall-Goetz and Nichol acquired their first experiences in pit orchestras for musicals. Marshall-Goetz got started in her eighth-grade year for the musical *My Fair Lady* and Nichol began in ninth-grade, playing for *Phantom of the Opera*. “Playing in those pit orchestras [in high school] was what actually drove me to become a music major [in college],” recalled Nichol. Depending on the school’s musical program, being in pit orchestras and other ensembles in school can be a great first step to any type of performance career.

**“The more instruments I learned, the more opportunities I got.”**  
-Margot Marshall-Goetz

Both Marshall-Goetz and Nichol agree that the most difficult aspect of performing in the pit orchestra are the inevitable changes in the music. The music in musical theatre, by nature, changes tempo and key constantly, even within one song. These changes happen not only frequently but close to each other. Nichol makes a point that in a pit member’s part book—a book filled with sheet music for each instrument(s) per musician—there are numerous circles, eyeglasses, and words written all over their scores.

Margot Marshall-Goetz, who typically plays multiple instruments in a show, said it can be hard with transpositions between different instruments. Despite this difficulty Marshall-Goetz is up for the challenge. “It’s a nice break for my brain, switching between all the [instruments because] if I’m



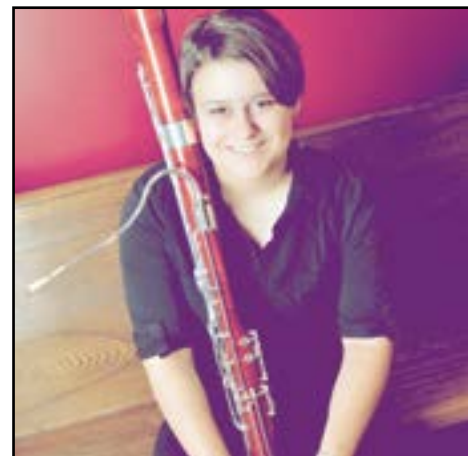
Olivia Nichol playing the upright bass in Riley Auditorium, Otterbein University.

just playing one instrument for a long time,

sometimes I’ll zone out or get bored, so it keeps me on my toes, which I like.” If interested in a career as a member of a pit orchestra, it can be beneficial to be skilled in many instruments. “The more instruments I learned, the more opportunities I got,” said Marshall-Goetz. It opens up doors to more positions if an orchestra needs a certain instrument for a specific production. Not all musicals need the same instruments, so if you only play the clarinet, it limits your options for getting hired.

What makes being in the pit orchestra enjoyable is the collaboration between many different types of people and artists. It’s about how the music fits with the dialogue of the actors and actresses, therefore with the sets, lighting, and sound created by the stage and technical crews. “It’s amazing to me that so many people can come together to create such a cohesive story and having the opportunity to be a part of that is my favorite part about playing in a pit orchestra,” said Nichol. Marshall-Goetz enjoys being surrounded by people of different backgrounds, experiences, and talents all for one common goal.

Now the question we’re all wondering: what’s their favorite musicals they’ve played for? Nichol answered *Phantom of the Opera*. It was her very first one she played for, so



Basoon player, Margot Marshall-Goetz.

it brings nostalgic feelings, but she also thought the music was a good challenge for her. Otterbein University’s production of *Into the Woods* was a close second for her, though. Margot said 9 to 5 was her favorite to play in the pit for.

No matter what type of music, or musicals, you may like listening to, it is important to cherish the talents and experience of live musicians. Marshall-Goetz said, “Live music, and music in general, changes the lives of so many individuals, whether they know it or not.” When playing in a pit orchestra, or in any type of ensemble or performance, know that music can change the lives of those who hear it.

## Chance’s Top 4 AUDITION TIPS

### 1 BREATHE!

“Do not panic at your audition. The people you are auditioning for want to see you succeed by showing them what materials you have to share.”

### 2 KNOW YOUR STUFF!

“Not only know the pieces you are performing for them, but also the story behind what you show them. Know the back story of your character and be able to showcase it in the song you sing.”

