

Does Canada Need Graduate Training for Musical Theatre Creators?

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# **ABSTRACT**

Does Canada Need Graduate Training for Musical Theatre Creators?

Jonathan Monro

Musical theatre is big business in Canada, contributing to our culture and economy. However, Canadian musical theatre creators (composers, lyricists, book-writers, musical directors, and directors of musicals) often leave the country to acquire their skills and pursue opportunities in the industry. Canada does not offer official diploma, degree, or graduate programs for musical theatre creators. My project assesses whether Canada needs such a training program at the graduate level. I collected data through three methods: a survey for professional musical theatre creators; a survey for pre-professional musical theatre creators; and focus groups for musical theatre creators of varying experience levels for cross-case analysis. Surveys were analyzed, cross-tabulated, and then triangulated with the coded focus group data. My analytical approach combined Carliner's ADDIE framework and Mezirow's critical reflection theory, as well as examining data through a phenomenological lens, and I found there was support for a graduate program among practitioners as well as systemic issues, including the existence of misperceptions of musicals and the artists who create them in the general public. Further research might address how audiences, funding bodies, theatre companies, and policymakers view these artists; measure the cultural and economic impact of such artists; and hopefully improve their ability to train in Canada and make a living.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I, Jonathan Monro, am a long-time musical theatre creator of international standing. I serve and have served as composer, lyricist, book-writer (story structure and script), director, and musical director for new musicals, from their initial idea to the closing night of a production. Over the course of my career, I have observed and experienced a lack of significant training in Canada in my industry, which results in a drain of talent. Creators seem to be faced with two options: 1. Leave the country to seek further training, or 2. Find another career path, resulting in a missed opportunity to develop this sector of Canadian arts and culture. I undertook this research to explore the lived experiences of professional and emerging Canadian musical theatre creators' training in Canada and compare these experiences with my own, the goal being to investigate what further steps might be taken to strengthen training for these creators in Canada.

Most Canadian musical theatre creators leave Canada to study abroad (Betts, 2012). I was one of these artists. The reason I chose to leave was due to a scarcity of programs available to musical theatre creators. Upon more profound inspection, the dearth of training seems to emanate from broader underlying problems facing the art form of musical theatre. For example, on December 27th, 2021, just one week after reopening post-pandemic, the musical *Come From Away*, the most successful piece of theatre in Canada's history, closed. The closing is not being blamed on another spike in the number of coronavirus cases but rather because the Canadian government refused to provide any type of support to sustain it (Fricker & Chong, 2022, Houpt, 2022, Nestruck, 2021). This event captures a reality expressed by many Canadian musical theatre creators for decades: musicals are not taken seriously in Canada (Betts, 2012), and that sentiment may directly affect training opportunities. Although my research aimed at analyzing training components for musical theatre creators to determine a possible need for a program at the graduate level, I found that these two phenomena were inextricably linked.

As I delved into this, memories of my attempts to be taken seriously as a musical theatre artist in Toronto rose to the surface. One warm spring evening, in 2007, I headed off to an awards show for the theatre community in Toronto, dressed in an inexpensive (read: my only) suit. I had been asked to present an award that night to Leslie Arden, arguably Canada's finest musical theatre composer and lyricist. In the audience sat the glitterati of the Toronto theatre scene. On marched the (then) head of the Toronto Alliance for the Performing Arts (TAPA), stating she would sing a song, but "definitely *not* a song from a musical, because I fucking *hate* musicals." The crowd whooped and cheered, while I sat there, stung, the blood draining out of my face. How could the person who represents TAPA, "the voice of theatre, dance, and opera in Toronto" (TAPA, 2021), speak so venomously about the art form to which I had devoted my life? I was in shock. When the song ended, they called me to the stage to present the award to Leslie Arden, but I felt like a foreigner in my own community. Three years later, I left Canada to study musical theatre abroad. Perhaps I was alone in experiences like this, but my gut told me otherwise. It became my mission and duty to uncover similar parallels with my Canadian colleagues to try to change the narrative. After my experience, and with what I know to be true in the Canadian professional theatre scene, the exploration of musical theatre creators' training seemed like the right place to start.

## The ADDIE Framework

The Analysis, Design, Development, Implementation, Evaluation (ADDIE) framework as outlined in Carliner's book, *Training Design Basics* (2015), suggests that a quality design begins with a needs assessment. A needs assessment usually follows an external request for a training program and investigates if there is a need to move forward into the design and development phases (Carliner, 2015). Since there was no external request for this study, I based it on a theoretical need for a training program, and the ADDIE framework provided the technical platform for this phase. Specifically, I incorporated elements like working with Subject Matter Experts (SMEs) in focus groups, collecting information from peer-reviewed journals as references, and creating a list of workable objectives in the methodology. However, despite its excellent level of detail, the ADDIE framework is intended for training design, and thus focuses too narrowly for this study.

## How I Arrived at Mezirow's Critical Reflection Theory

To encourage detailed, varied results, my goal was to seek out complementary frameworks and theories to enhance and expand ADDIE's technical boundaries. Initial exploration led to the Technological, Pedagogical, Content Knowledge (TPACK) framework (Mishra & Koehler, 2006) as a possibility. While potentially beneficial to some disciplines (composition, musical direction), the technological component eventually seemed to limit others (lyrics, book-writing).

Mishra, along with his colleagues Henriksen and Mehta, had also developed a new framework called trans-disciplinary creativity (2015). The concept of this framework is to combine theory, research, and practice with digital technology in an educational setting (Mishra, 2014). While the integration of practice and theory seemed like a more appropriate approach, the use of technology again became an obstacle to some disciplines. Additionally, in a series of email conversations I had with Mishra, he revealed that, although he wanted to explore how trans-disciplinary creativity might apply to arts and culture, he had not given it enough consideration (personal communication, December 9, 2020).

What appeared to be missing was a theory that allowed the SMEs to think about their experiences and evaluate those ideas to generate discussions about training. Jack Mezirow presented a theory in 1991 called *transformative learning*. "Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference (Mezirow, 1991, Cranton, 1994)." The goal of the thesis research was to explore the potential need to effect change in training, and the SMEs could refer to their training as their frame of reference. To enhance this approach, Mezirow (2002) posited that *critical reflection* could trigger transformative learning by encouraging the re-evaluation of pre-conceived ideas. If the SMEs engaged in critical reflection on their training, it might lead to discourse about how these training methods could be altered or improved.

To strengthen this approach, Mezirow's critical reflection framework provides a solid tactic for curriculum development, particularly for adult learning at the post-secondary level (Craig et al., 2001, King, 2002, as cited in [instructionaldesign.org](http://instructionaldesign.org), 2018). The three stages outlined in this framework are:

- *Content reflection*: Examining current curricula to identify gaps

- *Process reflection*: Determining the quality of current and desired training
- *Premise reflection*: Recommending solutions to the findings of content and process reflection

I used both frameworks to generate the questions for the surveys and focus groups, while focusing on Mezirow's critical reflection theory to triangulate the results.

## **Phenomenology and Van Manen**

To allow for a broader perspective when designing the methodology for this needs assessment, it became clear that I had to use a phenomenological approach. As Van Manen (2016) suggests, all writing incorporates elements of *time* and *space*, creating a dimension within which an experience can occur. If we were to take this suggestion as truth, musical theatre creation would be, in and of itself, a phenomenological act. To understand the depth of the participants' work, I did not want a plain, positivistic report. Rather, I wanted to provide a multi-layered analysis of the phenomena surrounding their lived experiences. Since Van Manen (2016) states that phenomenological writing hinges on the research content and its reflection, it seemed to fit logically with my choice to use the critical reflection theory for the comparative analysis.

Van Manen (2016) also considers *body* and *relation* to be core principals of phenomenological methodology. In analyzing the focus group transcripts, it was vital to examine the physical position of these creators, both as individuals and in relationship to each other. In other words, how have they experienced life as a musical theatre creator? How do we all compare to each other? How might I dive into these experiences to assess a need for graduate training? Many folks consider time, space, body, and relation to be core principles of dance. Let us embark on a dance of sorts to examine how the lives of musical theatre creators flow, turn, intersect, fall, and rise, with an eye toward lifting us all to new heights.

## **Musical Theatre Creators**

From producers to actors to media to the audience, new theatrical creations rely on collaboration (Monro, 2020): as the saying goes, "it takes a village to make a musical". However, at the genesis of every story told through this medium are its creators: those who imagine it, design it, breathe musical and poetic life into it, and translate it to the stage. For this research, musical theatre creators have been grouped into five categories: composers, lyricists, book-writers (those responsible for story structure and dialogue), directors, and musical directors. Although choreographers are often used in musical storytelling, some musicals do not require choreography. This omission in no way means to undervalue the contributions of a choreographer, but this study focuses solely on the five disciplines considered imperative to every musical.

## **Canada's First Musical**

Musical theatre is widely accepted as an American art form. It came about in the early 1900s, combining elements of several styles including jazz, vaudeville, operetta, and British Music Hall (Viertel, 2017). Despite the popularity of other musical forms of the time,



including revues and follies, the most lasting style of musical theatre is the book musical, which combines dialogue, lyrics, music, and often dance. The first American book musical was *Showboat*, which premiered in 1927. Canadians followed similar theatrical forms; however, Canada did not have the population to sustain a musical theatre system in the early 20th century (Overton, 2015). The first Canadian book musical, *Anne of Green Gables*, premiered in 1965 at the Charlottetown Festival in Prince Edward Island (Overton, 2015), and was penned by Don Harron, Elaine Campbell, Norman Campbell, and Mavor Moore.

### **Cultural and Income-Based Challenges Facing Musical Theatre Creators**

Canadian musical theatre creators appear to be overshadowed by their American colleagues. This phenomenon may tie into a Canadian's idea of culture. For this thesis, *culture* may be regarded as the evolution of a society's customs, thoughts, and behaviour. As Sumara et al. (2001) described, CBC Radio hosted a "Define Canadian culture contest" in the 1960s. The challenge was to finish the sentence, "Complete the adage: as Canadian as...". Listeners sent in their responses by mail or phone. Some were predictable (beavers and maple syrup), but surprisingly no one could pinpoint a specific characteristic that defined the Canadian identity. The winner's response was, "As Canadian as possible, under the circumstances." This vague sense of identity might pose a challenge for writers who attempt to create something that contributes to the Canadian cultural landscape. It might also be why Canadian musical theatre creators choose to train in countries with a more visceral and clear-cut sense of culture.

Income-wise, musical theatre creators tend to have an unfair disadvantage compared to their peers. Actors, designers, musicians, and stage technicians not only have access to formal training programs, but also have unions to provide fee schedules, pensions, and acceptable working conditions for their members. For example, an actor fresh out of a Canadian theatre school cast in a lead role at the Stratford Festival makes a minimum salary of \$1386/week (CTA, 2021). The engager must also insure them, contribute to their RRSP, and adhere to a handbook of rules designed for the actors' wellbeing. Musical theatre creators, on the other hand, are rarely given the opportunity to work. If they are lucky, they usually negotiate contracts for themselves, leaving little room for leverage. For example, a musical theatre book-writer with thirty years of experience may be commissioned to write an entire musical for \$3000 (a twelve-to-twenty-four-month process) with no guarantee of further compensation.

Academic institutions carry a certain cultural weight themselves. The phrases, "It's a university town", "ivy league", and "party college" all inspire vivid images of the type of life that might help define a city or community. Programs associated with high profile academic institutions have the potential to carry a proportionate amount of prestige (e.g., Harvard Law, Toronto Conservatory of Music, University of California in Los Angeles School of Theater, Film, and Television, etc.). This prestige often gives graduates a better chance at job placements and salaries, and it helps present them to the workforce branded with the cultural identity of their alma mater. Could musical theatre creators not enjoy similar benefits?

## What Canada Has to Offer

Canada's theatre and music traditions are diverse. Musicals have been inspired by Newfoundland folk customs (*Come From Away*), Indigenous traditional storytelling (*Children of God*), theatre of the absurd (*Ride the Cyclone*), and large-scale commercial concerts and shows (*The Drowsy Chaperone*). Canada's various regions offer a variety of evolving genres that have the capacity to promote the development of innovative musicals. Toronto is Canada's most prominent theatre centre and the third-largest English theatre city after London and New York (Goldberg, 2014). Still, Canada seems to have a disproportionately low amount of training to offer its musical theatre creators compared to its US and UK counterparts.

### Training in Canada

Such training as exists in Canada is available through rare university undergraduate courses, as well as some short-term programs offered directly by theatrical and independent companies. Only a couple of colleges and universities also offer musical theatre writing courses. My *alma mater*, Sheridan College in Oakville, Ontario, is one of Canada's successful musical theatre performance schools, and provides an introductory course to its students (Sheridan, 2021). They also used to house The Canadian Musical Theatre Project, where professional writers work with the performance students, but this program has been suspended indefinitely (CMTP, 2021). The University of Toronto's music performance program also offers a songwriting course with elements of musical theatre (U of T, 2020). These courses are for performers rather than musical theatre creators.

Three companies in Canada offer training for musical theatre creators. One is a two-week program led by librettist Steven Gallagher at the Bravo Academy in Toronto, called the New Music Theatre Intensive Writers' Workshop (Page, 2021). The second is a nine-session, assignment-based distance course led by various artists through The Musical Stage Company's Noteworthy Program in Toronto (The Musical Stage Company, 2021). The third consists of fourteen four-hour classes facilitated by the Canadian Musical Theatre Writers Collective in Montreal (Braverman, 2018). I lead the latter. None of these programs offer any type of degree or diploma, although all are designed to enhance the professionalism of emerging artists.

### Other Avenues

Professional Canadian musical theatre creators have taken various routes to cope with the lack of training in Canada. Leslie Arden studied in England and the United States (Arden, 2020). In an interview published in the Canadian Theatre Review (McCabe, 2017), Arden attributes the success of her musical, *The House of Martin Guerre*, to the resources made available to her at the Goodman Theatre in Chicago (McCabe, 2017). She also highlights that Canadian hit musicals *Come From Away* and *The Drowsy Chaperone* were imagined in Canada but developed and produced in the United States.

New York University's Tisch School of the Arts offers a two-year MFA program for musical theatre composers, lyricists, and librettists (NYU Curriculum, 2021). Alumni of this program have had their work produced worldwide, with productions currently on Broadway (*A Strange Loop*) and in London's West End (*Be More Chill* and *Amélie*) (NYU Tisch, 2021). Penn State's MFA program for musical directors and directors of musical theatre has

produced some of the best artists in the United States, leading shows in major regional theatres, U.S. tours, and on Broadway (Penn State, 2021).

Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) offers an elite workshop for musical theatre writers, attended by many graduates of NYU's Tisch MFA program. Alumni include EGOT™ winners Alan Menken and Bobby Lopez and multiple Tony Award™ winners Lynn Ahrens, Stephen Flaherty, Jeanine Tesori, Michael Korie, Kristen Anderson-Lopez, and Richard Maltby, amongst others. Neil Bartram and Brian Hill, a writing team from Toronto, moved to New York to attend this workshop (Bartram, 2021), which served as a springboard for the Broadway production of their Drama Desk award-winning show, *The Story of My Life*. The team has been living in New York ever since.

Other Canadian musical theatre creators followed similar paths. Librettist, lyricist, director Lezlie Wade, composer Nicky Philipps, and lyricist Daniel Abrahamson attended BMI's Lehman-Engel writers' workshop. Canadian Musical Theatre Writers' Collective founders Landon Braverman and Joseph Trefler are alumni of NYU's Tisch program for musical theatre writers (Trefler, 2018). Musical director Lily Ling is an alumna of Penn State's MFA program (Walton, 2019) and is currently the musical director for one of the U.S. tours of *Hamilton*. Finally, the late director Darcy Evans also graduated from Penn State and became the artistic director of Alberta Theatre Projects in Calgary, "saving it from financial ruin" before his untimely death of brain cancer in 2020 (Lederman, 2020).

Some notable exceptions include Irene Sankoff and David Hein, the creative team behind *Come From Away*. Although commercial productions of Canadian musicals are rare in Canada, Sankoff and Hein's first major musical, *My Mother's Lesbian Jewish Wiccan Wedding*, was produced by Mirvish Entertainment in Toronto. Although their second large-scale show, *Come From Away*, was written in Canada, it was developed and produced in the United States (Wikipedia, 2021). Britta Johnson, a Toronto-based composer and lyricist, was trained exclusively in Canada. In 2016, she received a three-year residency with the Musical Stage Company after her breakout fringe hit *Life After* (Fricker, 2017). Corey Payette, an Ojibwe musical theatre creator, had several national productions of his musical *Children of God* (Monro, 2021), but his biography does not indicate that he has studied abroad (Payette, 2021).

## **Research Question**

How can we know if Canada needs graduate training for musical theatre creators?

## **Overall Goal**

Determine by means of a needs assessment the interest in a graduate level program for musical theatre creators in Canada.

The three primary categories of Mezirow's critical reflection theory (Craig et al., 2001, King, 2002, as cited in [instructionaldesign.org](http://instructionaldesign.org), 2018) are content reflection, process reflection, and premise reflection. These three components served as a basis for seven objectives, below, broken down as per the ADDIE framework (Carliner, 2015). Mezirow's three categories appear in parentheses at the end of each objective.

## Objectives and Sub-objectives

- Determine what training is currently offered in Canada for musical theatre creators (content reflection)
  - Define types of programs offered through schools
    - Describe programs for emerging musical theatre creators
    - Describe programs for professional musical theatre creators
  - Define types of programs offered through theatres
    - Describe programs for emerging musical theatre creators
    - Describe programs for professional musical theatre creators
  - Define types of programs offered through private companies
    - Describe programs for emerging musical theatre creators
    - Describe programs for professional musical theatre creators
- Define what constitutes quality training for musical theatre creators (process reflection)
  - Define styles of musical theatre training
    - Describe styles for composers
    - Describe styles for lyricists
    - Describe styles for book-writers
    - Describe styles for directors
    - Describe styles for musical directors
  - Define quality training
  - Identify quality styles of musical theatre training
    - List positive results
    - List negative results
    - Compare positive and negative results
- List reasons why Canadian musical theatre creators leave the country to pursue training (process reflection)
  - List extrinsic motivators
  - List intrinsic motivators
  - Link training to motivation
- Identify international methods of training that could be implemented in Canada for musical theatre creators (premise reflection)
  - Identify international methods of training
    - List methods for composers
    - List methods for lyricists
    - List methods for book-writers
    - List methods for directors
    - List methods for musical directors
  - Identify missing methods of training in Canada.
    - List methods for composers
    - List methods for lyricists
    - List methods for book-writers
    - List methods for directors
    - List methods for musical directors
  - Identify methods that might not be suited to training programs in Canada.
  - Propose how appropriate methods might be implemented into training programs in Canada.
    - Demonstrate for composers
    - Demonstrate for lyricists

- Demonstrate for book-writers
  - Demonstrate for directors
  - Demonstrate for musical directors
- Identify what type of training helps contribute to culture (premise reflection)
  - Define culture
  - Determine how musical theatre creation relates to culture
- Identify what type of training helps ensure success in the field of musical theatre creation (content, process reflection)
  - Identify programs with high success rates
    - Define critical ingredients of these programs
    - Identify post-program alumni successes
  - Define success in the musical theatre industry
- Determine the level of desire to train in Canada (premise reflection)
  - List pros
  - List cons
  - Compare pros and cons

## CHAPTER 2: METHODS

### Overview

A mixed-methods approach was used to measure statistical and examine data. The following three studies were conducted:

1. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey for professional musical theatre creators. Professional musical theatre creators were defined as those with over three years of experience plus a professional production of their work. The survey contained five demographic-related questions and fourteen Likert scale questions related to training and experience in the field. These questions were based on the objectives inspired by the critical reflection framework.
2. A quantitative, cross-sectional survey for pre-professional or emerging musical theatre creators. This category was defined as those with three or fewer years of professional experience and with no official production of their work. This survey followed a similar format as the one above while homing in on pre-professionals' desired training and hopes for work in the field.
3. Focus groups: Qualitative data was sought from musical theatre creators of all experience levels in six ninety-minute sessions. Once again, based on the objectives, nine questions were offered for discussion in each group.

Survey data was collected using a Google Forms survey template. Once the survey was closed, the data was transferred to a Google spreadsheet for analysis. The focus group transcripts were validated through sets of qualitative coding, leading to identifying common themes through a phenomenological analysis. "Triangulation can cut across the qualitative-quantitative divide" (Olsen, 2004), so a concurrent triangulation design was then used to cross-validate the results between the two surveys and the focus groups and to reduce potential weaknesses associated with each method. The empirical survey data were triangulated with the qualitative information from the focus groups allowing for a more meaningful response to the objectives and the research question.

### Surveys

The following demographic information was collected to start each survey: Discipline(s) of musical theatre, age, years of experience, ethnic identity, gender identity, and region of residence. Following this, all seven objectives were used to design fourteen five-point Likert-scale questions. They were grouped in the following manner:

#### **Objective 1: Determine what is currently offered as training in Canada for musical theatre creators.**

The first three questions were ranked using the participants' level of satisfaction for the training available to them in Canada:

- How satisfied are you with programs offered to musical theatre creators through Canadian post-secondary institutions?

- How satisfied are you with programs offered to musical theatre creators through Canadian theatre companies?
- How satisfied are you with programs offered to musical theatre creators through independent Canadian companies?

The survey participants were asked about their satisfaction level (from 1 – not at all satisfied to 5 – very satisfied) to gather statistical data and understand their emotional connection to that data. They also had the option of answering 3 – not applicable – if they had not taken or explored the training in question. Had the respondents been asked more directly about what training is on offer, the results may have been less nuanced.

## **Objective 2: Define what constitutes quality training for musical theatre creators**

The following three survey questions were used to measure this objective:

- Considering your role as a musical theatre creator, how might you compare the style of training you have received\* abroad to programs in Canada?
- Considering your role as a musical theatre creator, how would you rate the quality of training you have received\* in Canada?
- To what degree did/do you find current Canadian courses related to your discipline (e.g., music theory, playwrighting, directing, etc.) limiting?

\*For the pre-professional/emerging creators' survey, "or might receive" was added here.

Identifying potential differences in teaching styles was necessary for determining whether Canadian training measured up to programs abroad. This data was collected to discuss possible differences between the focus groups. Likewise, it was vital to gauge how musical theatre creators rate the quality of the training in Canada, as it represents a precise statistic in designing a training program.

The final question laid the ground for insight into which discipline(s) within musical theatre might experience limitations. Additionally, the responses to this question were used for a Chi-square test to determine if ethnic minority groups experienced a different level of training-based limitations. This was because curricula were thought to limit non-white creators (Ewell, 2020, Monro, 2020). For example, music theory in Canada is based on Euro-Western practices and rarely takes any other type of framework into account (Ewell, 2020). This information might also point to deeper reasons why certain writers leave the country to study.

## **Objective 3: List reasons Canadian musical theatre creators leave the country to pursue training.**

Although it was challenging to "list reasons" as per the objective, the first two questions of this set measured intrinsic and extrinsic motivators, respectively. These two statistics provided an overall picture of whether the participants were motivated to leave primarily because of the program components, because of the conditions surrounding the program, or both. Since musical theatre creators do not fall into a high-income bracket, the

third question in this section was used to assess the importance of affordability when it comes to training, despite also being an intrinsic motivator.

- How likely are you to/did you pursue studies for musical theatre creation abroad because the program components (teachers, curriculum, certification, etc.) are better?
- How likely are you to/did you pursue studies for musical theatre creation abroad for other reasons not directly related to the program (networking, reputation, population, etc.)?
- Regarding training programs for musical theatre creation, how important is affordability to you?

#### **Objective 4: Identify international methods of training that could be implemented in Canada for musical theatre creators**

The final five questions were purposely designed to make the participant think about training in an academic institution. Instead of asking survey participants about international training methodology, the question was reframed to generate interest and emotional response towards a degree program:

- How important is it to you that Canada has a degree program for musical theatre creators similar to degree programs abroad (NYU, Penn State, etc.)?

As Dan-Cohen (2001) explains, ownership can establish value for items that might otherwise be declared worthless. Therefore, the participants were asked if they found it essential to have their own Canadian training program. However, the challenge in this type of question was determining the degree of similarity with the programs abroad. Did they want a program exactly like those at NYU and Penn State, or would they prefer something more Canadian in scope?

#### **Objective 5: Identify what type of training helps contribute to culture**

This objective was explored in depth in the focus groups. To make it concise enough for a Likert-scale response, the survey question focused squarely on a degree program's potential contribution to culture. This also provided the cleanest connection to the overall research question.

- How likely would a degree program for musical theatre creators in Canada help contribute to culture?

#### **Objective 6: Identify what type of training helps ensure success in the field of musical theatre creation**

This could have been posed as a yes-no question, but instead, participants were asked to consider degree programs and success in the field:

- How likely do degree programs for musical theatre creators contribute to the artist's success in the field?



## **Objective 7: Determine the level of desire to train in Canada**

The final two questions in the survey measured the level of desire concerning degree programs in Canada. This was achieved by measuring how many participants had trained abroad and how many are interested in a Canadian degree program.

- How much training did you pursue outside of Canada?
- How interested would you be in a graduate degree program for musical theatre creators in Canada?

The limitation with these questions is that even if a degree program should be implemented in Canada, there is no way to determine whether the participants who did study abroad would still want to. This gap was addressed in the focus groups.

## **Focus Groups**

The purpose of the focus groups was to collect qualitative answers to the seven primary objectives and identify any potential educational gap. To do this, the seven primary objectives were distilled to three, allowing the participants the opportunity to touch upon each element of Mezirow's critical reflection theory:

1. Identify what training is missing for musical theatre creators in Canada and why (content).
2. Determine what constitutes quality training for musical theatre creators (process).
3. Determine the potential cultural value of musical theatre creators in Canada (premise).

## **Population and Study Sample**

### **Surveys**

I delivered the survey for professionals nationwide via theatre companies such as The Musical Stage Company, Segal Centre, Vancouver Arts Club, and Talk is Free Theatre and by direct invitation via email and social media links. I sent the pre-professional artist survey to educational institutions like Sheridan, St. Lawrence College, and the University of Toronto. I also distributed it via email to colleagues and professors currently working with post-secondary students or young professionals.

### **Focus groups**

Personal invitations were sent out to seventy-seven musical theatre creators covering three populations: 1. Emerging artists, 2. Professionals at various stages of their respective careers, and 3. Students. Invitations were sent out to seventy-seven musical theatre

creators. These artists were recruited through personal contacts or by writing emails to former or current students of the Canadian Musical Theatre Writers’ Collective (CMTWC), The Musical Stage Company’s Noteworthy program, and the Bravo Academy’s program for musical theatre writers.

## Sample Size and Selection of Sample

### Surveys

The survey for professionals was completed by 59 ( $N = 59$ ) participants, with one participant choosing not to complete the survey, leaving the final number at  $N = 58$  participants. The sample group comprised artists representing all five disciplines: Directing, Musical Direction, Composing, Lyric Writing, and Book-writing. However, several participants indicated that they practiced more than one discipline (Table 1), increasing the sample size per discipline to  $N = 126$  total (Table 2).

**Table 1**

*Respondents and Their Related Discipline(s) – Professional Artists*

Discipline(s)	Number
Directing	18
Musical Direction	6
Composing	0
Lyric-writing	1
Book-writing	0
Directing, Musical Direction	1
Lyric Writing, Book-writing	2
Composing, Lyric Writing	2
Book-writing, Directing	1
Composing, Musical Direction	1
Lyric Writing, Book-writing, Directing	7
Composing, Lyric Writing, Musical Direction	5
Composing, Lyric Writing, Book-writing	3
Composing, Lyric Writing, Book-writing, Musical Direction	6
Composing, Lyric Writing, Book-writing Directing	3
Composing, Lyric Writing, Book-writing, Directing, Musical Direction	1
Unspecified	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>58</b>

**Table 2***Representatives per discipline – Professional Artists*

Discipline	Number
Directing	31
Musical Direction	20
Composing	21
Lyric Writing	30
Book-writing	23
Unspecified	1
TOTAL	126

29 (N = 29) participants completed the survey for emerging musical theatre creators. The sample group was also comprised of artists representing all five disciplines: Directing, Musical Direction, Composing, Lyric Writing, and Book-writing. Like the professionals, several participants indicated that they practiced more than one discipline (Table 3), increasing the sample size per discipline to N = 81 total (Table 4).

**Table 3***Respondents and Their Related Discipline(s) – Emerging Artists*

Discipline(s)	Number
Directing	3
Book-writing	1
Book-writing, Directing	2
Directing, Musical Direction	1
Composing, Lyric Writing	2
Composing, Musical Direction	2
Lyric Writing, Book-writing	1
Lyric Writing, Book-writing, Directing	2
Composing, Lyric Writing, Directing	2
Composing, Lyric Writing, Book-writing	4
Composing, Directing, Musical Direction	1
Composing, Lyric Writing, Directing, Musical Direction	1
Composing, Lyric Writing, Book-writing, Directing	3
Composing, Lyric Writing, Book-writing, Musical Direction	2
Composing, Lyric Writing, Book-writing, Directing, Musical Direction	2
TOTAL	29

**Table 4**

*Representatives per Discipline – Emerging Artists*

Discipline	Number
Directing	17
Musical Direction	9
Composing	19
Lyric Writing	19
Book-writing	17
TOTAL	81

**Focus Groups**

Six focus group sessions were held between November 8<sup>th</sup> and November 25<sup>th</sup>, 2021, via Zoom. Each session was ninety minutes in length and, for each one, I hosted eight to ten participants.

Fifty-eight participants confirmed their place in the focus group sessions, and eight participants withdrew, leaving a total of 50 participants ( $N = 50$ ) in the focus groups. The environment allowed the participants to interact in conversation and inspire responses they might not have considered in a one-on-one interview. Although they were discouraged from taking the survey, there may have been some overlap between the focus group sample and survey samples. The surveys were anonymous, though, so there is no way to know for sure.

**Sources of Data**

In addition to data collected from the musical theatre practitioners, I combed through a considerable number of journals (e.g., Canadian Theatre Review), newspaper articles, interviews, and specialized reference material (e.g., the Tisch School at New York University’s curriculum for musical theatre writers) to complement and enhance the participants’ data. These resources were available online and through various professional unions of which I am a member, namely the Canadian Actors’ Equity Association, the American Equity Association, the American Federation of Musicians, and the Dramatists’ Guild.

**Collection of Data**

Both surveys opened for responses on September 9<sup>th</sup>, 2021 and closed on November 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Surveys were designed using Google Forms. Forms provides a live tabulation of results and creates tables for swifter analysis. Zoom’s video recording feature, operated with the participants’ unanimous permission, allowed me to download the focus group interviews and store them for review.

## **Data Management**

The data was accessible only to me and those given a private link and viewing or editing permission. Supervisors were welcome to view live results of the surveys, but only I had editing permission. The survey was protected through a password known only to me and Google security. The supervisors elected not to attend the focus groups, so as not to create any undue influence or discomfort on the participants.

## **Data Analysis**

### **Surveys**

I tabulated the ordinal data from the Likert scale questions separately from the demographic information to overview the surveys. Using a Google spreadsheet, the results from both were cross tabulated to segment the answer results into percentages. I used a Chi-square test for independence to assess relationships between the demographic information and the ordinal data. Finally, I inputted the data into the Visme infographics program (Visme, 2021) to create visually appealing charts to display the results.

### **Focus Groups**

Each ninety-minute focus group session was held via Zoom and recorded to an encrypted video on a laptop computer. Following the sessions, I reviewed the videos to transcribe the interviews into six separate documents, ranging in length from 11,835 words to 15,209 words.

I thoroughly examined the transcripts using a manual inductive coding process (inductive coding occurs post data collection [Medelyan, 2021]). The first coding identified broad similarities within and between the sessions. Next, I imported each document into a qualitative data filtering program called Quirkos (Turner et al., 2020). This program does not automatically analyze qualitative data but rather serves as a tool for organizing and sorting data into themes. Third, I identified themes and sorted them into hierarchical layers through a colour coding process. Fourth, Quirkos generated a report detailing the most discussed topics and sorting the colour-coded quotes. Finally, a third coding (Appendix B) helped determine which themes and sub-themes informed the three primary objectives and the research question. Quirkos also generated a word cloud (Appendix C) to illustrate the most used words within these colour-coded themes.

## **Ethics and Human Subjects Issues**

All information about data collection was approved by Concordia University's ethics department and assigned the certification number 30015407 (Appendix D).

## CHAPTER 3: RESULTS

### Survey for Professional Musical Theatre Creators

**Figure 1**

*Survey Participants*

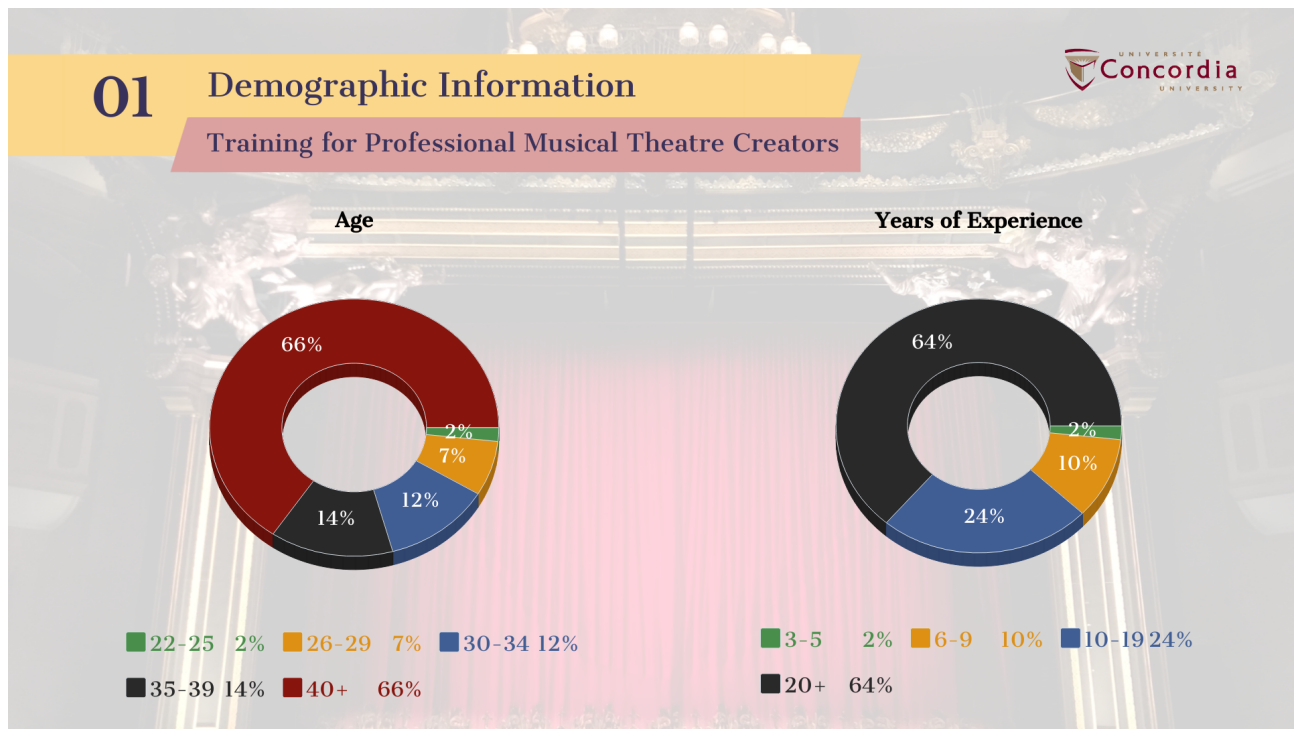


The following demographic information was collected: age range, gender identity, ethnic identity, region of Canada, and years of experience, to determine whether certain aspects of the training were of particular concern to a specific group of individuals.

Figure 2 displays age and years of experience. 66% of participants were 40 or older, and 64% had 20 or more years of experience. Although it is beyond the scope of this study to determine if the numbers correlate, they indicate that experience is likely gained with age. Figure 3 shows that 55% of the participants identified as male, and 79% identified as white. This is slightly higher than the Canadian national averages of 49.7% (Statista, 2021) and 71.35% (StatsCan, 2016).

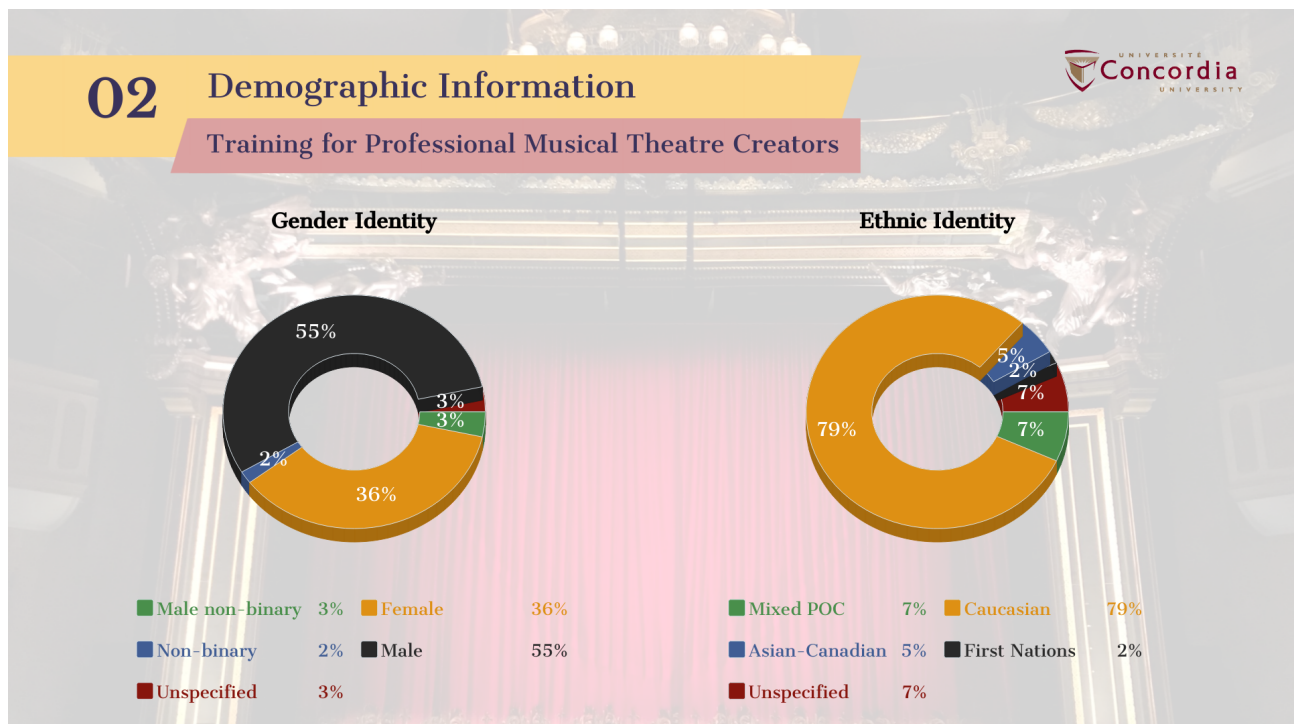
**Figure 2**

*Age and Years of Experience*



**Figure 3**

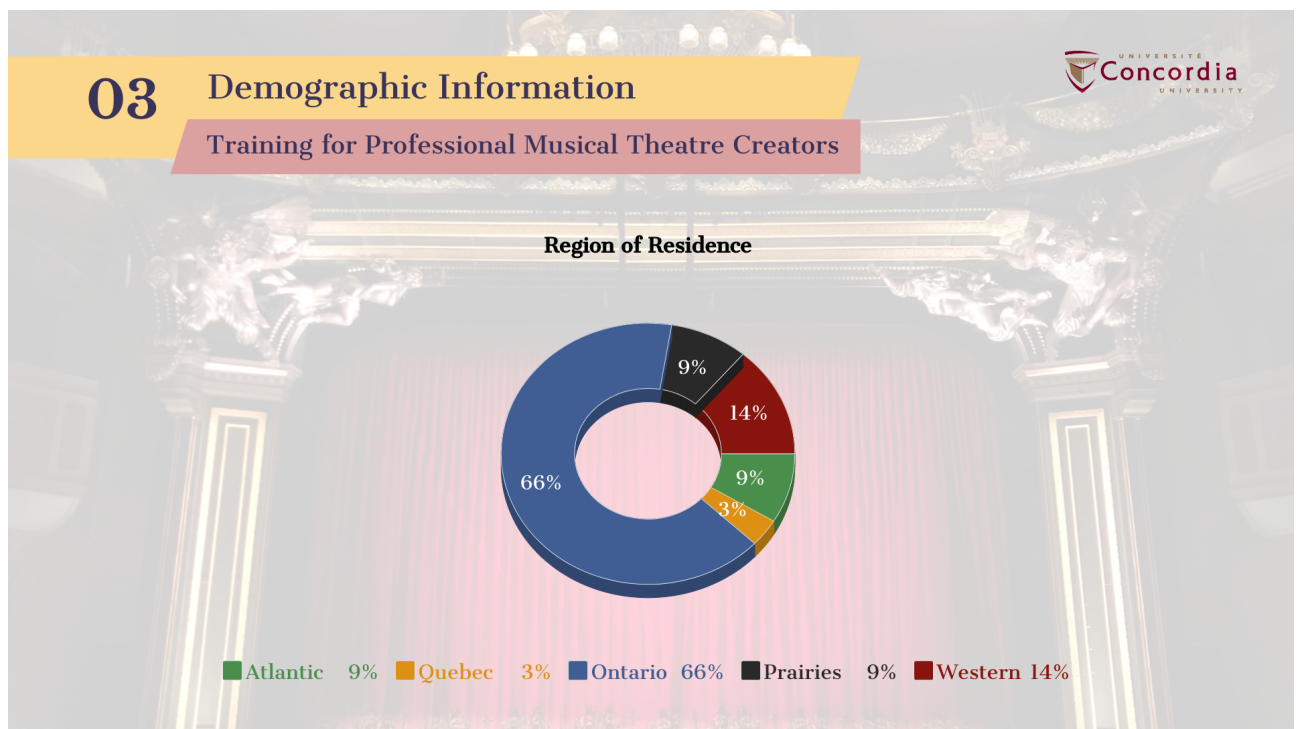
*Gender Identity, Ethnic Identity*



Finally, Figure 4 illustrates the participants' region of residence, with two-thirds (66%) based in Ontario. The remaining population is divided between Western Canada (14%) and the rest of the country at 20%.

**Figure 4**

*Region of Residence*

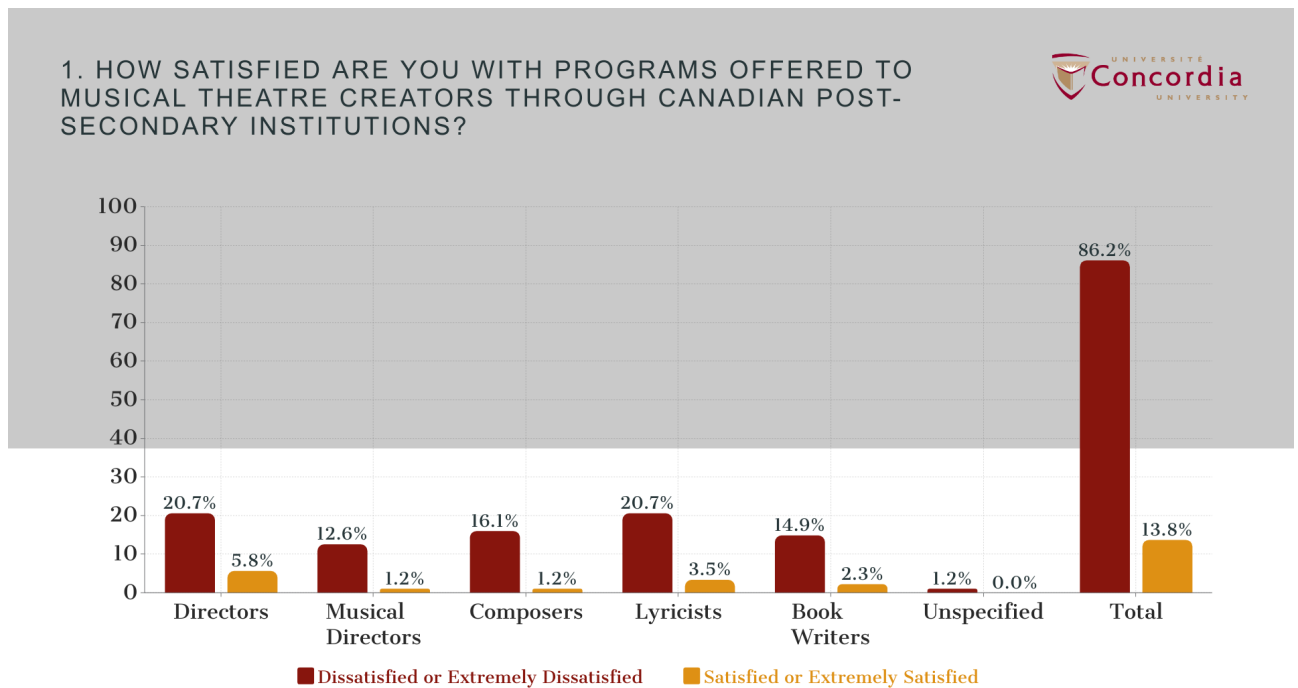


The first objective was to determine the level of satisfaction with the current content offered to musical theatre creators through academic institutions, theatre companies, and independent (*ad hoc*) organizations. Figures 5, 6, and 7 show that, across the board, the respondents were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with academic institutions (86.2%), theatre companies (81%), and independent companies (80.5%). All disciplines were relatively similar with regards to these numbers.