### 3 HAVE EVERYTHING POSSIBLE, INCLUDING BACKUPS!

“Sheet music needs to be cleanly printed, three-hole-punched, and in a binder with correct key and cuts. Bring a headshot that actually looks like you (NOT A DIFFERENT PERSON). An extra change of clothes, tons of water, and a smile is always good too.”

### 4 BE YOURSELF!

“When presenting your materials or at an interview, do not show them someone or something that you think they want to see. They want to see you and only YOU. Be yourself and show them what YOU can offer them.”

# Broadway Bound Boy

By Chance Landers

The road to Broadway is different for everyone. Some people are at the right place at the right time or they fight their way through hardship and determination. This career, like many other careers, requires training and practice to develop one’s craft. This is where education comes into the equation. There are dozens of phenomenal and acclaimed programs that are credited with producing top performers (e.g. Juilliard, Columbia, etc.) across the United States. Ohio has five universities renowned for amazing musical theater programs. These include Otterbein University, Wright State University, Kent State University, Baldwin-Wallace University, and Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music.

Auditioning for postsecondary theater programs is just like auditioning for a musical production, cutthroat and extremely selective. Through personal experience, I can vouch for this. I auditioned for Otterbein twice, Kent State twice, and Wright State once; Wright State has a “one audition and that’s it” policy. All of these schools said no to me, so I know what it truly feels like to have something so fulfilling and “right” ripped away by the words “We regret to inform you . . .” or “Unfortunately.” From all these rejections, I have learned that they are not the end of the world.

This past summer of 2016, I had the privilege of playing a role in the Columbus Civic Theater’s production of Steve Martin’s *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*. Through this role, I gained experiences, heard stories, and met people that helped shape my artistic view, motive, and approach towards the stage. These people and experiences pushed



Chance Landers in costume as the role of The Visitor in Columbus Civic Theater’s production of *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*, June 2016.

me to unknown boundaries and past my comfort zone.

Even though I am not part of a college theater program, I am still able to pursue my dreams of performing on the stage. Seeing what I could do, I knew that I was doing what was right to me. It does not matter where one starts, but where they finish. The journey to the stage is hard, but staying true to yourself and always holding onto that passion will get you further than the name on your college diploma.

## What’s new to see in NYC (other than Hamilton)?

Dear Evan Hansen is one of the top picks of critics this theatre season. Dear Evan Hansen tells the story of a social-anxious,

high-school boy, Evan, who feels left out of the world by his mom and his school. He eventually gets stuck in a lie after writing a fake letter to a classmate who committed suicide, but ignites a social media movement to show that everyone is important. After he family and social life gets better, he keeps the secret to himself. How long will that last? The musical is composed by La La Land lyric writers, Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, after coming off of their Oscar win (also Steven Levenson as librettist). The musical stars Ben Platt of *Pitch Perfect* fame and directed by Michael Grief, director of *Rent* and *Next to Normal*. The original Broadway

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cast album is on iTunes and Spotify.

**Bandstand** is a story that takes place in the 1940's about a man who makes veterans into band musicians on their way to being the top swing band, who also happens to meet a girl along the way. It stars Corey Cott and Laura Osnes, both veteran Broadway favorites and it's currently in previews until April 26.

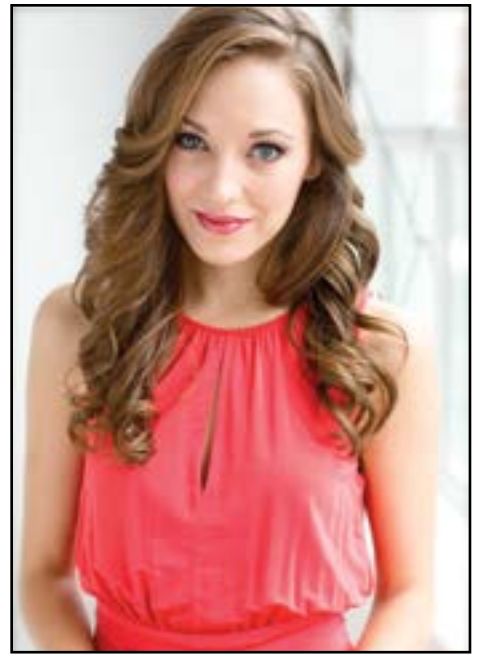
**In Transit** is a story about a variety of characters in New York City, inspired by the subway. It's the first completely a cappella musical on Broadway. The score comes from the creators of *Frozen* and *Pitch Perfect*. The musical stars Justin Guarini from American Idol fame and veteran Broadway actors Telly Leung and James Snyder. It closed April 16.