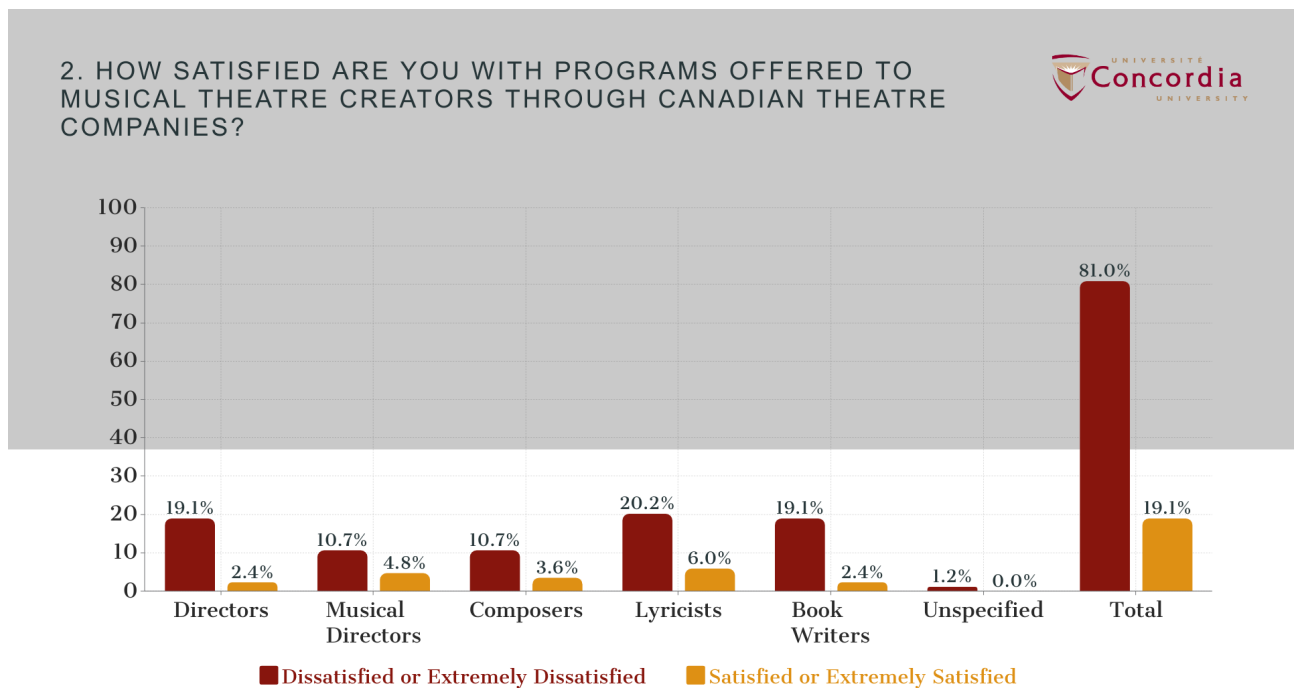
**Figure 5**

*Satisfaction With Programs Offered Through Post-Secondary Institutions*



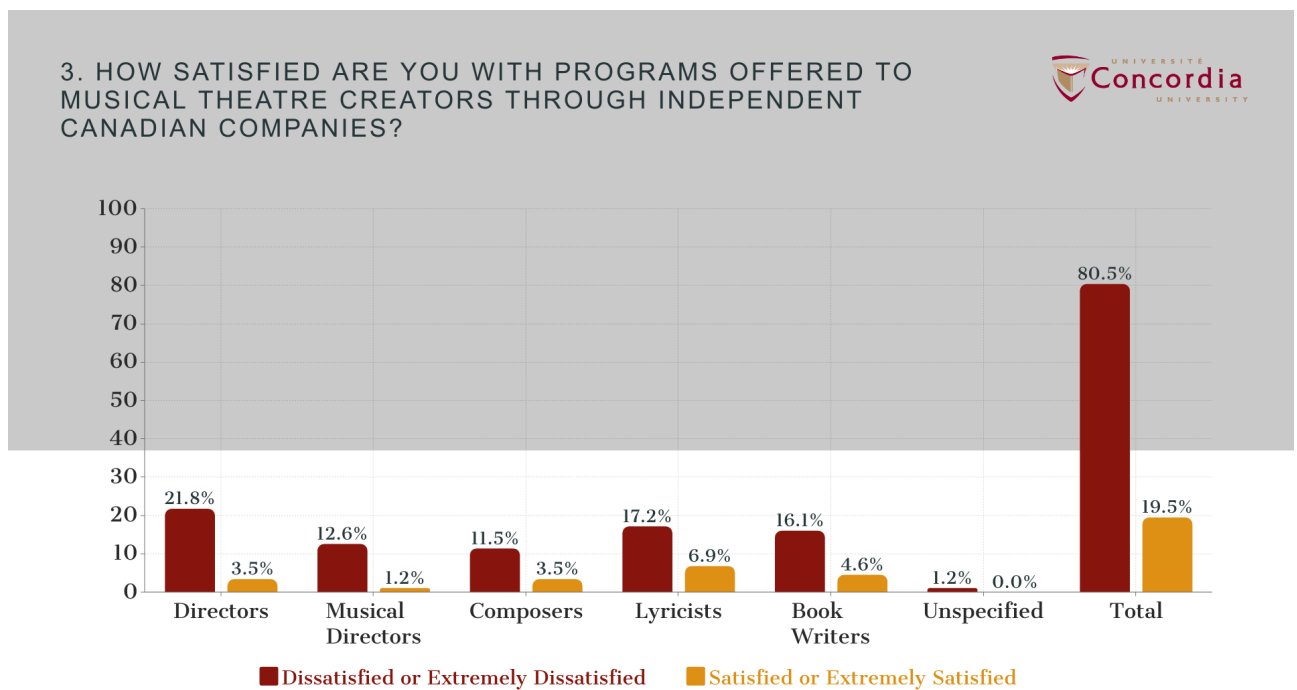
**Figure 6**

*Satisfaction With Programs Offered Through Theatre Companies*



**Figure 7**

*Satisfaction With Programs Offered Through Independent Canadian Companies*



At an average dissatisfaction rate of 82.6%, it is likely that musical theatre creators feel that the current training content offered in this country could be improved.

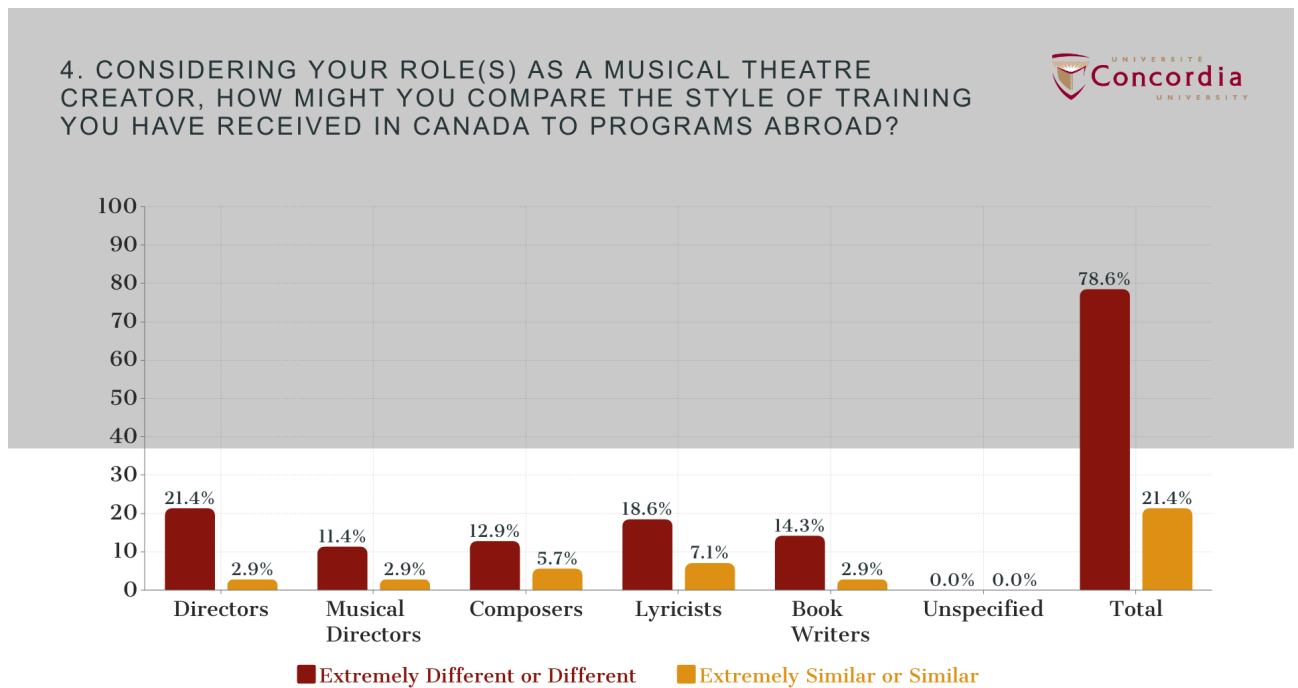
The next objective was to measure the quality of that training content. This was done through a three-question sequence, focused on:

- Comparing Canadian training with training abroad
- Rating the quality of Canadian training
- Identifying limitations in Canadian training

Figures 8, 9, and 10 illustrate the results:

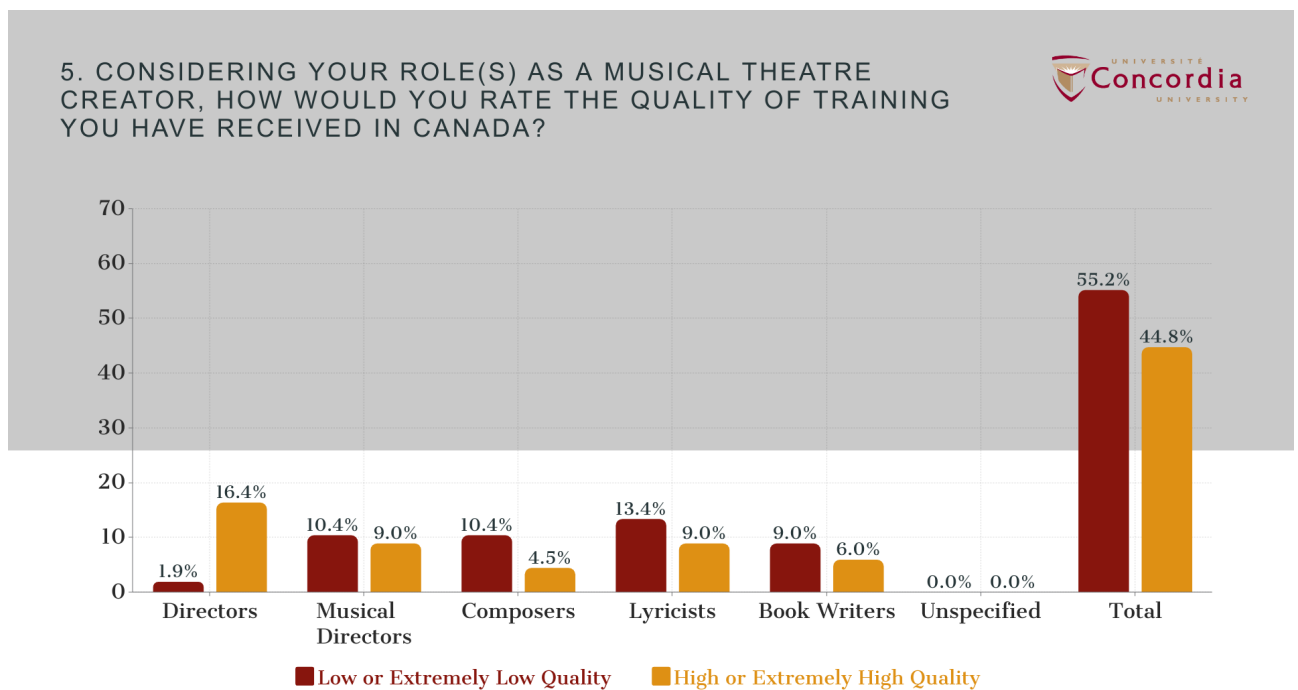
**Figure 8**

*Comparison of Training Styles*



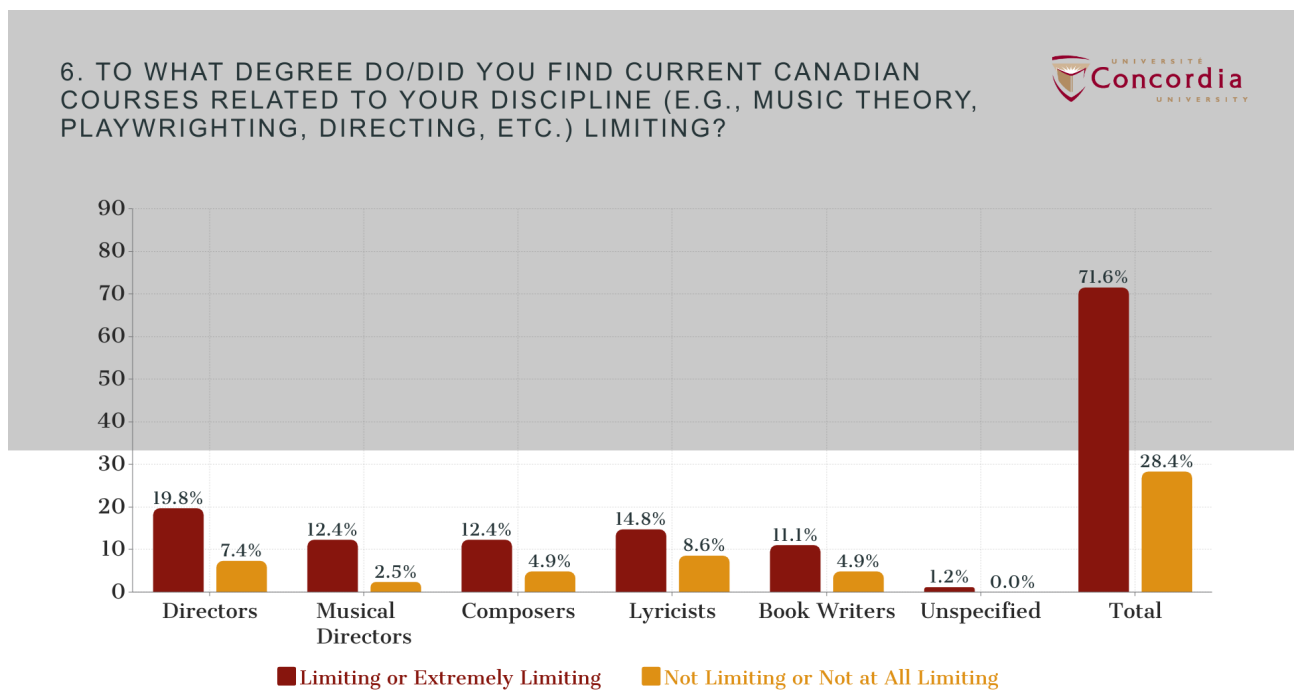
**Figure 9**

*Quality of Canadian Training*



**Figure 10**

*Limitations of Canadian Training*



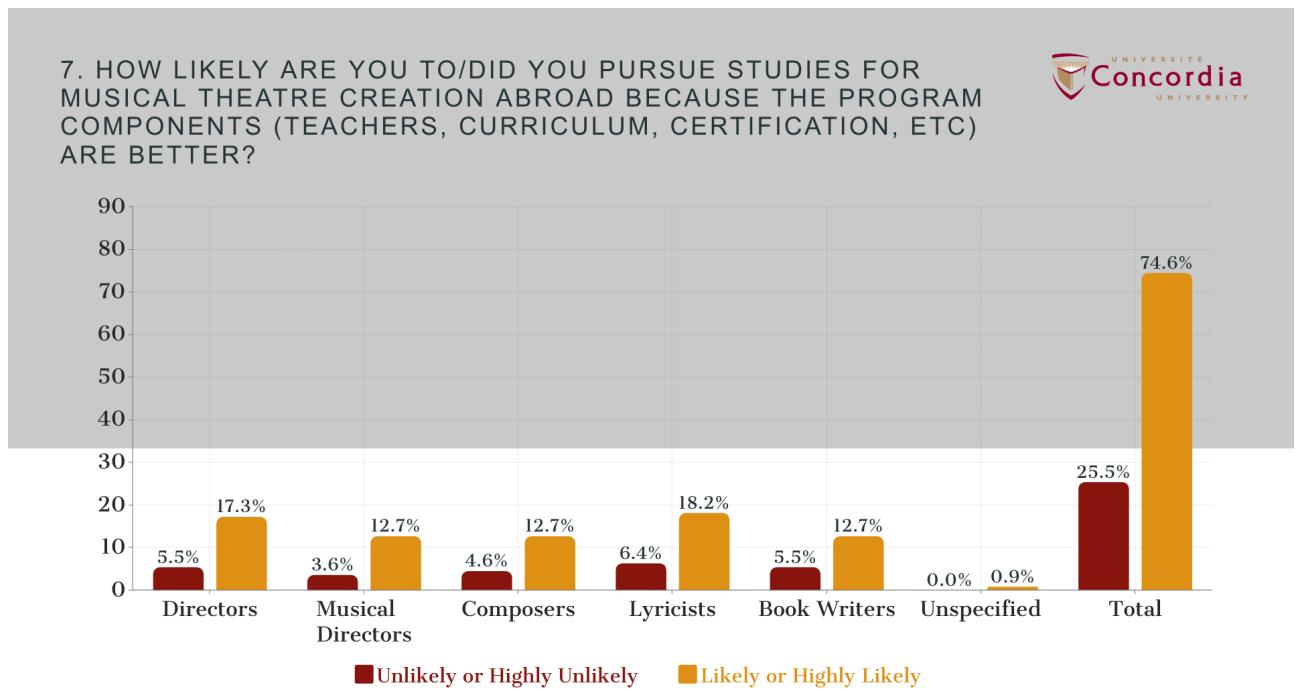
When asked directly to rate the quality of Canadian training, the participants were divided evenly, with 55.2% considering it to be low quality or extremely low quality and 44.8% touting it as high quality or extremely high quality. When examining individual disciplines, 89.7% of directors and only 30.2% of composers found Canadian training to be high quality or extremely high quality, a significant difference.

More information may be gleaned from examining potential limitations. In other words, do the courses offered encourage or limit the artist's potential growth. Overall, 71.6% of professional musical theatre creators found that Canadian training was limiting or extremely limiting, with musical directors, composers, and book-writers finding it to be the most limiting. Although the sample sizes were too small, I used Chi-square test of independence as a suggestive device to inquire as to whether this might have been driven by the participants' ethnic identities. The results showed no significant association between ethnic identity and limitations in musical theatre training in Canada,  $\chi^2(1, N = 38) = 0.3, p = .5842$ .

The next objective was to understand what might motivate musical theatre creators to study abroad. The questions offered a list of intrinsic (instruction, curriculum, certification, etc.) and extrinsic (exposure to city, reputation, proximity to relatives, etc.) motivators. Since cost is often a significant consideration for training programs, the participants were posed a separate question to measure the importance of affordability. Figures 11, 12, and 13 summarize the results.

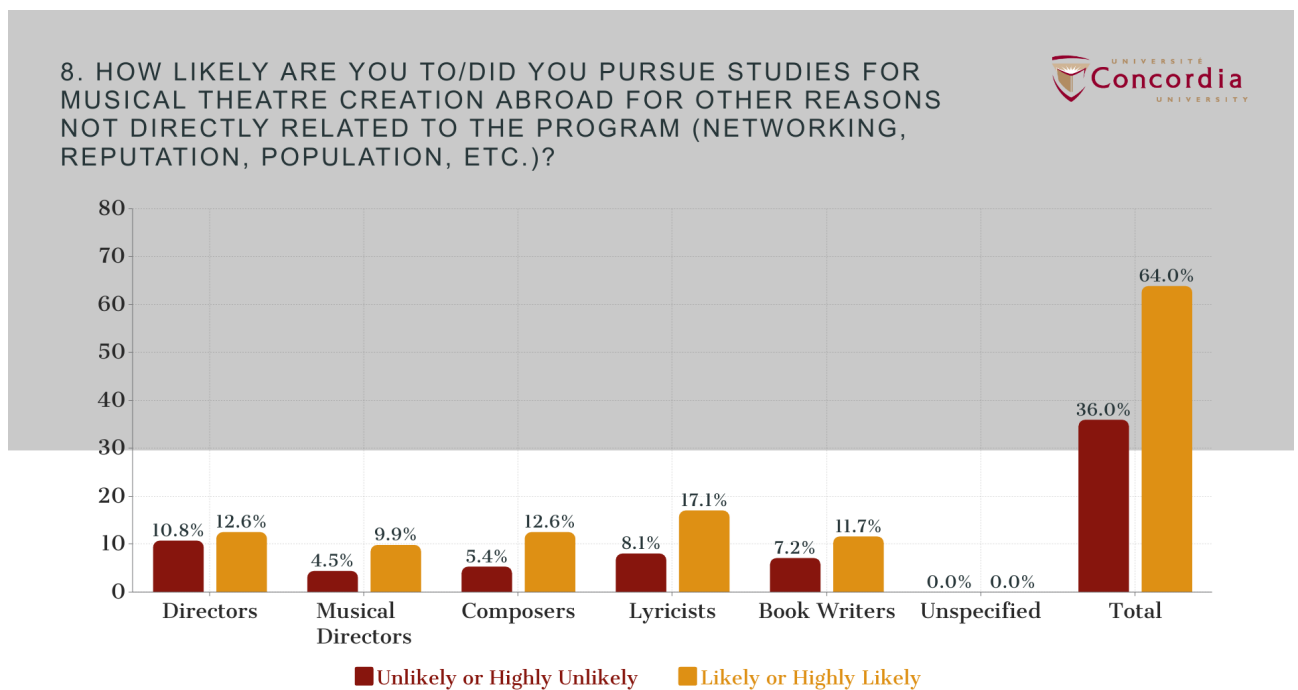
**Figure 11**

*Intrinsic Motivators*



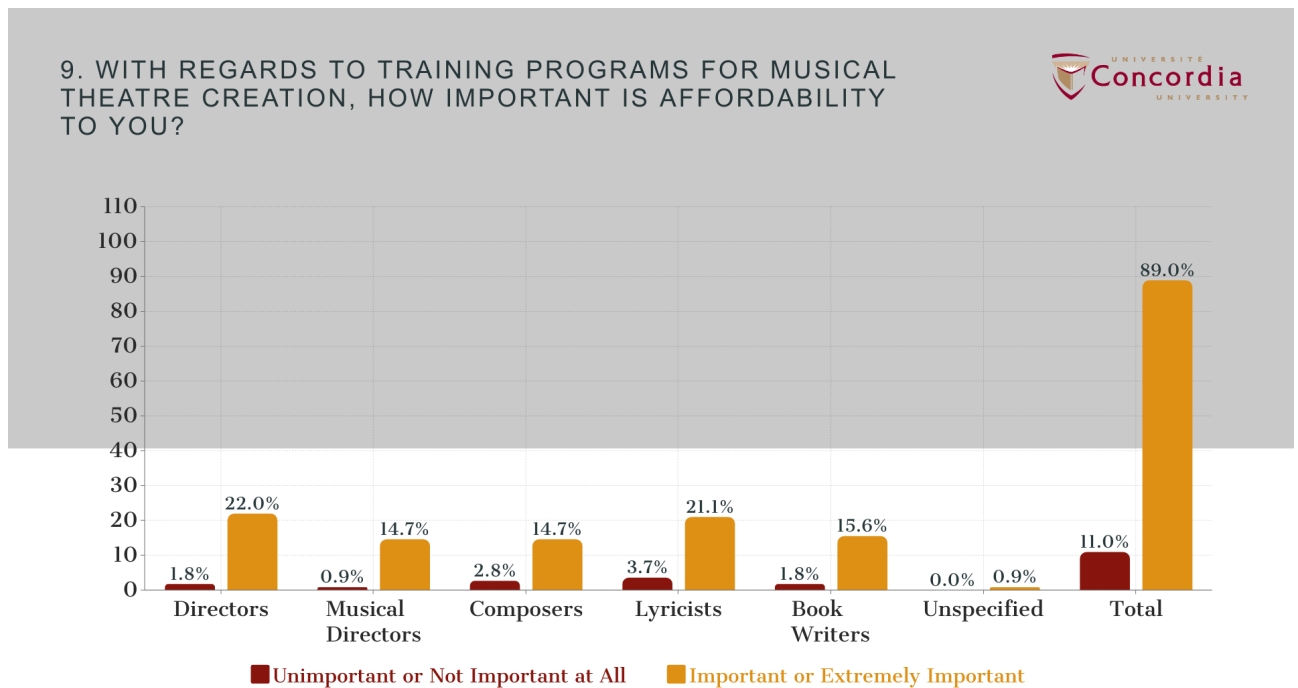
**Figure 12**

*Extrinsic Motivators*



**Figure 13**

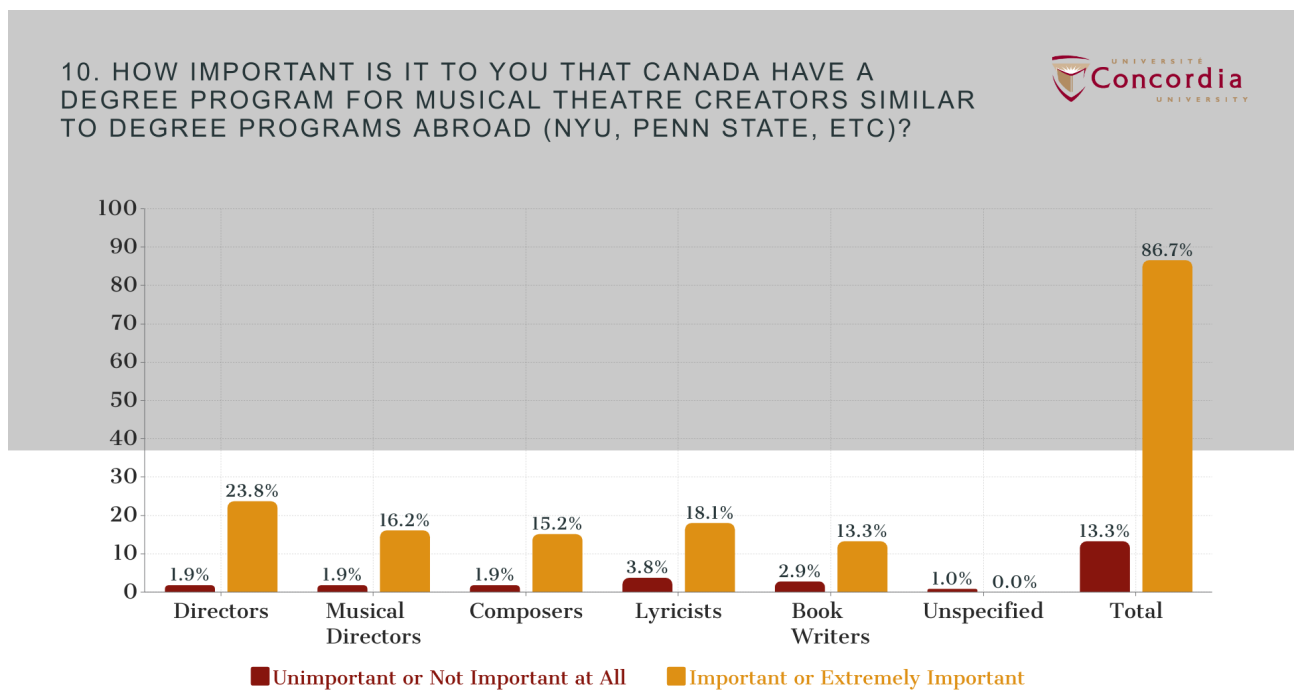
*Affordability*



As Figure 13 suggests, affordability is crucial when choosing a training program. This may be due to the low salaries associated with these disciplines. 74.6% of participants felt that the elements associated with a program (e.g., curriculum) were important or very important, while slightly fewer (64%) were motivated for other reasons. These numbers suggest that an ideal training program for musical theatre creators would be an affordable one with high-quality instruction and a strong curriculum, in a location that encourages the arts and provides an opportunity to network.

**Figure 14**

*Importance of a Canadian Degree Program*



As a follow-up to this objective, the participants were asked if it was important to them that Canada have its own degree program (or programs). Overwhelmingly, 86.7% found it important or very important. This is a positive indication that the participants believe a degree program would help Canadian musical theatre creators. It is encouraging to note that such a large majority support the notion of training at this level.

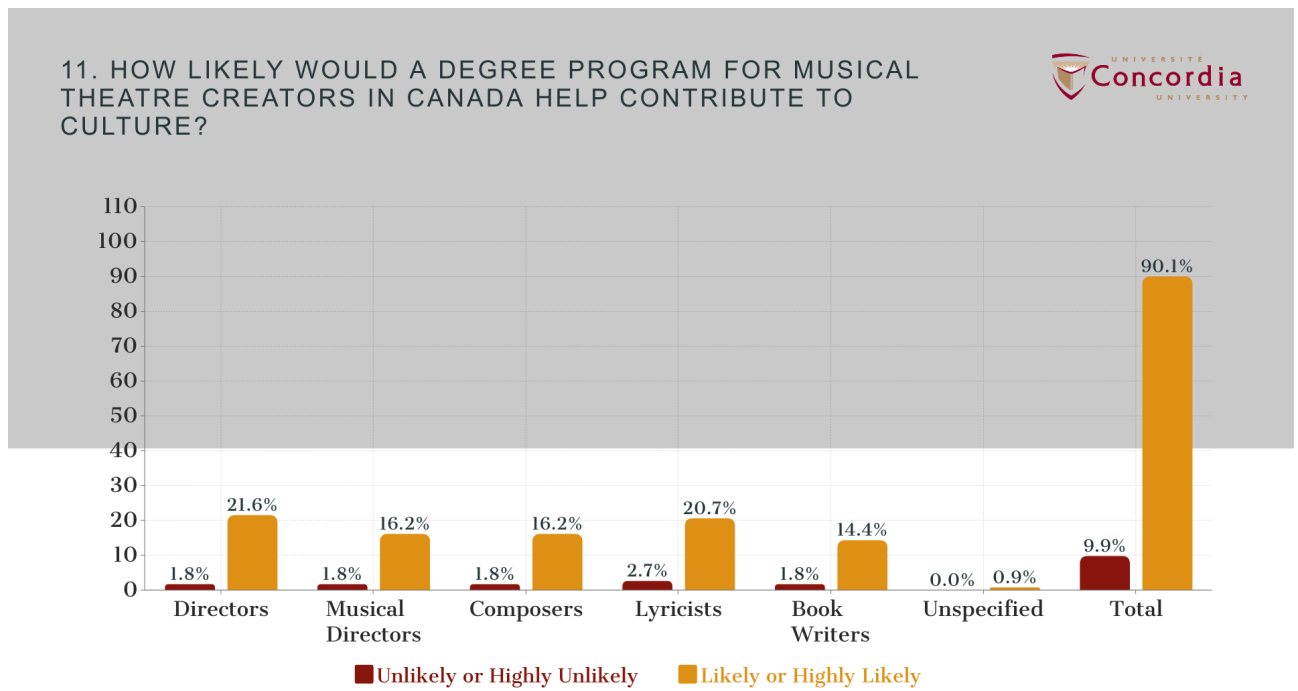
The next three objectives measured:

- A degree program's contribution to culture
- How a degree program may influence the success of a practitioner
- The amount of training by those who have studied abroad

These questions were explored in depth in the focus group sessions, but the survey did provide some insight.

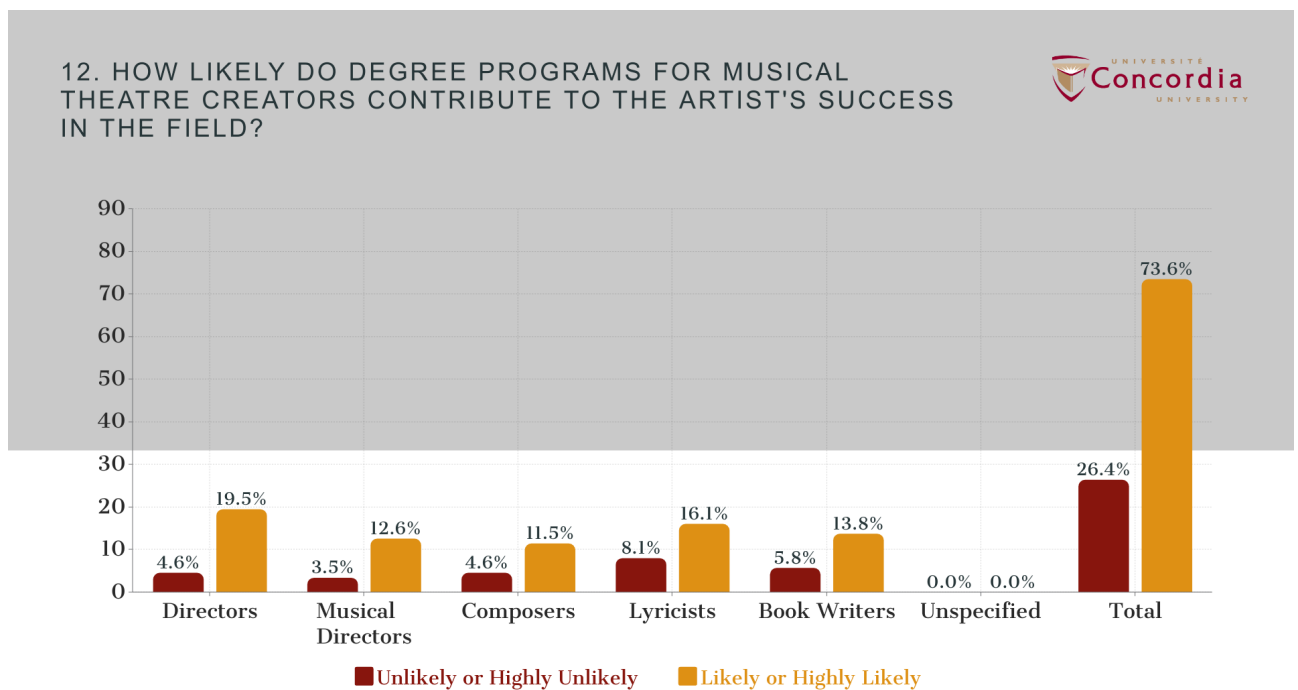
**Figure 15**

*Contribution to Culture*



**Figure 16**

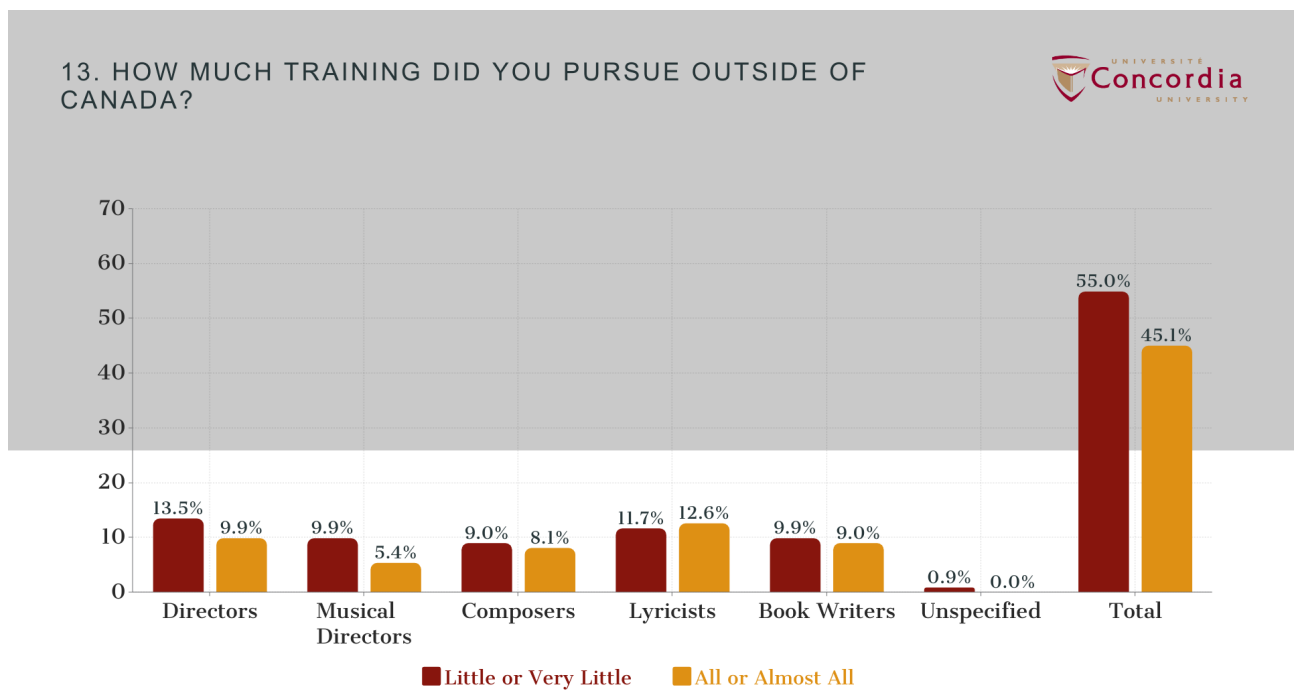
*Degree Programs and Success*





**Figure 17**

*Training Abroad*

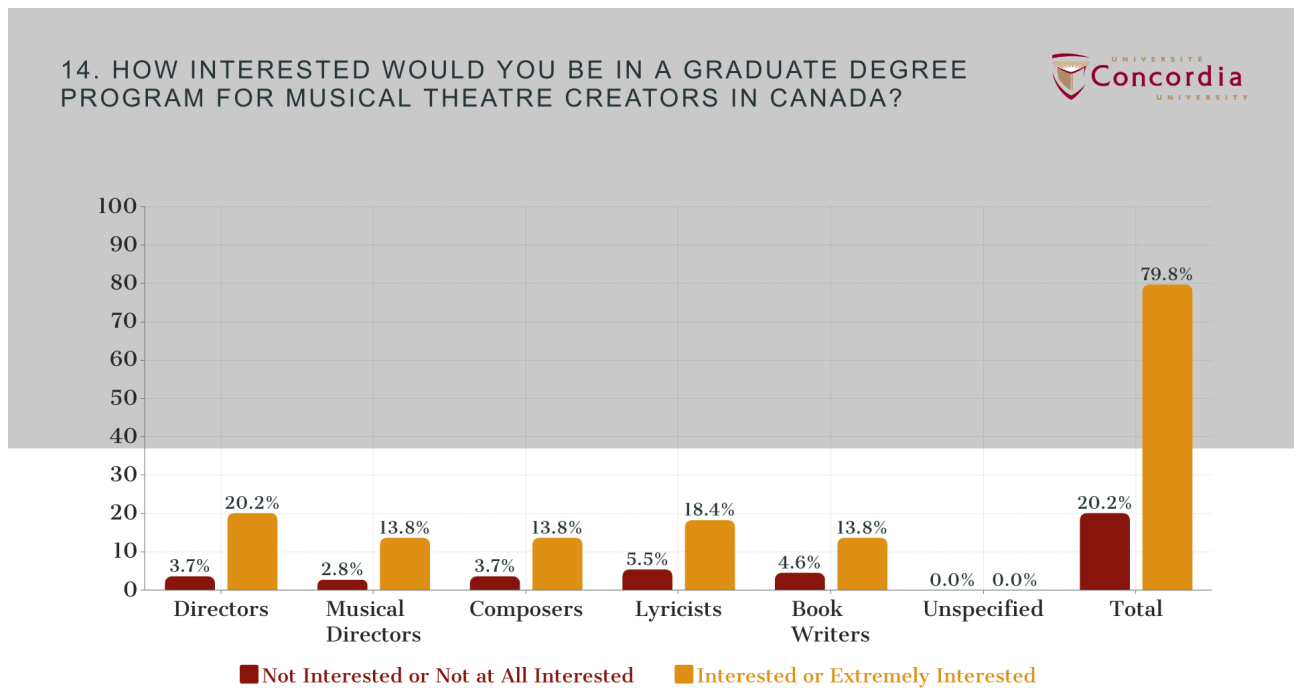


90.1% of respondents felt it was likely or highly likely that a Canadian graduate degree program would contribute to Canadian culture, and 73.6% thought it could contribute to an artist's success. Suppose the 45.1% of the creators who received their training abroad had studied in Canada. In that case, the numbers suggest that we might have more working musical theatre creators and a more thriving culture of musicals in Canada.

Finally, the candidates were asked if they would be interested in a graduate degree program for their chosen discipline.

**Figure 18**

*Interest in a Graduate Degree Program*



As Figure 18 shows, 79.8% of professionals were interested in graduate studies. The question could be raised whether older practitioners would want to go to university. A Chi-square test of independence showed no significant association between years of experience and interest in a graduate program for musical theatre creators,  $\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 0.53, p = .4651$ , but, again, due to sample size, this is only presented as a suggestion.

## Survey for Emerging Musical Theatre Creators

**Figure 19**

*Participants*

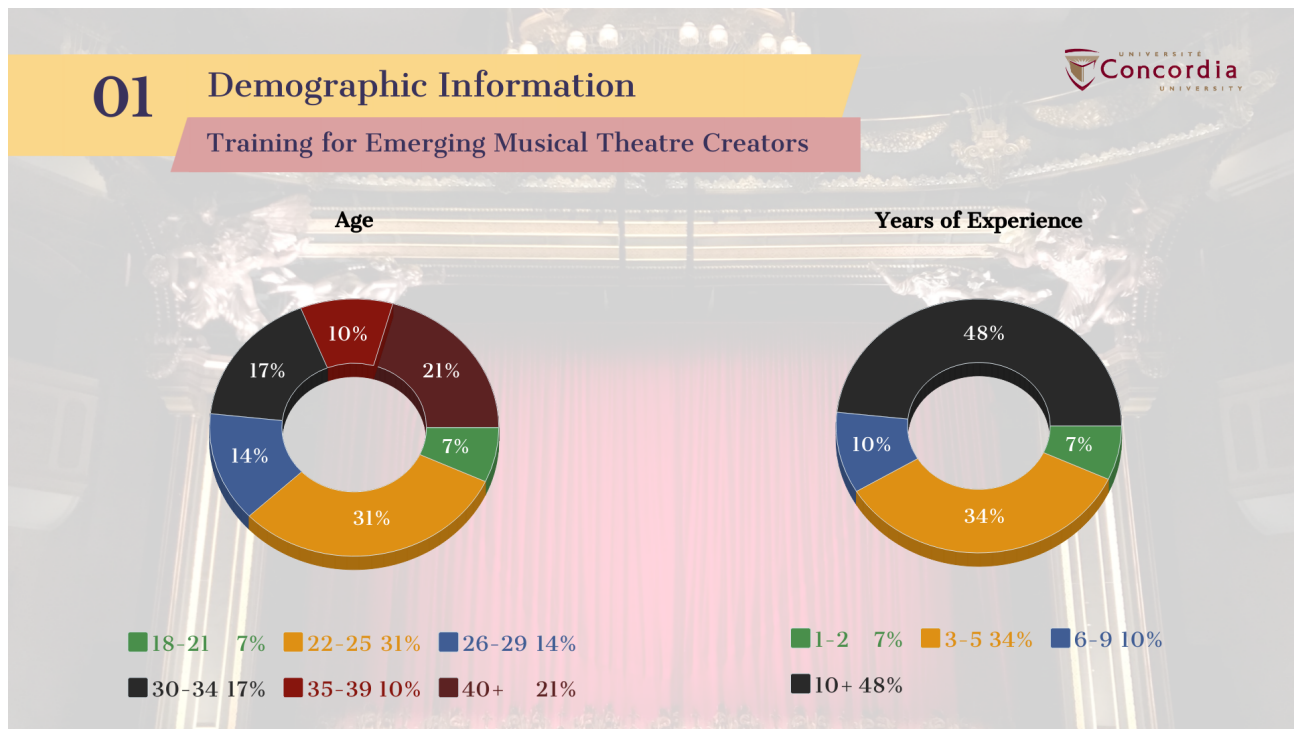


Like the previous survey, the following demographic information was collected: age range, gender identity, ethnic identity, region of Canada, and years of experience, to determine whether certain aspects of the training were of particular concern to a specific group of individuals.

Figure 20 displays age and years of experience. As displayed, there is an even distribution of age groups, with the largest group being 22-25 years old (31%). Those with ten or more years of experience led the group at 48%. Figure 21 shows that 48% of the participants identified as female, and 10% chose female/non-binary as their gender preference. This is a significant turnaround from the professional creators' survey. Still, 76% of participants identified as white, again higher than the 2016 StatsCan percentage of 71.35%. That stated, the sample size is too small to generalize.

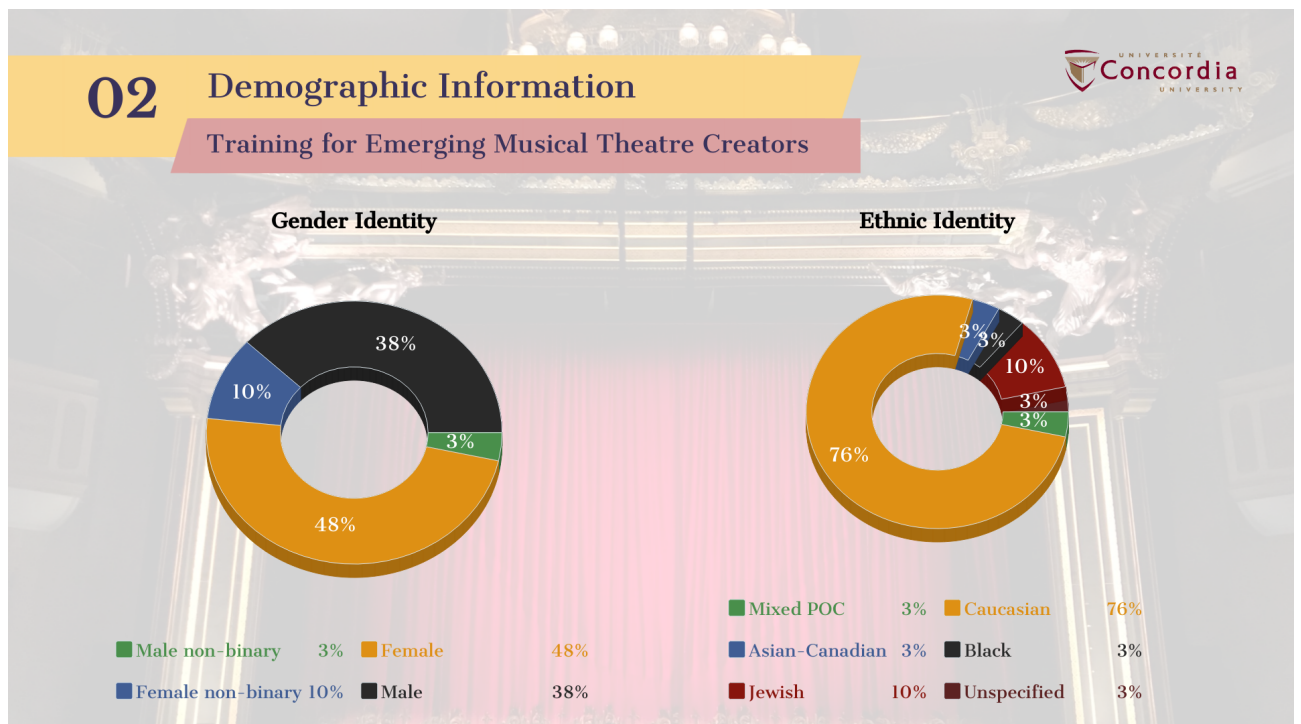
**Figure 20**

*Age and Years of Experience*



**Figure 21**

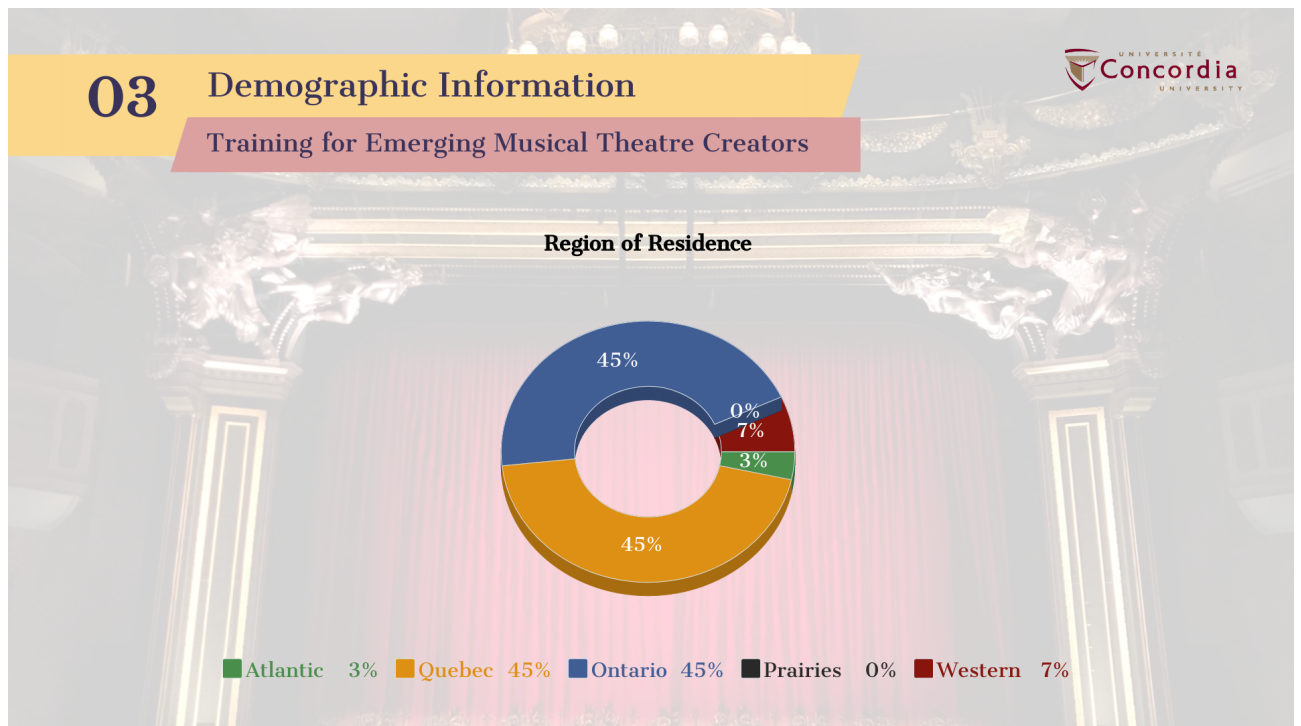
*Gender and Ethnic Identity*



A significant shift can be seen in Quebec regarding the region of residence. 3% of professionals reside in Quebec, whereas 45% of emerging musical theatre creators call Quebec their home. Ontario is still a dominant location, however, at 45%.