**Come From Away** is based on the true

story of when the small, isolated town of Gander, Newfoundland, Canada became host to thousands of airplane travelers after being diverted as a result of the 9/11 attacks. Similar to *In Transit* in that it includes individual stories that come from the days following 9/11. The musical stars Jenn Colella (*If/Then*) and Chad Kimball (*Memphis*) The original Broadway cast album is on iTunes and Spotify.

**Amélie** is a musical based off of the popular French film of the same name and follows the journey of a young woman who makes the city of Montmartre, France into her own world. After she finds a mysterious photo album, she realizes the joy of helping others versus finding her own love. The musical stars Phillipa Soo, who you may know as the original Eliza Schuyler in *Hamilton*.

Source: BroadwayMusicalHome.com



Photographer: Nathan Johnson; Wikimedia Commons  
Broadway actress Laura Osnes, who stars in *Bandstand*.

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are considered secondary compared to the dialogue of the two lovers.

The modern issue the film explores is that of ambition versus love. Sebastian (Gosling) is a jazz pianist who is a purist, in that he listens to only what he considers art, which to him is jazz of the past. Mia (Stone) is an aspiring actress who works at a coffee shop as a barista on the Warner Brothers lot, auditioning for whatever role she can get. Should Sebastian open a jazz club with music he wants or spare that life for his love for Mia? Should Mia strive to become an A-list actress or sacrifice her dream for Sebastian's heart?

This idea has sparked controversy and is primarily answered in the unexpected ending. The last fifteen minutes of the film fast-forwards five years after the main events of the film take place. Mia (Stone) is

now a successful Hollywood actress, has a child, and is married to another man, not being Sebastian (Gosling). At the very end of the film, Mia has a moment of a flashback, presenting the ideal ending if she had stayed with Sebastian the rest of her life. The film's end provides an alternate ending that realizes not only the idea of 'the road less traveled' but also of the notion that love is messy and does not always bring a 'happy ending.'

Viewers who have positive reactions to the film see the central ideas that the film either projects or makes fun of. The film almost picks at Old Hollywood movie musicals for their perfect and happy lives of the characters they portray. *La La Land* shows that in the modern world, life is not always perfect. A.A. Dowd of A.V. Club describes it perfectly: "song and dance in the key of life."

Negative reactions come from audience members that didn't see the point that Damien Chazelle, the director, was trying to make. They were expecting a typical movie musical that contains not only expected song and dance numbers but a plot plucked out of the ordinary. A love-at-first-sight story that would bring the two lead characters to life-long bliss. People who do not appreciate the movie also see it as attempting to bring back the Old Hollywood movie musical but not doing as well as expected.

The reviews from both sides are credible of the film's aspects (at least from my view since I have seen the film). One can see how both positive and negative reactions could come from a film like *La La Land*. The fact that the film provokes dividing opinions can prove that it is a film of quality.

## Test your Broadway knowledge!

1. What is the longest-running Broadway musical?

- Wicked
- Phantom of the Opera
- Rent
- Into the Woods

2. Who has won the most Tony Awards?

- Harold Prince
- Audra McDonald
- George Gershwin
- Patti Lupone

3. Which Broadway theater has housed the most Tony-winning Best Plays and Best Musicals?

- Winter Garden Theater
- Helen Hayes Theatre
- Nederlander Theatre
- Richard Rodgers Theatre