**Figure 22**

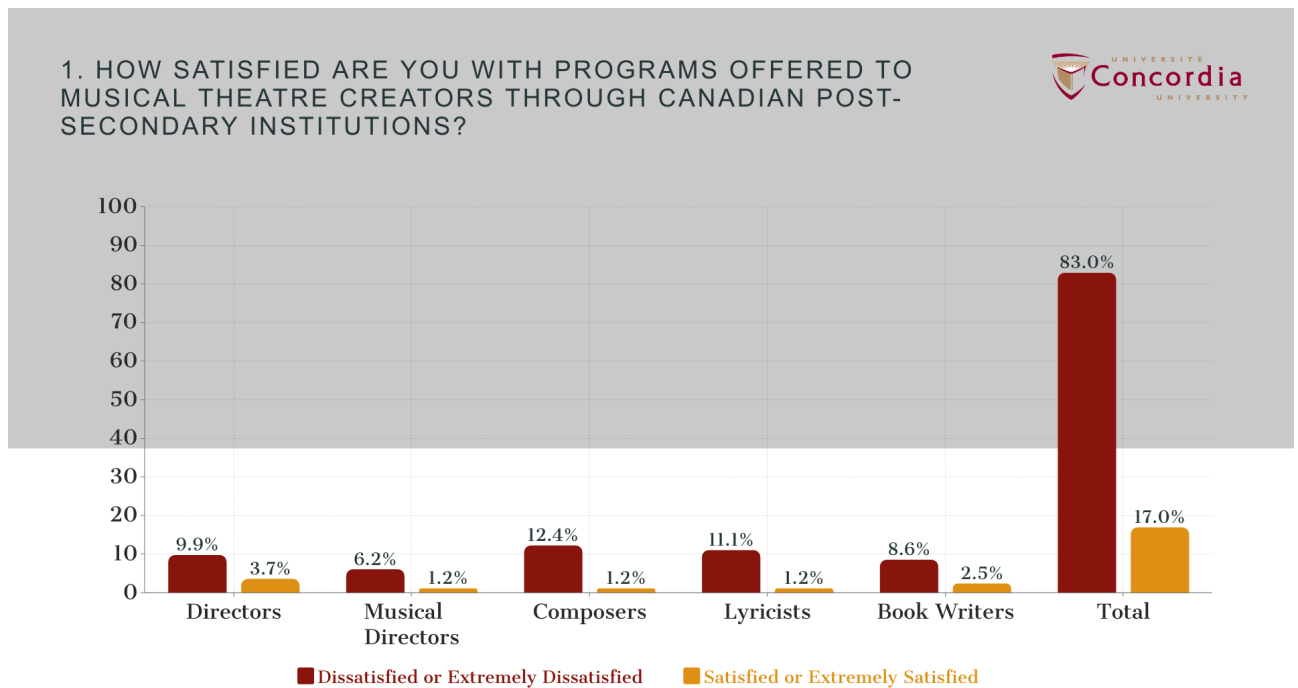
*Region of Residence*



As with the other survey, the first objective was to determine the level of satisfaction with the current content on offer to musical theatre creators through academic institutions, theatre companies, and independent (*ad hoc*) organizations. Figures 23 through 25 show that, like the professionals, the respondents were either dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with academic institutions (83%), theatre companies (84.4%), but were divided at 47.5% dissatisfied to 52.5% satisfied when it came to independent companies (80.5%). The distribution of these totals was generally even across the disciplines.

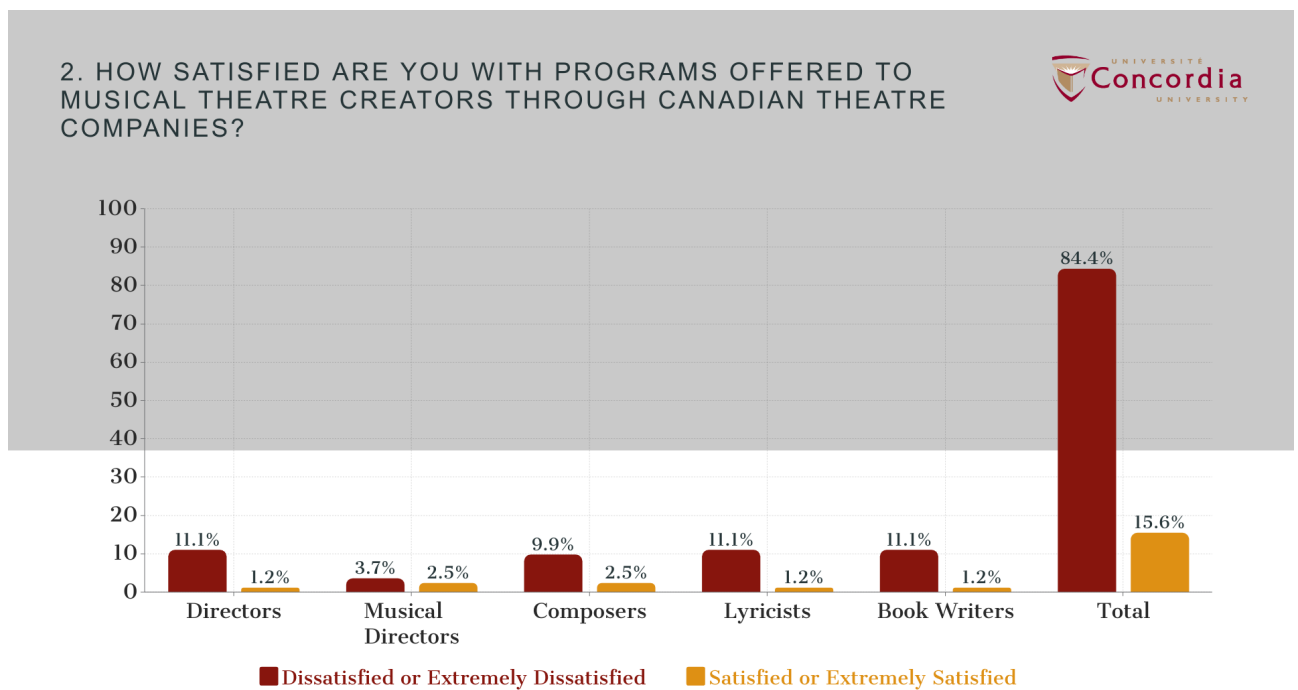
**Figure 23**

*Satisfaction With Programs Offered Through Post-Secondary Institutions*



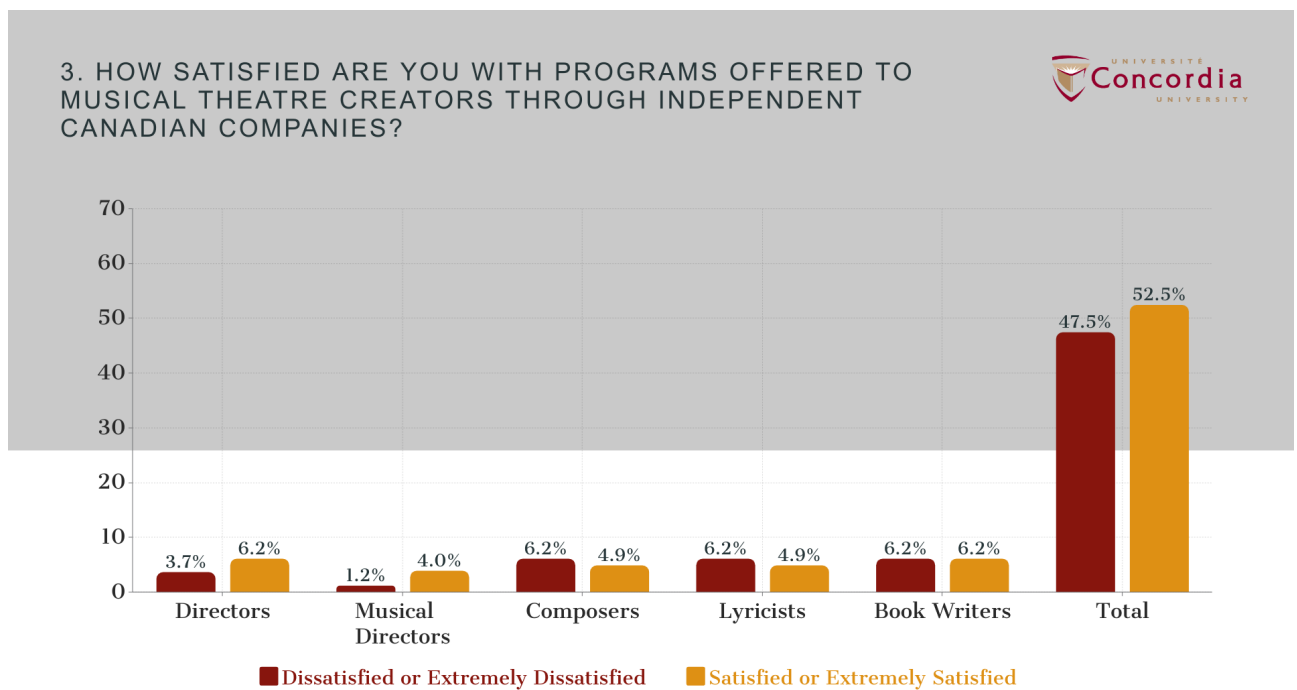
**Figure 24**

*Satisfaction With Programs Offered Through Theatre Companies*



**Figure 25**

*Satisfaction With Programs Offered Through Independent Canadian Companies*



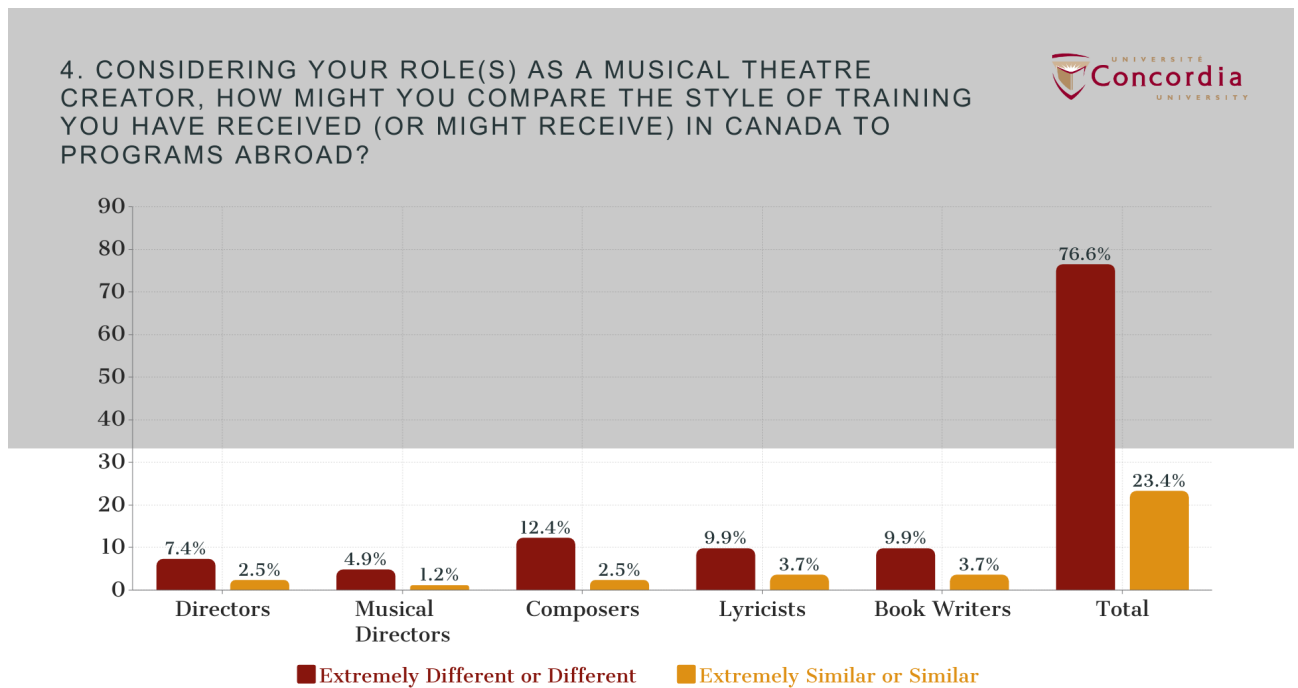
The next objective was approached slightly differently from the other survey. The participants were also asked to assess the quality of training available in Canada through a three-question sequence. And they were asked to consider the potential training they might receive. This approach was mainly aimed at emerging professionals presently considering training in Canada or abroad. The reasoning behind this is, as these artists prepare for entrance requirements, they may be privy to evolving or unpublished information about training programs.

Figures 26-28 summarize the findings:



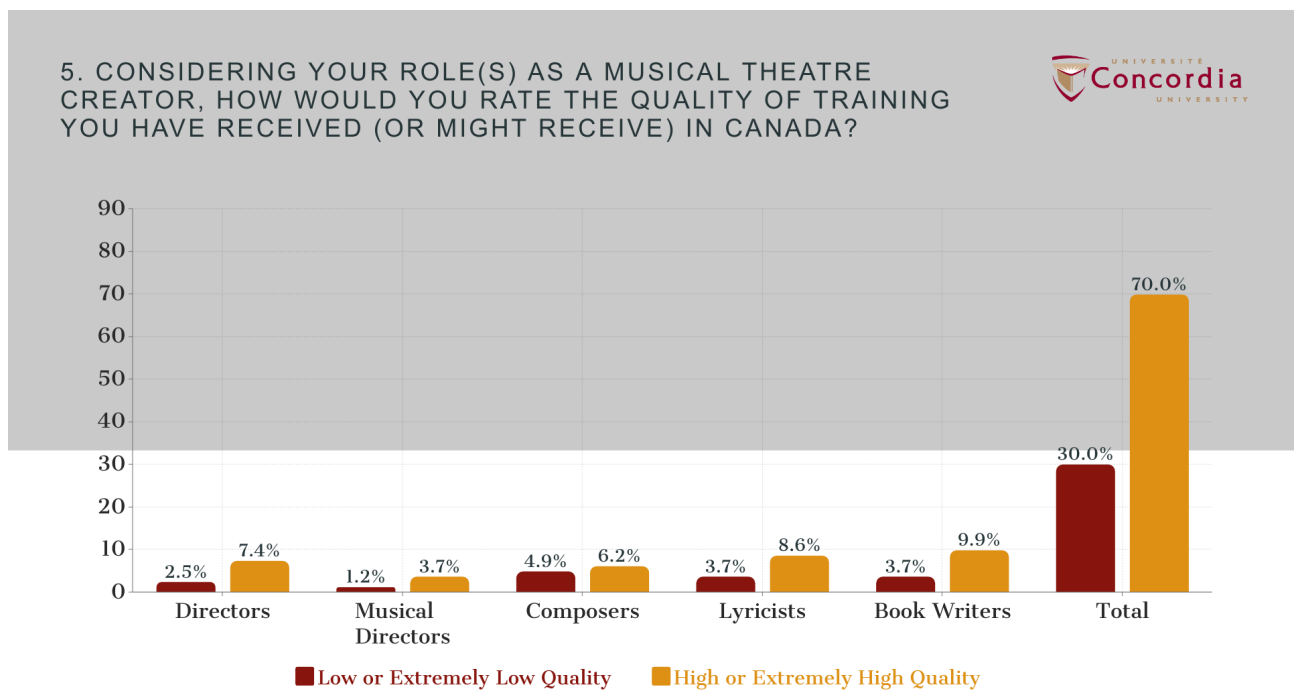
**Figure 26**

*Comparison of Training Styles*



**Figure 27**

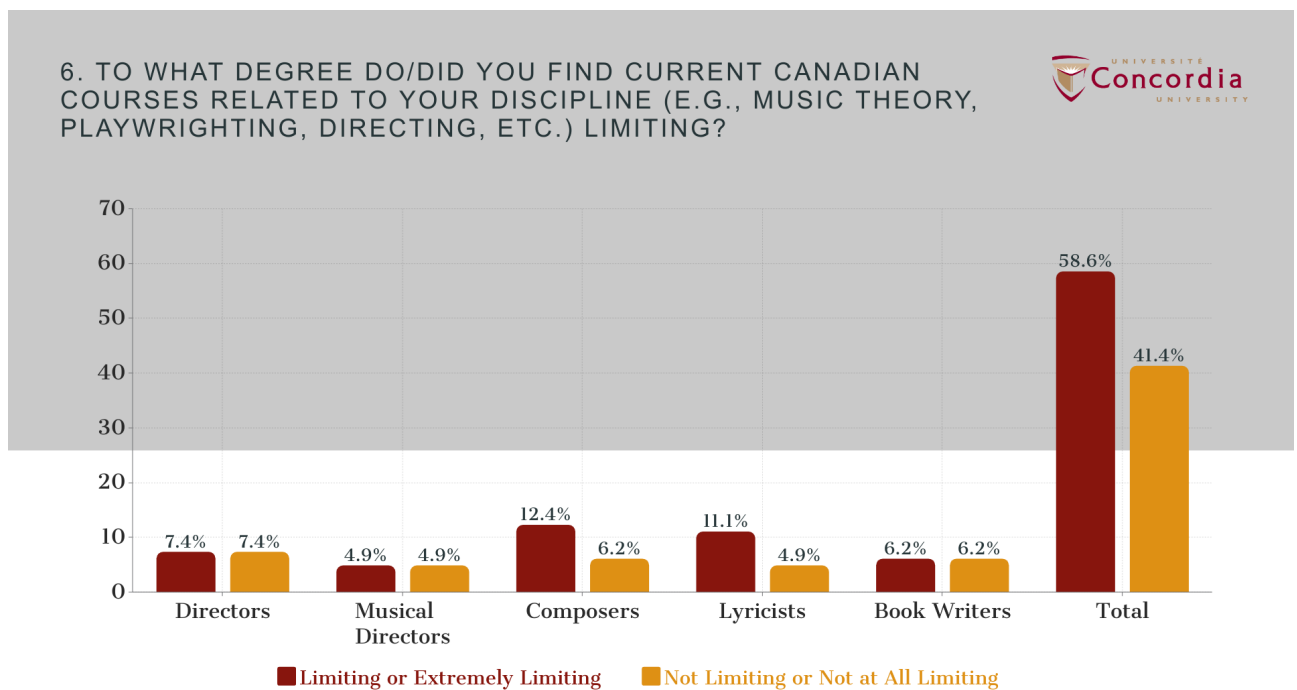
*Quality of Training in Canada*





**Figure 28**

*Limitations of Canadian Training*



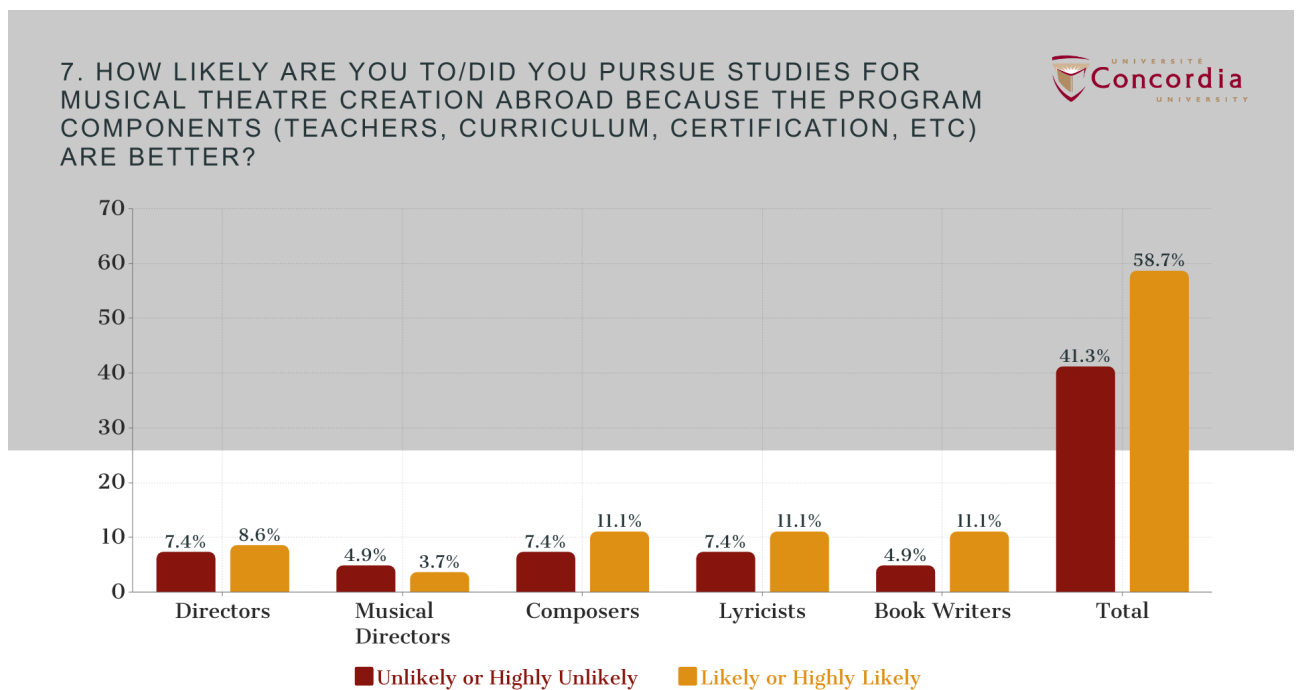
There was a noticeable difference between the two surveys on the quality of Canadian training. 70% of emerging artists found it high or extremely high quality, an increase of 25.2% from the professional survey (Figure 10). Again, the disciplines show similar low versus high-quality values, except composers, 44.1% of whom found the training to be low or extremely low quality and 55.9% high or extremely high quality.

Regarding potential limitations, 58.6% of emerging creators found the Canadian system limiting or extremely limiting, with composers and lyricists finding it the most limiting. This is still a weighty figure but is lower than the professional creators' survey by 13%. Like the first survey, a Chi-square test of independence showed that there was no significant association between ethnic identity and limitations in musical theatre training in Canada,  $X^2(1, N = 17) = 0.57, p = .4522$ . As with the previous tests, I present these results as suggestions since the lack of diversity in the sample size has had an impact on definitive figures.

Figures 29-31 illustrate the intrinsic or extrinsic motivators in selecting a training program (like the first survey). The only difference is the wording.

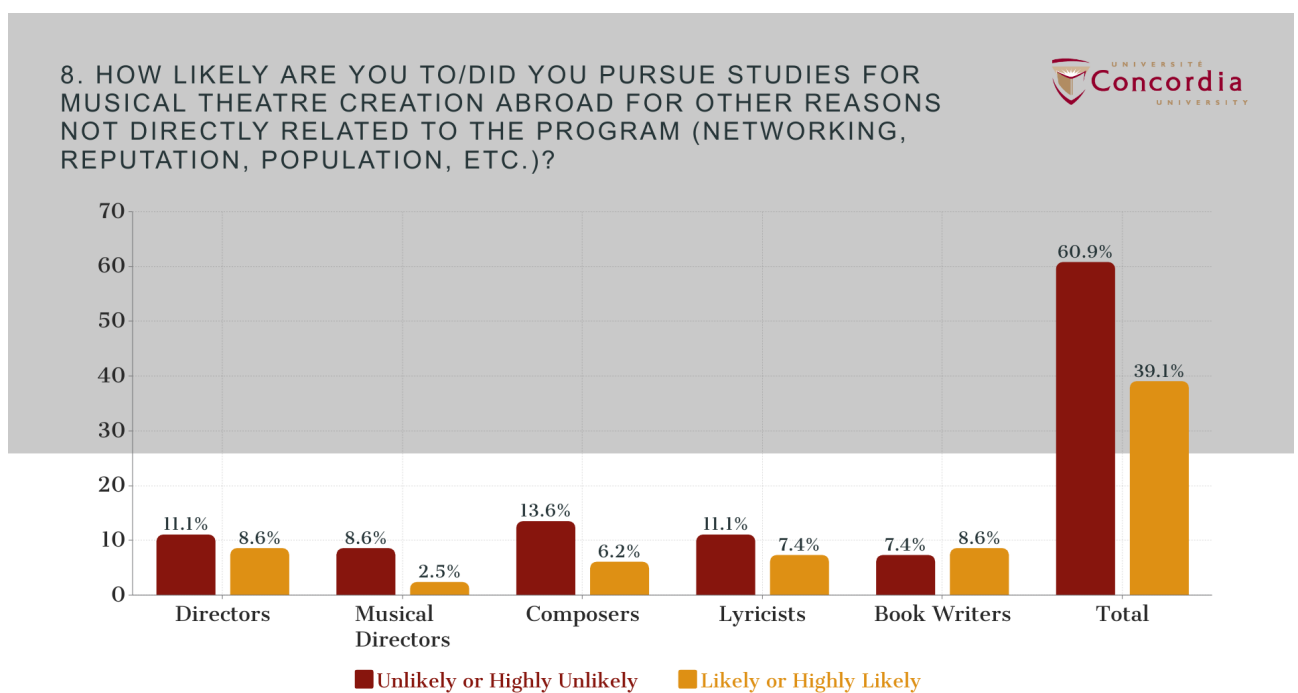
**Figure 29**

*Intrinsic Motivators*



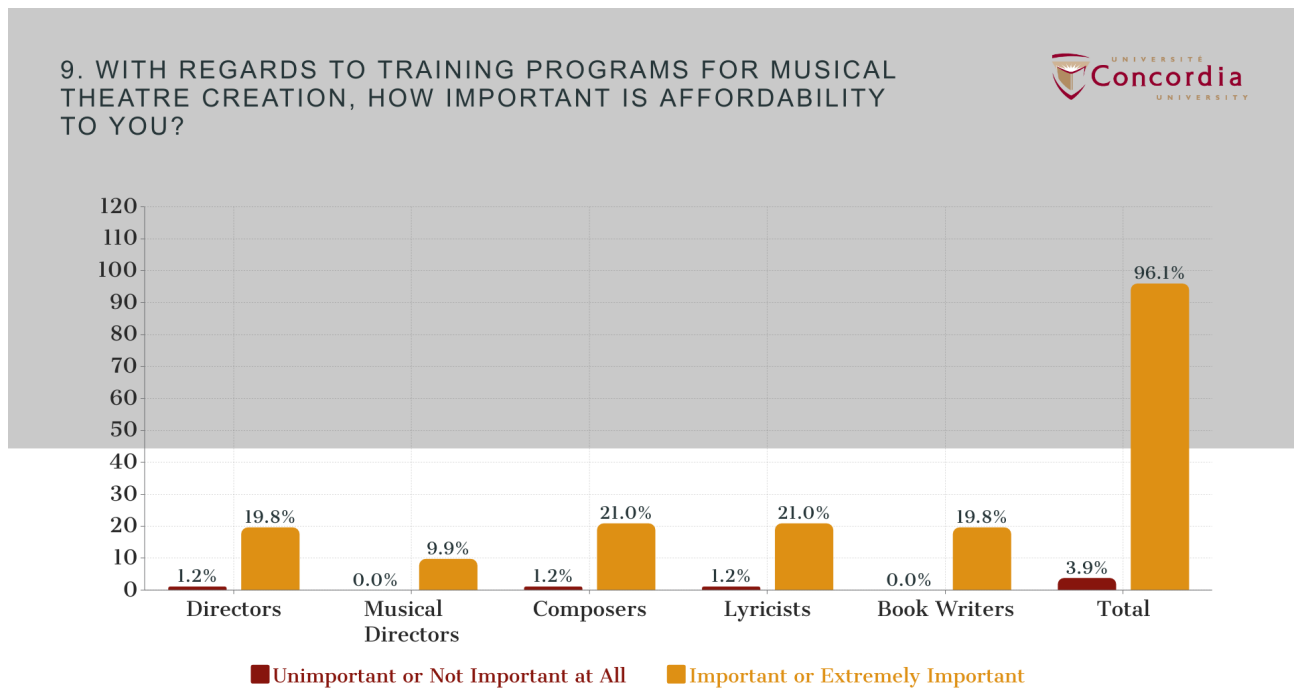
**Figure 30**

*Extrinsic Motivators*



**Figure 31**

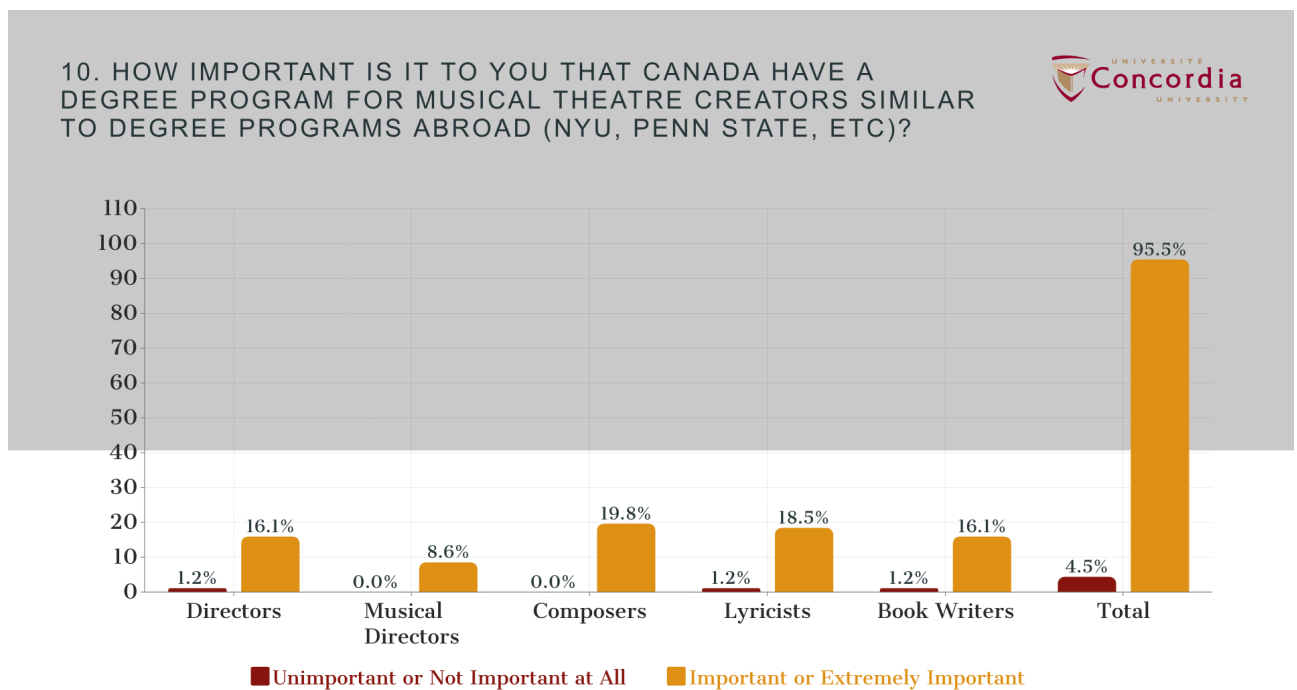
*Affordability*



Weighing in at 96.1%, affordability is the most important motivator to emerging musical theatre creators. This may speak to the current tuition costs for international students (e.g., NYU Tisch is estimated at over USD 100,000 [NYU, 2021]). 58.7% were motivated by the training components, while other factors inspired only 39.1%. Emerging creators indicate that the training location is not as important as it is to the professionals.

**Figure 32**

*Importance of a Canadian Degree Program*



95.5% of emerging musical theatre creators feel that it is important or very important for Canada to have its own degree program. The average between the two surveys comes to 91.1%. The hearty support leads one to believe that such a program would be more than welcome in Canada.

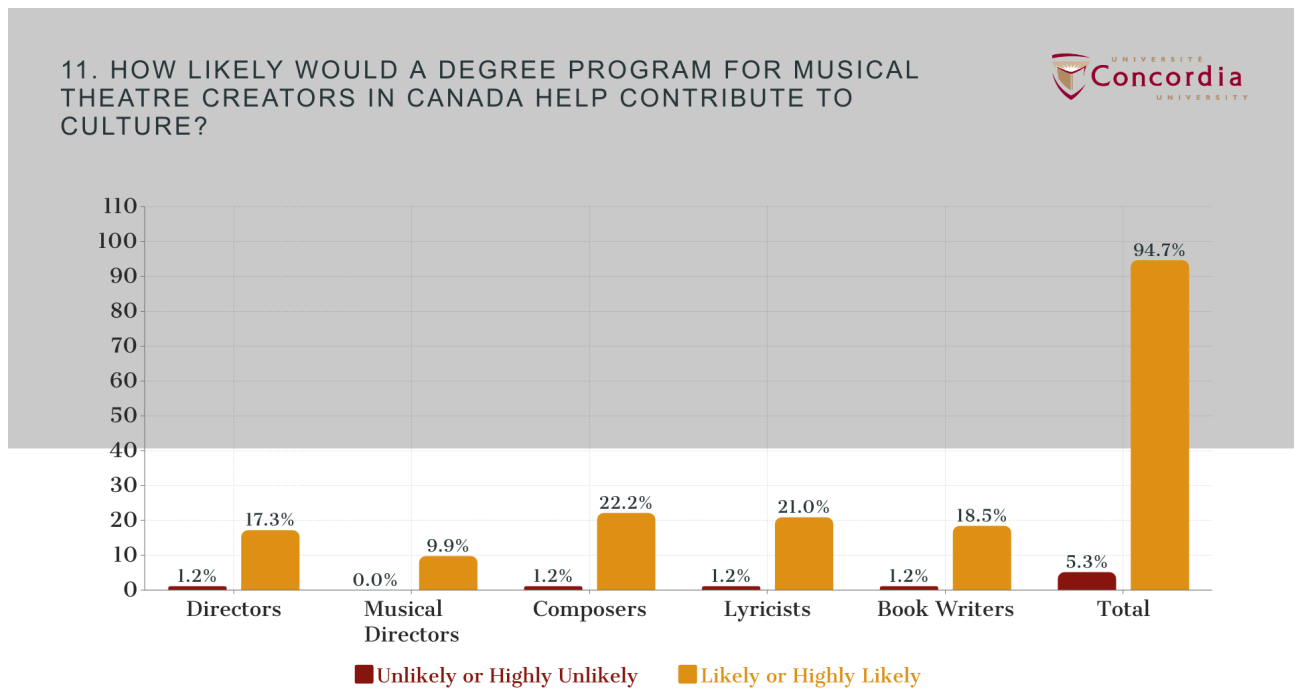
The following three objectives were measured using the same method as the previous survey:

- A degree program's contribution to culture
- How a degree program may influence the success of a practitioner
- The amount of training by those who have studied abroad

Although the respondents are emerging artists, it was informative to examine how many had done most of their studies abroad at this stage in their respective careers.

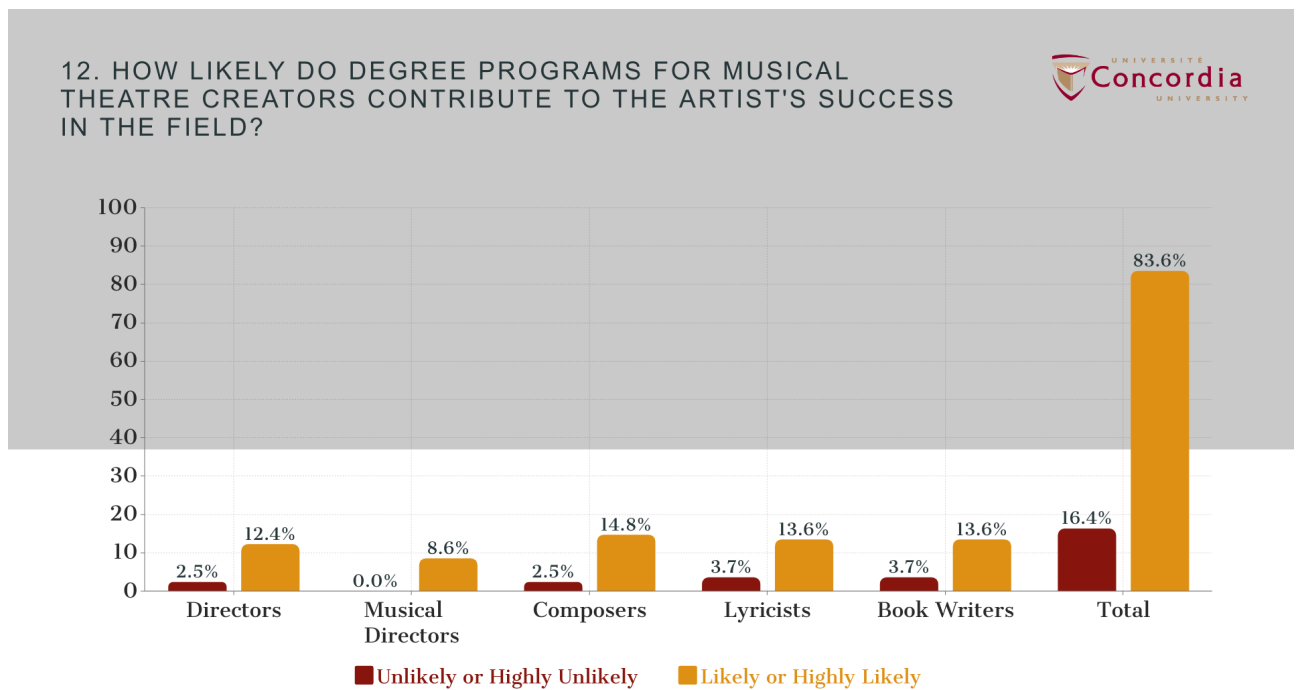
**Figure 33**

*Contribution to Culture*



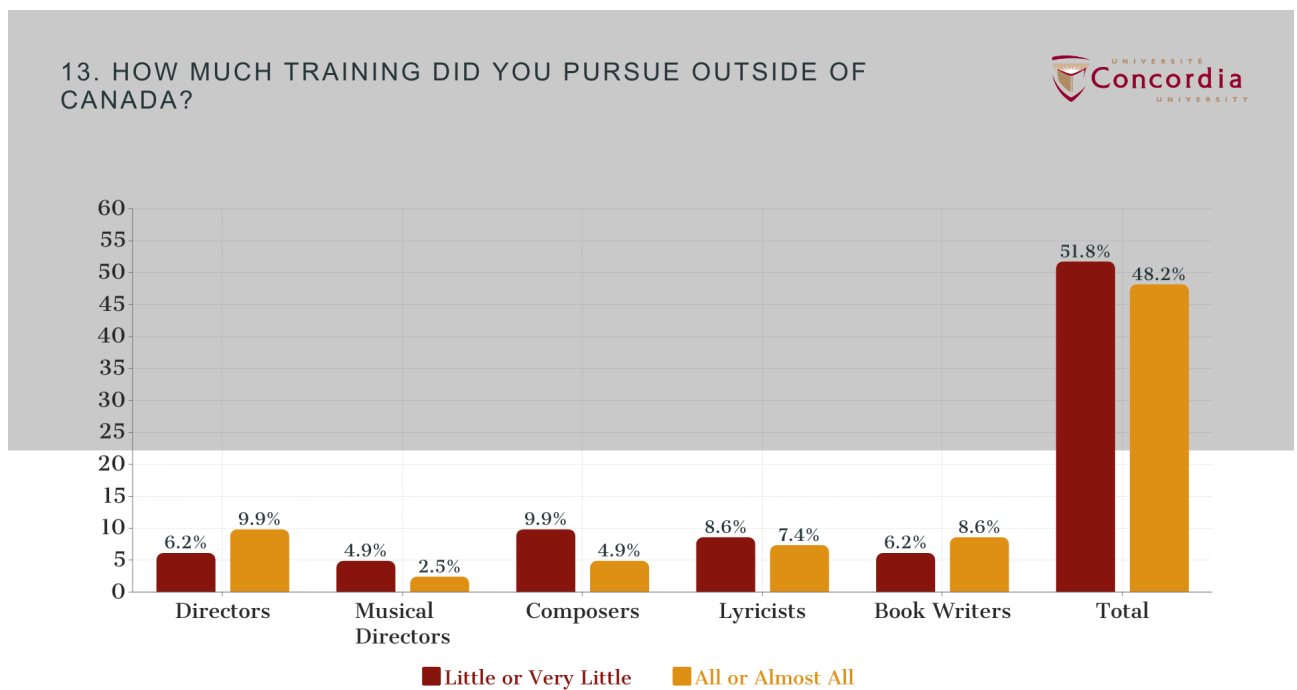
**Figure 34**

*Degree Programs and Success*



**Figure 35**

*Training Abroad*

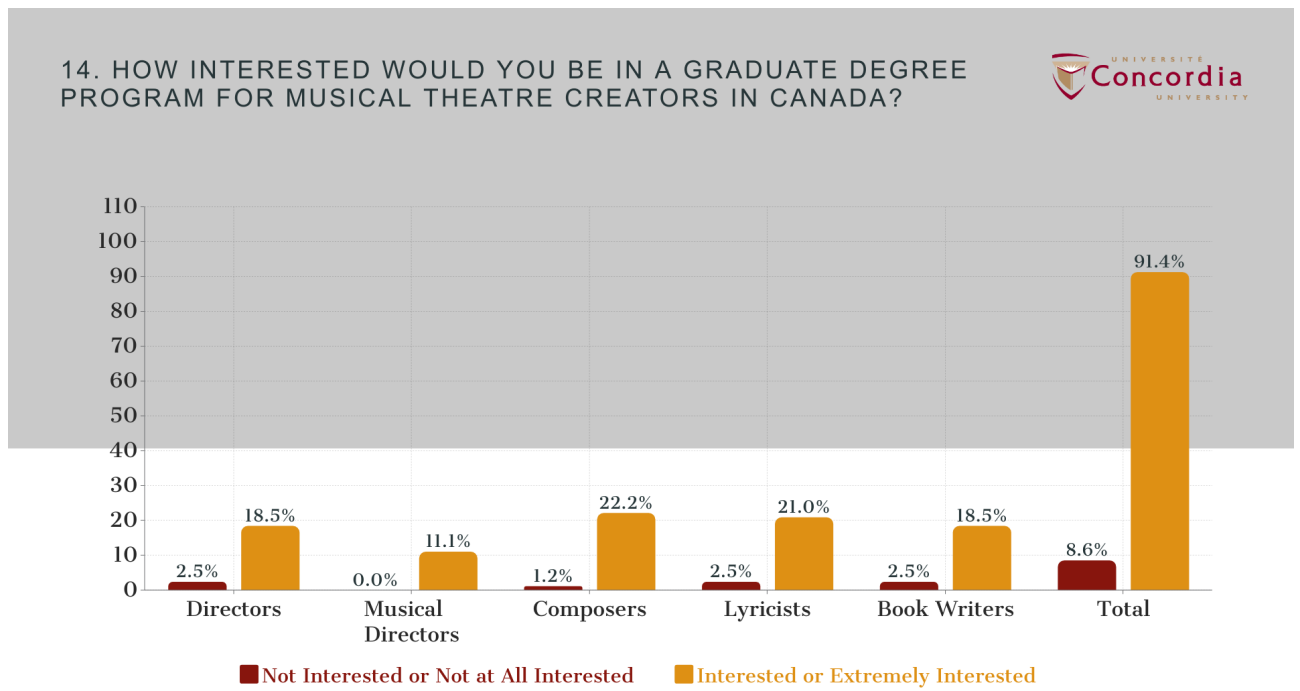


Compared to the survey for professional musical theatre creators, even more emerging artists (94.7%) felt that such a program would contribute to culture. This, averaged with the 90.1% of respondents from the first survey (Figure 15), totals 92.4%, a strong indication that musical theatre could affect the cultural fabric of Canada. Regarding success, 83.6% felt that a degree program could contribute to an artists' success, an increase of 10% from the previous survey (Figure 16). The artists were almost evenly divided at 51.8% home trained versus 48.2% trained abroad.

Identical to the other survey, the candidates were asked if they would be interested in a graduate degree program for their chosen discipline.

**Figure 36**

*Interest in a Degree Program*



91.4% of respondents were interested or extremely interested.

## Results from Focus Group Discussions

The focus groups generated conversations between professional and emerging musical theatre creators to help determine if Canada needs training for these artists. To honour the participants' request to remain anonymous, quoted passages are cited with the focus group number in which they participated (e.g., FGX).

### Previous Training

Before getting into the meat of the discussion, I documented the training backgrounds of the focus group participants to provide deeper insight into their perspectives. Their formal training has been broken down into three categories, ranked from most to least discussed:

- Workshops and specialized training
- University and college
- On-the-job training

### Workshops and Specialized Training

39 of 50 participants cited workshops and specialized courses as a source of their training. The courses mentioned include:

1. The Canadian Musical Theatre Writers' Collective (CMTWC): Twelve composers and lyricists are chosen to participate in eleven sessions over an academic year. Each class lasts three to four hours and is moderated by a professional composer/lyricist. Throughout the year, the participants work on mastering the basics of musical theatre song form, lyric writing, and character-based composition. The CMTWC had chapters in Vancouver, Toronto, and Montreal, but only Montreal remains active.
2. Noteworthy, offered by The Musical Stage Company: "Over nine sessions 24 artists will alternate participating in masterclasses and writing assignment presentations. For each assignment, participants are paired with a new collaborator. Masterclasses will be taught by international BIPOC experts in the field and are open to audit by the public. After each public masterclass, a participant's only-session will be held to dive deeper into the subject matter, including the instructions for the following week's writing assignment." (Musical Stage Co., 2021)
3. ScriptLab (defunct): A program led by Jim Betts, which offered a meeting place for all composers and lyricists in Toronto to share their work and receive constructive criticism from peers.
4. Composium, offered by Theatre 20 (defunct): A mentorship program for composers and lyricists, run by renowned composer/lyricist Leslie Arden bi-weekly from September 2015 to January 2016.
5. The Canadian Musical Theatre Project (hiatus): Launched in 2011, the CMTP was a highly successful program initiated by Michael Rubinoff through Sheridan College's Musical Theatre Department. It is described as "an internationally-renowned incubator – and Canada's first – dedicated to the development of new works of musical theatre" (Sheridan College, 2021), and it provided composers, lyricists,



book-writers, musical directors, and directors of musicals a chance to collaborate on new works.

6. In Tune (defunct): A conference in Vancouver that offered seminars and workshops for musical theatre artists.

Other specialized training was taken through occasional intensives at the Banff Centre or through *ad hoc* offerings in various cities across Canada.

## University and College

29 of the 50 participants received a degree from a Canadian University, six of which were completely unrelated to their discipline(s). Six of the remaining 23 were somewhat related to their discipline(s) (e.g., general arts studies, arts management); 17 of these 23 degrees were related to their discipline(s) and broke down as follows:

- 11 of the 31 musical directors and composers studied classical or jazz music.
- Two of the 20 book-writers graduated from creative writing programs.
- Two of the 23 composers interviewed majored in composition.
- One director received an MFA in direction.
- One book-writer/lyricist received a Ph.D. in English.

Nine participants cited college or conservatory programs as their primary source of training. These included Sheridan College's musical theatre performance program in Oakville, Ontario, George Brown Theatre School in Toronto, and Studio 58 in Vancouver. Four of the participants who studied acting or performance became book-writers and lyricists, and one became a musical director and composer. The remaining four who studied jazz or classical music became musical directors.

## On-the-job Training

*"I just, you know, called everybody I knew and said, 'Can I come and watch you work? I'll get your coffee.' And I did that for a long time, and I figured some stuff out. And I failed, and I did more, and I failed, and here we are."* (FG3)

As this quote suggests, the artist had to solicit work by offering services free of charge, some of which were unrelated to the job. Although this may be viewed as a type of "apprenticeship", we must ask ourselves why this had to happen at all. Why were there no structures in place for this artist to acquire the skills necessary to work within their chosen field? Most participants expressed active support for on-the-job training in the focus group sessions, and 21 of the 50 participants clearly stated that experience gained while working in the field was the most valuable. The types of on-the-job learning mentioned included assistant directorships, interning, playing instruments in pit orchestras, and working for theatre companies outside of their discipline(s).

## Phenomenological Reflections

Participants then responded to questions guided by the seven primary considerations, which I framed for analysis using four core existential categories of phenomenology as themes:

1. Space – workshops, labs, and educational spaces: where musicals come to life.
2. Time – learning periods
3. Body – (dis)respect for musical theatre.
4. Relation – connection: collaboration, mentorship, and professional opportunities.

These themes were examined and discussed in each focus group through a nine-question process (Appendix A).

## Workshops, Labs, and Educational Spaces: Where Musical Come to Life

### Workshops & Labs

A workshop in musical theatre is a developmental process where the creative team gets to take the script and musical score for a test drive. Actors are hired to breathe life into the characters, musicians play live instruments and, often, small audiences may be invited to view a run-through. A workshop is supposed to happen in a safe environment wherein the writers gather information from the director, musical director, and (often) dramaturg about what is and is not working with their script and score. In Canada, it is rare that musicals ever reach the workshop phase. They are not cheap and are most often housed by a theatre company, with the goal of a future production. In my experience, writers are lucky if their work receives one workshop every five to ten years.

*“... too often what they call the workshop in Canada is y'all sit around and learn some songs and do the script, and everybody tosses their ideas around.” (FG1)*

As the participant above notes, their experience with workshops is not useful. Instead of a focused read-sing-through of the libretto and score, their work is casually dealt with, and then open to comments from every participant in the room. Their workshop space appears to be a chaotic mess of misguided suggestions. Even if the aim is to improve the work, the unstructured approach suggests a level of ignorance about what is to happen in that space. How is a creator supposed to improve their work if their only opportunity at this crucial phase of development is approached like a free-for-all?

*“I talked to people a week after they've had a workshop, and they were in tears because they said, 'I didn't know why we did it.'” (FG1), “Writers emerge into workshop processes as well where they don't know enough about how they work, or how to communicate what they're after that they don't actually make full use of workshop processes.” (FG1)*

These two participants' deeply emotional experiences within the walls of a workshop room also suggest that the Canadian workshop process for musicals may not yet be defined enough. Usually, workshops do not happen until after the second or third year of musical

development. This can add significant pressure to the workshop process, especially if potential investors are invited to attend. The experiences suggest that the workshop room is something to fear, rather than something to look forward to.

*“There’s something about going to an artistic space where you’re allowed to fail. When you’re in an academic program, you’re not allowed to fail.” (FG2)*

What the participants seem to be craving is a place that allows writers to “play in the sandbox together” (FG2) for a sustained period, giving them a place where you’re “allowed to fail” (FG2). Canadian theatre leaders might be unaware that their development process may not support the creative team. “Even well-intentioned theatres fling people into a room...and expect magic to happen, and it doesn't, because the writers are the most fragile people in that room, and they're not being given a voice.” (FG1) Additionally, “The workshops themselves aren't structured enough to give the writers time to pivot, rewrite, and come back and hear it out loud.” (FG1)

By contrast, a lab is almost always restricted to the writers and composers of a show, giving them a chance to develop their collaborative relationship in a supportive environment. A workshop involves many more people, including the director, musical director, actors, key creative personnel, chief administrative team, and sometimes audience members. One goal of a workshop is to refine a show with an eye on production.

Labs are a different matter. There was some disagreement among the participants about the effectiveness of a lab versus a workshop. “I've seen better things come out of labs than workshops.” (FG1), “workshops leading to productions...it's all essential in terms of learning.” (FG6) A closed lab setting often allows for greater freedom in the writing, rewriting, and reimagining process but usually only involves the composer, lyricist, and book-writer. On the other hand, a workshop tends to invite more people to participate and has a specific goal – usually a performance – so the creators are subject to a slightly higher degree of pressure and less opportunity to fix their work.

Lab-favoured statements, like “...a program or a platform that would allow me to, over the course of two or three years, work on a project” (FG4) were countered with “if they [actors and writers] don't get up and do it, there's no way they can. And then you're not preparing them – it's not fair.” (FG4) While some were on the fence, “I think the lab sort of system of training is useful to a point.” (FG1), some shed a different light, “I think that we have to redefine workshop.” (FG1) Despite the mild polarization and lack of clarity between the two approaches, the combination of the two seemed to receive a positive response, as the participants cited several examples, like this one from an experience with The Musical Stage Company:

*“The writers, within six months, had a series of very pivotal experiences going through a writing process. Having dramaturgical work, collaborating, having another workshop...very quickly after that, a cast of three and an orchestra of three showed up, and we started putting these pieces together, and then we did them for performances.” (FG3)*

The advantage of combining labs and workshops is that all five major disciplines of musical theatre creation have a chance to collaborate. Additionally, this lab-to-workshop progression is essentially a replica of what these artists will experience outside of a training

program. Notably, the creators end up with a musical ready for further development, and as one participant noted, “anything that's concrete as a takeaway is something that's really important.” (FG3)

## Educational Spaces

*“I think what we have in Canada is a series of great educational institutions that all offer bits and pieces of this process, but it'd be great if there were, you know, actual places where you can get all of them at once.”* (FG3)

This participant clearly points out the lack of a venue for comprehensive training for musical theatre creators in Canada. A place these artists could call home might provide a sense of security and a safe space to learn and apply their skills. When all that is on offer is “bits and pieces” of training, especially in as large a country as Canada is, the instability of this piecemeal approach seems to be less desirable. As another participant confirmed, “We all just expressed earlier that the training...available in Canada is in snack sizes.” (FG2), furthered by another in the same group, “Definitely a broader program that could provide a deeper dive into the art form.” (FG2). However, “What's missing is the outlet to actually test it out on.” (FG3) These artists point to a lack of *place* wherein which they can exist, unencumbered, and expand their knowledge over *time*. That time, however, cannot exist without the space to house it.

Beyond basic skills training, where do musical theatre creators take their musical once it is ready for development? “What's missing is institutions, offering space for creation.” (FG6), “It just seems like such a disconnect between the big theatres and the training programs where we're not bridging that gap.” (FG5), “I feel like there's a Canadian habit of getting a show to the finish line of its first production, and then it dies, and then that's it.” (FG6) As another participant put it, “There's no progression in Canada.” (FG4)

There is little evidence that Canadian educational institutions support the time necessary for gestating musicals. An exception may be Sheridan College's writing for musical theatre courses, but these are restricted to performers. As one participant remarked, “don't make people do a dance audition if they're a composer-lyricist.” (FG3) If creators somehow find a way to overcome the hurdle of writing musicals without formal training, they are faced with finding a way to get theatre companies to read and listen to their shows. If they are successful, they are usually thrown into a high-pressure situation where they are given a single chance to get it right. If they fail? They rarely, maybe never, get another opportunity. In other words, their career is often compromised, which seems to be unfair after years of writing *pro bono*.

“We still have very, very few homegrown Canadian musicals.” (FG5) Even the world-famous *Come From Away*, developed through Michael Rubinoff's Canadian Musical Theatre Project at Sheridan College, “couldn't get a damn theatre in Canada interested in it after the Sheridan College workshop.” (FG1) As another participant in another focus group remarked, “It is shameful that they had to go elsewhere to get that development and that it couldn't happen in Canada.” (FG2) However, American musicals do not seem to experience similar resistance. Even American flops are given a fighting chance in Canada:

*“We're in previews for a Dolly Parton musical that got the worst, horrible reviews in Boston. And if that was a Canadian musical, you know, that would not see the light of day again.” (FG5)*

One immediate solution the participants mentioned was demanding that Canadian theatre companies include more Canadian content and making them both responsible and accountable for their choices. “The largest three companies in the country are producing predominantly American work.” (FG5) Why is this? “Can we, as a collective, bring up the concept that all theatre companies should be a bit more responsible to finding the Canadian story?” (FG5) Be it a Canadian story or a story written by Canadians, it is bizarre that theatre companies – artistic directors and board members alike – seem to avoid new Canadian musicals. One thing seems to be clear: there is a lack of space for musical theatre creation in Canada.

## **Learning Periods**

### **Putting in the Hours**

Each discipline of musical theatre creation requires a different skillset, some of which take years to acquire. Musical direction was one discipline singled out as requiring lengthy technical training.

*“You really have to have good chops at the piano. I found that's been the most useful thing to me, and I see that's where other struggle the most. If they can't really play piano super well, it's hard to be a musical director.” (FG5)*

Piano, the focal instrument for most musical directors, takes ten years or more to master (Piano Reviewer, 2021) and is best learned at a young age. However, unlike other genres, many musical directors felt that various piano backgrounds (classical, jazz, pop, etc.) were welcome in the musical theatre. Several participants felt the rest of the technical skills for musical directors, such as conducting an orchestra, arranging, and orchestrating, using computer software like Finale or Sibelius, working with programming technology like Mainstage, contracting, learning how to speak with actors – bedside manner, and vocal health could be learned in a specialized training program, provided it was “rigorous” (FG3) and “completely immersive.” (FG3)

Each one of these skills requires intensive training, resulting in “time away” from professional practice. In other words, musical theatre creators must step away from professional opportunities to master the skills they need to work. So, when some of these skills take a decade or more to master, how can this be addressed so that these creators do not find themselves in a black hole of training?

*“I think quality education in this particular art form needs to explain the history and show the development of the structure so that you can understand those rules and then maybe break them or at least play with them a little bit.” (FG1)*

The idea of “breaking the rules” may prove useful to address the issue of time. The idea of years of conventional piano training for musical directors, for example, may become

more obsolete, given the amount of software that can be used to accompany singers and electronic instruments that can be programmed to play technically challenging material.

Several participants supported this concept and some stated that: “Education should allow the students to break the rules, once they have learned the rules, because it's kind of the bedrock of everything,” (FG1) “The best of those [musicals] are from creators that understand the form and then are making educated choices to depart from the form.” (FG1), “...you have to walk before you can run in understanding why something works because of its structure.” (FG2), and that “knowing and understanding what came before, so that you can keep expanding on that” (FG5) is vital to training. While learning conventions of musical theatre creation seems to be important, and does take a period of time to acquire, breaking those conventions may assist with reducing the gap of time between training and working in the professional world.

As one of the participants said, it is vital to maintain a “balance between the art of writing and the craft of writing.” (FG3) It might be said that the “craft of writing” involves acquiring technical skills over time, whereas the “art of writing” is gained through all types of lives experiences and is infinite. This “craft” for composers includes a basic understanding of harmony, melody, song structure, story, and an ability to communicate that information. This could be learned through traditional classical or jazz notation (longer learning periods) or something as simple as humming a melody into a voice memo app (shorter learning periods). For lyricists, it helps to understand the guidelines for storytelling through lyrics, the basic rules specific to musicals, and have a sense of rhythm to facilitate collaboration with composers. For book-writers, it is vital to have a thorough understanding of story structure and familiarity with musical structure and write compelling, dramatic dialogue that transitions seamlessly into the music.

Directors have a different, though no less significant, responsibility. They must translate the show from page to stage and align all theatrical departments into one vision for the story. Understanding how each department functions is essential and takes years to learn, as does effective communication and an ability to interpret scripts and musical scores into a living, breathing state on a stage. Directors have many other elements to master, and some participants suggested that several “must be learned on the job.” (FG5) A portion of directors are also choreographers, and in these instances, the skill set is even more specialized. Dancers and choreographers, like pianists, require early and highly disciplined training. Each artist is therefore faced with the individual challenges of the commitment it takes, both in time and effort, to acquire the knowledge they need to learn how to channel their sense of artistic expression.

Several participants discussed the “chicken and egg” type of situation in that “your voice and your individual artistic thrust is the most important thing, but you can only make that better with more knowledge.” (FG1) Technique, including individuality, taught by expert pedagogues, and working professionals, was generally agreed upon to constitute quality training for musical theatre creators.

*“From a person who has done everything the hard way through experience, I would have died to have had an instructor.” (FG6)*

It is this participant’s experience that they had no access to training. Imagine having to fend for yourself when studying law or medicine or math. Although it can be done, it is

generally looked down upon and would very likely be labeled a hobby. Instructors are of utmost importance, but participants wondered, “Who would be teaching this program?” (FG4) As the focus group members realized, musical theatre techniques are likely best taught by “people who are true pedagogues at heart... And then, are also interested in the Canadian experience and [who] can mentor Canadians” (FG5). This would “be the caveat,” (FG5) as one participant concluded. Another important factor was finding a teacher who encourages creators to “speak with [their] own voice.” (FG1) After all, a technique often serves to “figure out when these tools are useful to [writers] to express what they want to express clearly.” (FG2). The participants seem to desire a blend of professional and pedagogue as instructor, but would professionals want to take time away from their job to teach?

Musicals take years to write, develop, and produce. The balance of time within the training sphere is vital to address. A more extended training program could give musical theatre creators enough time, confidence, and know-how to work as a team with the theatre companies to get the most out of the creation and development of their musicals. But a program that lasts too long could potentially smother the creative “breaking of rules” the participants felt was so important to honour.

### **Absence**

*“...there is something sort of mythological about New York or London or Paris.”* (FG2)

As exciting as these larger cultural centers might appear to Canadians, moving abroad poses challenges, namely time and displacement of body.

*“I was like, do I really want to figure out the hassle of immigration and visa and waste a bunch of money because [it’s] what I’m supposed to do?”* (FG3)

Immigration is not an overnight process. I can attest to this, as someone who immigrated to the United States. You must prove to the U.S. government that you are an “alien of extraordinary ability”, in that you possess skills that Americans do not possess. If lucky, this puts one in good standing, and a permanent resident (green) card application can begin. The green card process takes about one year and is not at all guaranteed. It also costs over \$5000 USD. If the application is successful, you are allowed to enter and work in the United States. To maintain your resident status, you must stay in the U.S. for at least six months a year, until citizenship is attained about five to seven years later. This eliminates the possibility of accepting long-term contracts abroad. The total time spent on an immigration, from start to finish, can be almost a decade. I went through this process because I am devoted to my craft and could not find training in Canada. Many others have, too.

It also takes time to save money for tuition and living costs when moving abroad. An example of tuition issues discussed in two of the focus groups was with regards to the New York University’s Tisch MFA program for musical theatre writers, “...great program, you get lots of awesome exposure to real Broadway production stuff and it’s \$100,000 (tuition), so it’s like there’s no way, right?” (FG3), “I definitely spent probably at least 100 hours total ogling the NYU master’s website and fantasizing about it and wishing for it and...I’m not wealthy, and my family doesn’t have money, so that was why I didn’t pursue it” (FG1). It is perhaps interesting to question why a program unique to musical theatre writers in North America should be exclusive to those with money.

It is no secret that “Going to New York, going to London, it's expensive.” (FG2) Numbeo (2021) reported that the overall cost of living in New York is 230.1% higher than in Montreal, and rent is 84.5% higher than Canada’s most expensive rental market, Vancouver. As for London, the cost of rent is 49.5% higher than in Toronto (Numbeo, 2021). Immigration and visas offer another barrier to those trying to afford to live in these centers. If a musical theatre artist is lucky enough to be admitted into New York University’s Tisch program, not only do they have to navigate the extreme costs of tuition and living, but they are only eligible for a student visa, which makes it impossible to work off-campus.

Some programs offer solutions to these issues:

*“The program that I did (in Scotland) was a trade-off. So instead of me paying tuition for it, I had to provide a certain skill set. So, I was kind of a pseudo-like teacher’s assistant...throughout the week I had to accompany, and I had to play dance classes, and I had to provide my skills as music director. And then, after twelve months, they gave me a [master’s] degree.” (FG4)*

Finally, there is the idea of the time spent away from Canada, and how that might affect the participant’s position within the Canadian theatre community. Even a short program, like the twelve-month master’s degree mentioned above, takes preparation time, and could result in an “out of sight, out of mind” reality. One must question what might have happened had that participant stayed in Canada, had there been training available to them. When this participant returns to Canada, even with a master’s degree, they must face the reality of the time it will take to establish themselves within a new theatre community.

## **(Dis)respect for Musical Theatre**

*“I keep running into people who hate musical theatre and, isn't it funny that they can't wait to tell you that? They ask what you do for a living, and you tell them, and they can't wait to tell you how much they loathe all of that.” (FG4)*

This participant is experiencing repeated insults about their career choice. Since creating musical theatre is a subjective experience which combines technique with the artist’s lived experience and personal creative approach, an insult about their line of work is often taken as an insult against the person themselves: it can be a personal attack. This is felt in the body, in the cells, and stays in the memory. It can have an impact on so many facets of the individual’s life, confidence, health, relationships, and social interactions, to name a few. I, too, have felt this type of hatred towards my work, and I share the participant’s observation that “they can’t wait to tell you how much they loathe all of that.” This type of insult is often delivered with an entitled vitriol, as if it is honourable to be able to tell a musical theatre creator that their work is worthless.

The word “disrespect” was unprompted, yet it was raised as an issue of grave concern by all six focus groups. Participants reported events of disregard or outright contempt for the art form in educational institutions, from peers within the industry, and the public, which I have broken down for analysis.



## Educational Institutions

Several participants from different focus groups spoke of the problems they encountered when they tried to create musicals while enrolled in degree programs. Some examples include, “I got my directing masters from the University of British Columbia, which actively frowned on musical theatre.” (FG1), “I was basically trying to do musicals...my composition teacher was very supportive of that, unlike everyone else in the conservatory.” (FG1), “...where most composers kind of go into stage works, we are not really considered valid.” (FG3), “There are places you could go to take composition and orchestration like U of T (University of Toronto)...and many music schools...but they almost all frown on musical theatre.” (FG4), “There was basically no musical theatre department at McGill...but it was certainly...looked down upon and the opera students were never, never singing musical theatre.” (FG5) Those passionate enough about their work reported pushing through adversity or leaving the country to find support. “I will be honest and say that the level of respect for musical theatre performers is much greater in the States than it ever is here.” (FG4)

What these artists reported is a feeling of being treated like second class citizens within their university setting. That somehow, their choice of profession was “less than” and was discouraged within their respective fine arts departments. Imagine that for a moment: the genre of art you are passionate about, and that exists as a legitimate art form, is “actively frowned upon” by experts *in the fine arts* – the ones you are paying to guide you toward a career! Moreover, the resistance is so strong that you are forced to leave your home to search for legitimacy.

Is there snobbery in educational institutions? It had enough of an effect on these participants that they brought it into the conversation. Many interviewees also remarked that, despite their respective experiences, institutions seem to be quick to deny this snobbery. Still, one must ask why there is still no degree program for musical theatre creators in Canada.

Another issue posited by the participants was that there is not “a developed and understood education process,” (FG3) where institutions take ownership of musical theatre as valid and, like all other art forms, constantly evolving. “I don't think musical theatre was on the radar of ever being taught.” (FG2) One can only speculate as to why institutions have not embraced the creation of the art form as legitimate (“I think there's like some sort of like snobbism going on.” (FG2), but as one participant suggested, “musical theatre tends to be accessible and quite universal. And because it's accessible...it can't be important.” (FG6)

An interesting perspective. Could “accessible art” possibly be associated with something that is easy to understand, and therefore interpreted as being “simple”? Pop music is often categorized as accessible because of its catchy melodies, rhythms, and hooks, but does that make it less important? Pieces of musical theatre vary widely. *Sweeney Todd* is not at all like *Fun Home*, and neither are like *Cats*, but audiences generally seem to respond favourably to all three. Who is to determine the accessibility of one over the other, and whether that degree of accessibility makes it more or less important? Are all three of these musicals less important than any piece of straight theatre?

## Within the Industry

The participants also cited several instances of industry professionals in Canada having a strong bias against musical theatre. When Garth Drabinsky, and his now-defunct company Livent, Inc., began producing musicals in the 1980s and 1990s in Toronto, the creative teams were all American. After some backlash from the musical theatre community, one participant was allowed to have their work featured alongside several American creative teams. They remembered, “On the meet and greet day, I was introduced as the Canadian imperative, and they made it absolutely clear that they weren't at all interested in me or my work.” (FG4) This work was later developed and produced in the U.S. to great acclaim, garnering several awards before returning to Canada.

*“We're in this weird kind of nether world where companies use us for money, but they only really use the American ones (musicals) for money. It's pretty messed up. It's a problem.”* (FG5)

The participants suggest that, for some companies, musicals are a source of contempt. “Here in Canada, we still seem to hang on to this idea that, ‘Oh yeah, that's [musicals are] what you take your grandma to go see at Stratford.” (FG3). Are musicals any less of an art form if grandma enjoys them? Should theatre companies hold musicals in contempt if they allow them to survive? More importantly, if companies receive operating grants from funding bodies like the Canada Council for the Arts, why are almost all the musicals they program American in origin?

The disparagement sometimes comes from funding bodies as well.

*“Maybe three years ago, I was applying to the Canada Council for a musical theatre writing grant, and I was shocked by the response I got from the person who was supposed to be helping me. They “did not award grants to musical theatre.” It was ‘high kicking and smiles’ and ‘not artistically viable.’”* (FG5)

When an employee of the Canada Council for the Arts does not consider musical theatre to be a legitimate art form, not only do the creators lose a significant source of funding but they are also treated as second class artists by an association designed to “contribute to the vibrancy of a creative and diverse arts and literary scene” (Canada Council for the Arts, 2021). Provincial funding bodies like the Conseil des Arts du Québec or the Ontario Arts Council were not mentioned in the focus groups.

There are champions of the art form within the theatre community. Artistic directors like Lisa Rubin at the Segal Centre and Mitchell Marcus at the Musical Stage Company have prioritized the development of new Canadian work. Peter Jorgensen and Katey Wright at Patrick Street Productions, Carson Natrass at Rainbow Stage, and Adam Brazier at the Charlottetown Festival have also worked hard to secure funds for the development of new work. The participants noted that development goes beyond securing funds and providing space. “There needs to be an understanding and appreciation and respect for the history [of musical theatre].” (FG5)

## The General Public

*“I don't know how many of you have ever experienced this...but you came out after the show, you just killed yourself...and people would go, ‘That was good. So, what do you do for a living?’” (FG4)*

This sentiment is not exclusive to musical theatre, but it might speak to the level of understanding the audiences and the public sometimes have regarding theatre artists. According to some participants, this perception is not new. “In the 1980s...musicals were like the lowest form of theatre – that’s what most people in Canada thought about them.” (FG3)

The two participants above have felt ostracized by “people”. In their respective experiences, they express that some of these people perceive their profession as more of a hobby or, at best, a sub-genre of theatre that does not deserve attention. I can relate. When I tried to apply for homeowner’s insurance, the agent could not identify my profession as anything other than “hobbyist”, and my request was denied. What effect does this have on the body? How might this affect creativity and a musical theatre creator’s desire to pursue their passion? “...Most people in Canada...” suggests that the artist spent at least a significant amount of time working in Canada, perhaps in several provinces, and that they felt looked down upon everywhere they went. Additionally, they speak of this being in the 1980s. If creators are feeling the same type of isolation today, then it is a phenomenon that has existed in this person’s body over a period of forty years.

The participants were not placing blame on the public. Instead, they suggested another underlying cause: “I think there is a fundamental lack of recognition for what a musical is... what it's supposed to do.” (FG1) Most art, I would argue, aims to communicate in some way with an audience. To be recognized for one’s work is perhaps to receive a confirmation or validation that someone is listening to and feeling that work. The above quote suggests that the public does not understand the function and importance of a musical as an art form and may have a fundamental misunderstanding of the work that goes into creating one. However, it is changing. When theatre companies have programmed works that challenge the public’s perception of a musical, the response has sometimes been favourable. “People came up to me in the lobby after that and said, ‘I had no idea that musicals could actually be so lush and serious and funny, and heartwarming and heartbreaking.’” (FG3)

How are Canadian musicals perceived versus American musicals? “There's something about the term ‘Canadian musical’ to the public at large that feels quaint and provincial.” (FG1) Perhaps a solution lies in defining musicals developed in Canada as simply a “new musical” rather than a “new Canadian musical.” After all, when a Canadian painter or musician releases new work, one does not tend to call it “a Canadian exhibit” or “a Canadian album.” These seemingly insignificant shifts in perspective and labelling may be a part of the solution.

As one participant asked, “How do we actually create an ecosystem that supports the art form, that respects the art form, and then grows the art form?” (FG5) The unprompted discussions in all six forums about the unfavourable perception of musical theatre support further investigation into the question. Regardless of the source of reported disparagement, it may be argued that musical theatre needs to be recognized as a legitimate art form. Much like

any other form of discrimination, healing happens through acknowledgment, apology, education, and a resolve to do better at all levels (Chaudhury & Colla, 2020).

## Leadership

The participants wished that “the public [were] made aware of the idea of Canadian musicals...the concept of it, and the regularity of it on their cultural calendar” (FG1) so that it became a more sought-after commodity. Despite their belief that “the culture [of musicals] is broadening because more people are employed in it.” (FG1), they agreed that leaders need to be better role models. For example, “instead of flying to New York to see *Come From Away*, maybe [Trudeau] could have seen the Toronto production.” (FG6) Some leaders have looked upon artists with contempt, “Stephen Harper used to complain on the campaign trail about all the artists; they just want to get their Canada Council grants and then go have fancy parties...I thought it was ironic on so many levels.” (FG1)

As I mentioned, Mirvish Entertainment was forced to cancel *Come From Away* on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 2021, a week after its reopening, due to insufficient financial support from the Canadian government to keep it afloat during the pandemic (Fricker & Chong, 2022, Houpt, 2022, Nestruck, 2021). All the while, American musical touring companies continued with performances in Toronto. If national leaders are not setting an example for their constituents, how can Canadian arts and culture evolve? Some participants felt leaders could benefit from “emotional engagement and empathy” (FG3), as that “feeling has a lot of political potential in terms of creation.” (FG3)

Leadership also extends to artistic directors and board members of theatre companies, especially those funded by taxpayers through funding bodies. As one participant clearly stated, “It can’t have an influence [on culture] unless it gets done [produced].” (FG2) Canadian hits like *The Drowsy Chaperone* and *Come From Away* “had the advantage of being workshopped in the US and getting tons of development...” (FG2). But why did they (and other shows) seek that development elsewhere? The participants agreed that “there's this certain stamp of approval from outside [Canada] that we seem to crave as Canadians.” (FG6) While there are some producers in Canada who are doing their best to make Canadian shows happen, according to most participants, “there doesn't seem to be a culture of cooperation between the companies and the risk” (FG1) of doing a new show. “I hope that producers will step up in Canada and take that risk.” (FG2) However, “almost all of our commercially successful shows have gone south of the border to become successful.” (FG3) One solution posed was to mandate more Canadian work:

*“25% of all content needs to be Canadian made. Does that exist in the major theatre companies, or do they just do whatever? Because I think there is a point where they should be held accountable. Are [they] just doing this as a cash cow? Because that’s not a cultural decision.”* (FG5)

What theatre companies in Canada appear not to recognize is that by programming work written by Canadians, they can impact our culture. “Canadians have a specific voice... We live in a very specific place, and anything we're going to write about will contribute to the culture of Canada.” (FG6) Is that not why theatres exist in the first place?

## Economic Impact

This potential lack of respect may indeed translate to economic impact. If, as the participants have outlined, musical theatre is occasionally seen as something contemptuous, might it have a negative impact on the overall economic health of the musical theatre industry and all businesses associated with it?

*“How do you convince someone in their teens or their early 20s to spend the same on one ticket to a theatrical production, which would be the equivalent of an entire year's subscription on Netflix?” (FG4)*

Theatre must reach an audience to have an economic impact, but how can we make Canadian audiences excited to pay for a seat to a Canadian musical? Most tickets to Broadway musicals go anywhere from \$100 to \$300. Premium seating to Hamilton in New York was upwards of \$800 at one point. Some participants pointed out that “there's so much good marketing and a lot of history in America behind making someone “excited to pay \$800 for a ticket to go see Hamilton.” (FG4). In Canada, there seems to be a disconnect between the money that musicals can make and the support system that surrounds them. “*Anne of Green Gables the Musical* has contributed to over a billion dollars to the island [PEI] in 56 years.” (FG6) According to CBC (2021), *Come From Away*'s economic impact amounts to over \$920 million in under three years. Businesses surrounding these theatres, from restaurants to museums to hotels to cafés, flourished. With this type of potential, what pathway is in place to ensure that Canadians see the value in Canadian-made musicals?

Regional, not-for-profit theatres could work with funding bodies to support artists. “...if it takes you five years to develop a musical and it gets done once, and the entire financial landscape of that was a \$2000 commission, and in royalties you made \$783, that's not an enormous incentive.” (FG3) We all “need to understand [that] when something is well-crafted, it [translates] to bucks.” (FG5) Money is not everything, but at a minimum, musical theatre creators should be able to survive: “...my goal is, as a writer, to be able to make a living doing what I do.” (FG6) One participant thinks “if we had commercial theatre producers in the country [saying], ‘I've got money, I want to do some producing, then those regional theatres would jump on the bandwagon to start creating that work. But as it is, that's a gap in the economy of creation for us.” (FG6) Most participants wished for an ecosystem where musical theatre creators were valued for their skill and for their cultural contributions to society.

*“If we keep cutting budgets, society goes, ‘this isn't important anymore. Obviously, it's not important.’ So, I think that it comes back to how we view culture, the development of culture and development of all the arts.” (FG4)*

This participant introduces a broader perspective. They suggest that all artists have suffered a similar kind of judgment, a sense that they are “not important” to society. This phenomenon could be a direct result of policymakers who decide where and how to allot funds. These are decisions that appear to be made behind closed doors. Do we, as a society, notice when instruments are taken out of children's hands in schools or when local theatres close because their operational grants have been frozen? If so, how do we act against it to show policymakers at all levels that the arts are to be respected and not eliminated? Or does it matter enough to Canadians? If the participants' lived experiences are any indication, musical theatre creation is in trouble.

## Connection: Mentorship, Collaboration, and Professional Opportunities

Most training aims to “develop the competencies and skills of learners” (Carliner, 2015). Musical theatre is a highly collaborative art form that requires constant communication between several specialists to create a show and to get that show to production. Since theatre often aims to illuminate the human condition as it relates to an evolving society, it is not a stable medium. Therefore, musical theatre training must go beyond simply providing learners with competencies and skills. Creators must also learn how to collaborate and how to apply that art form to a constantly shifting creative ecosystem. The focus group participants had varied opinions on how musical theatre creators should be trained and discussed issues from textbook learning to socio-political awareness. Over the six sessions, the conversations began to revolve around the following five relation-based themes, in order of most to least discussed:

- Dramaturgy and Mentorship
- Collaboration and Inclusion
- Connection to the Industry and Audience
- Reaching Beyond Canada’s Borders
- Bringing Us Together in Canada

### Dramaturgy and Mentorship

*“Most people in Canada...don’t even think about having a dramaturg or even know what a dramaturg is... So that, I think, is a huge gap.” (FG1)*

The role of a musical theatre dramaturg (sometimes dramaturge) may be the least understood part of the process of musical theatre creation. The Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the America (LMDA) defines the function of a dramaturg as someone who “forge(s) a critical link between artists and institutions, and institutions and their communities. They work with their other artistic collaborators to hone their vision, focus their goals and find outlets for their creative work on new and classical plays and dance pieces.” (2021) In musical development, dramaturgs work with writers and theatre companies to ensure that the vision of the creators’ story stays strong as it develops and becomes musicalized. However, musical books (or libretti) often have a different structure than plays or screenplays. The number of resident dramaturgs in Canada who understand these differences is few; some participants even said there are none. “There was funding to hire [an American dramaturg] who won a Tony Award...and her input...altered everything about the structure and the storytelling, and I have never encountered anything like that here.” (FG1)

Even if one locates a dramaturg familiar with the variations of musical theatre book-writing, that does not necessarily help the composer or the lyricist. “Sometimes I feel like dramaturgy only plays maybe to one of the three [disciplines].” (FG2) Since composing, lyric writing, and book-writing are all vastly different disciplines; it has proven helpful to bring in dramaturges who specialize in one or more of those disciplines. The first focus group supported The Musical Stage Company’s efforts to bring in American orchestrator/arranger Lynne Shankel as a musical dramaturg to the composer. Still, there were no mentions of dramaturgs hired to help lyricists. Additionally, although borders should not play a role in the arts, the question arises as to why the dramaturgs cited by the participants were all American.

Directors sometimes take on the role of quasi-dramaturg, and musical directors the part of quasi-musical dramaturg, but this may muddy the disciplinary boundaries, especially in development workshop settings. The director has a responsibility to take ownership of the piece and ensure it is staged as successfully as possible. However, if there is a blurring of the lines between the roles of director and dramaturg in the creation phase of a musical, this can hurt the writing team.

*“To have a dramaturge that you trust in your court when you're in that process to support you and to...help you decipher a piece of work that you care about...it's super, super helpful. Otherwise... it's really easy to get squashed.” (FG1)*

Based on this quote alone, I would posit that the critical link between a writer and someone whose only duty is to protect and enhance that work is a vital relation in any developmental setting. As the artist states, “trust” is a key element when working with a dramaturg because, in their experience, other creators may not be as trustworthy. While it might not be intentional for a director or musical director to “squash” the writers’ process, the dramaturg (or ideally dramaturgs) can liaison the director’s vision with that of the writers. This allows all parties involved to focus on their process rather than working in opposition to each other to present a product.

*“[Creative teams] sort of treat workshops like it's an opportunity to present this polished thing in progress and they spend all this time polishing what's there, rather than digging into like the dramaturgy of the book or rewriting a song.” (FG1)*

Discussion of the invisible role of the dramaturg arose naturally; that this role is vital was supported by four of the six groups.

*“...a huge part of what would make a difference in a master's program is...mentorship.” (FG4)*

Cited heavily across all six focus groups, mentorship was almost unanimously agreed upon as a vital element of quality training and “something that is formally missing” (FG6) in Canada. The connection to a mentor for musical theatre creators usually involves an immersive, real-world experience on a production or at a theatre company. It comes in many forms:

1. Assistant or resident directorships: directors collaborate with more experienced directors on a production, sometimes maintaining longer-running shows.
2. Assistant or Associate musical director positions: musical directors train and work alongside more experienced musical directors.
3. Shadowing: Occasionally, directors and musical directors allow less experienced professionals to observe them as they work.
4. Copyist/arranger: Composers engrave and possibly orchestrate the work of more experienced composers.
5. Artist-in-residence positions: Artists are invited to work at a theatre company or institution for a finite amount of time and often contribute to various departments.
6. One-off mentorships: Usually offered through short-term programs or festivals, emerging artists are assigned to a more experienced artist for a short time.

The Shaw Festival's Internship Program for musical directors, led by Shaw's Head of Music, Paul Sportelli, was singled out as the only established mentorship for musical theatre creators in Canada. It was lauded across the focus groups as the model upon which other mentorship programs could be built. Every two years, one intern is hired on salary to work with Mr. Sportelli for eight months at the Shaw Festival in all areas of the music department, from arranging to leading rehearsals to conducting shows. One participant described Mr. Sportelli as a "brilliant fusion of being an amazing teacher, as well as being an expert in what he does." (FG4)

The mentorship allows emerging professionals to collaborate with professional theatre artists over a significant period. According to the participants, the luxury of this networking, combined with Mr. Sportelli's expertise, helps launch careers. There are two challenges with establishing other programs like this one: 1. It is sponsored, and this sponsorship level may not be readily available in other cities. 2. The Shaw Festival has a long season (nine months) compared to most theatre contracts (six to eight weeks), diminishing the amount of time the mentee has with their mentor.

Participants discussed how mentorships often successfully bridge the gap between educational institutions and the workforce. "I think mentorship is what would be most interesting to me." (FG5), "...one thing I think we, I felt that was missing a lot, it's just the idea of mentorship." (FG5) As noted by some, in theatre, the word *mentor* tends to hold more weight than *supervisor*. A mentor "gives [an artist] responsibility. He helps train them. He finally says, go out of the nest, little bird, you know, he helps place them in jobs. He's always keeping an eye on them, and they really get quality attention." (FG1) As such, many interviewees expressed a keen interest in bringing mentorship into the training to ensure an even smoother transition into the "real world."

*"I would want the perfect storm, a combination of the two... formal training with mentorship."* (FG5)

The relationship a young artist has with their mentor can be powerful. It is a special connection defined by common interests and often contains an element of mutual admiration: the mentor inspired by the young prodigy; the mentee fueled by the expertise of the master. As identified in the previous section about disrespect, many artists feel isolated. The mentor can provide a haven for their protege. Not only can they connect directly with their mentee, but they can introduce them to their network of colleagues. It is hard to imagine a world in which this type of relationship is not useful, especially in the context of formalized training.

"It's nice when people teaching you understand the contemporary media and haven't been teaching for years." (FG2) There is something unattractive about a stale teacher who has been recycling the same curriculum year after year in the arts. Even though most artists recognize that "teaching in and of itself is a craft and requires so much energy," (FG4) they also feel that it is essential to have instructors who are involved with the evolution of theatre outside of the walls of academic institutions. If the mentor has an active career, they might provide a transitional path for their mentees to go from student to working professional. "Doing doing doing..." (FG3), "Hands-on experience is the most valuable type of experience, which I think is through real active mentorship." (FG6)



## Collaboration and Inclusion

*“...the experience [of] collaboration...seems like the most valuable thing I could imagine giving to anyone.” (FG1)*

Collaboration is a deceptively tricky skill in musical theatre. In five of the six focus groups, “being given tools for communicating as insightfully as possible” (FG2) was unanimously agreed upon as “vital.” (e.g., FG3) The sixth focus group did not discuss collaboration.

Part of being a great artist requires belief in oneself and one’s abilities. This fortitude, however, needs to be balanced with a certain amount of flexibility in a professional setting. “Learning...when you need to take yourself out, when you need to give space, when you need to take space, learning that relationship...is so beautiful.” (FG2) Each discipline requires different skillsets, but respect and understanding for all disciplines encourage collaboration. One strategy offered was to learn the “different vocabulary that could be shared and better understood between choreographers and musical directors and directors and writers and lyricists and composers.” (FG2) Another approach was to gain a better understanding of how one’s “work feeds into other people's work.” (FG2) Finally, recognition was singled out, “it needs to be acknowledged that we're a sum of a bunch of parts” (FG4) to develop compassion so that creators learn “what it means to listen to another partner and forgive them.” (FG5)

When one’s creation is on the line, it can be challenging to receive criticism. So, another element of collaborative training offered was to learn “ways to communicate and critique one another's work.” (FG2) Critiquing is a vital skill, but the participants only identified the Canadian Musical Theatre Writers’ Collective as the one training program that actively teaches it.

*“...when you're training you [must be] willing to open yourself up to criticism, and [that] the people [who] are giving you feedback are giving [it] in an honest and helpful and creative way but aren't lying to you or trying to be nice just to make you feel better.” (FG1)*

Honesty seems to be a crucial element of critique, but only when offered respectfully. Respectful honesty “helps me to receive comments better and really decide how I want to incorporate them or not.” (FG2) However, achieving that requires a deep understanding of the “intersections between music and text” (FG3) and a willingness to “safe space” (FG1) for artists to be vulnerable. In other words, musical theatre creators may function optimally if “nurtured to be their most authentic contributor.” (FG1)

The final piece of the collaborative puzzle discussed was the x-factor of the ‘perfect’ connection. Under the right conditions, collaborative teams can elevate each other’s work to new heights. Rogers and Hammerstein, Ahrens and Flaherty, Bock and Harnick, Menken and Ashman... the list of legendary Broadway teams goes on. The focus groups noted the power of a strong collaboration as a crucial part of training, suggesting that a high-quality program would “pair students up as much as possible with people with different skill sets so they can develop a network of collaborators.” (FG3) “It's about meeting the people that you need to meet and working on your craft.” (FG2) More often than not, it comes down to finding the

right fit, and the participants agreed that starting this process as early as possible can lead to a successful career.

*“Being able to create connections and pair people up and give people the chance to work with a bunch of new collaborative partners, I think, that is one of the most valuable [things] to incorporate into a program.” (FG3)*

Interviewees found it essential that a high-quality program be inclusive and create an environment of socio-political awareness to honour all artistic voices. “How do we take some of the [white] supremacy and the colonialism out of the teaching while keeping the best of what we've learned?” (FG1) asked one participant. One potential answer came in a different focus group: “...illuminate the great traditions of musical theatre and still make room for people to find their own voice, to find their own artistry.” (FG2) From another group, it was about “understanding how the art form is connected to social and political changes.” (FG5) From another, it was “an education that takes the best of what we have learned, explains at a deeper root why it works in a sort of human way so that we can continue to empower the next generation of writers.” (FG1) In other words, it might help to learn older musical theatre traditions to understand how they might apply to today’s socio-political climate.

Part of this process is through exposure to new styles, “one other thing about [BMI’s Lehman-Engel Workshop] that was so valuable was hearing other people's work. You...just learn so much. I learned so much.” (FG1) and being true to one’s artistic voice, “I feel really committed to my little corner of the west coast of Canada, and I feel like the stuff I write here is different than the stuff that I write, when I'm in Berlin, or other places...I feel like the world needs it.” (FG1) The final element, it could be argued, is a willingness to be open to these styles and voices. “...when the management put teams together, [it was remarkable] how they would thrive or not depending on the amount of openness in the room.” (FG3) It was agreed that inclusion should be taught to musical theatre creators. Even the act of teaching inclusion indicates an openness on the part of the institution. It might encourage artists from all walks of life to believe that creating musicals is “something that they can actually do too.” (FG2)

## **Connection to the Industry and Audience**

Beyond the safety net of a training program and the arms of a mentor lies the “big bad world,” and practical experience in that world is an important component of an artist’s training. Practical experience helps the artist connect to the theatre community at large often with the goal of “making sure that the work they...create has a life.” (FG6) While mentorship can offer elements of real-world training, when an artist works autonomously, they usually experience the realities of their career choice.

*“If there was a young person in my life who wanted to pursue musical theatre, I would want them to find a program that's connected to the industry.” (FG1)*

Most focus group members quickly pointed out that high-level training should include ways to be “situated as part of the larger professional community.” (FG5) Some participants pointed to acting training programs “like a Soulpepper Academy or a Birmingham Conservatory” (FG6) as a model to be considered. These examples demonstrate a type of practical instruction “...where you get to be under the umbrella of an institution (like

Soulpepper Theatre Company or the Stratford Festival) so that...your work doesn't disappear into a vacuum.” (FG6) The suggestion is that if a high-quality program is integrated into an established theatre company, it might give musical theatre creators the chance to receive a salary and have their work seen and heard by a paying audience as part of that training.

A less formal way to consider it is that “you have to be working with the people that you will be working with when you leave that education space.” (FG1) One participant mentioned doing “copy work for Broadway composers” (FG1) as a side job while studying at NYU. As a result, they “knew what was expected of” (FG1) them after graduation, giving them an advantage over their classmates. Another participant mentioned that they had been assisting great designers while at theatre school (again on the side). This got them in the rehearsal room and allowed them to make early connections in the industry. “Networking, networking, networking,” (FG3) as was stated, is a cliché for a reason: theatre often relies on collaboration.

One last consideration is that artists, in general, “are not always built to be businesspeople.” (FG5) A direct connection to the industry tends to encourage a better business understanding. Negotiating contracts, writing grants, “learning payroll,” (FG5) “bedside manner,” (FG5) anything that can only be “learned on the job” (FG5) is an “important, integral part of the job.” (FG5) The participants agreed that if a training program should provide “anything to help in a practical sense,” (FG3) it could increase the quality of that training.

“A lot of research been done about the way that musicals make people feel in a way that a lot of other forms of entertainment don't..., and how that emotion can lead to forms of attachment and community development.” (FG3) As someone else remarked, “Oftentimes, the pictures that people love to reminisce about [from] high school are not the ones in math class, [they] are the ones where they're backstage in their costumes, doing a show... It's memory-making; it's connecting with people.” (FG4) It is often through these memories that “we are training people to love art, and to love the theatre and become patrons of it.” (FG4) What is more, “music really is the only common language that we have as human beings.” (FG4) Hence, musicals possess the potential to transcend the nuance of language.

*“Musical theatre is the perfect marriage of all three disciplines because when you can't speak anymore, you sing. When you can't sing anymore, you dance. And when you don't know what to do with yourself, you do a frickin' musical.”* (FG4)

The participants also noted the willingness of audiences to see new work. “I find, overwhelmingly, people are open to new stories and new pieces and so for me, that's...how musical theatre can and does affect the culture.” (FG6) Not only are they open to these new stories, but they are also affected by them, “I've had the experience of speaking with audiences or people who have seen newly created musical theatre, and they're very moved.” (FG6)

So how can we encourage “the health of [the] musical theatre community” (FG6) and ensure that “people are interested in seeing new shows” (FG6)? Part of it is likely education in the broader sense of the word, starting with a formalized training for creators of “many different backgrounds and artistic backgrounds coming into one room to create something new.” (FG2) while letting people see the process. The participants suggested that allowing the audience to have a stake in their work as it develops might give them a sense of propriety.

That community ownership may give theatre companies the impetus to seek and ultimately produce more work. Finally, it was offered that “whatever new work gets made in a place, changes the fabric of that place.” (FG6), but it is everyone’s responsibility to help change that fabric.

## Reaching Beyond Canada’s Borders

*“...it was the siren call of New York City.”* (FG2)

Even though the art form is not exclusive to New York, musicals and Broadway are, in many ways, inextricably linked. Broadway is the commercial mecca for musical theatre, where musicals go to thrive or die, where a good review in the New York Times can make or break a show. However, behind the talent and power of Broadway is a narrative sold by marketing geniuses to tourists, hinged upon a star system that elevates and celebrates the city’s artists as though they were royalty.

*“The way they advertise is very tricky, right? The American Academy of Dramatic Arts, they put all their famous graduates around it, people who just won Tony Awards, whatever it is... As a kid, you're saying, ‘Oh my god, this is the place to go!’”* (FG2)

As published in the University of Washington Press (2021), the star system in the United States came from England, dating back to 1741 when actor David Garrick was declared their first star (Hale, 2021). The narrative of a star system is rarely employed in Canada, and as a result, it affects the selling power of a show. The trickle-down effect, of course, is that the creators of that show lose visibility and salary. So, the allure of a city that celebrates musicals through a star system is not only a romantic notion but a means of survival.

“As a person who's passionate about the craft, you can't ignore that influence and where that came from.” (FG2) The history of musical theatre in America is attractive to most musical theatre writers because it is the source of the art form and is advertised as such. History is also more widely available in educational institutions, advertising, and television and film. As a result of that exposure, American audiences tend to be more knowledgeable about the art form. American children often grow up on musicals like “Annie” or “The Sound of Music.” These musicals are then passed on from generation to generation. “The pedigree of musical theatre in the U.S. is...not as easily accessed...in Canada.” (FG5). It is offered as a concept by some, “How many Canadian musicals can Canadians name from their youth?” (FG3)

*“I applied for [BMI’s Lehmen-Engel Workshop in New York] right out of college...because I wanted to be Alan Menken, and that was where Alan Menken had studied.”* (FG6)

In terms of training, as with most art forms, lineage is a significant factor and can only be established through a developed history over time. Several participants noted lineage as something that was missing in Canada, “[A training program] would have to be attached to somebody that I knew by name.” (FG3), “...something like a connection to a star professor...” (FG3), “One of the reasons that I was so interested in applying to do the Johnny

Mercer Songwriters' Project...was this idea to work with some of the greats.” (FG3) Based on these types of comments, one might assume that learning from a musical theatre creator with a certain measure of perceived success is vital to students and professionals alike. However, this line of thinking was also offered as a potential way to incentivize students to consider a training program in Canada, “leverage the city where the program is as part of the program itself.” (FG3) Perhaps Canada needs more marketing geniuses to generate allure comparable to that abroad.

Participants were divided on the idea of travel as a necessary part of a broader education. On one side of the spectrum, some suggested that “there's also a huge appeal to leaving the country that you are born to go out and see what else the world [has] to offer.” (FG3) On the other side, “I think the allure of this kind of like star-studded, New York, LA, London, Sydney Opera House kind of lifestyle...I'm just not buying it as much anymore because the reality doesn't reflect the fantasy.” (FG3)

Unquestionably, every city offers different cultural experiences. The theatre someone sees in New York will be different from London. While most participants agreed that these varying experiences are helpful to musical theatre creators, they were uncertain if long-term training in a foreign city was necessary. The pandemic also played into some conversations, “The allure of going somewhere like in New York has greatly diminished because of the state of the world right now.” (FG3) It is likely that studying musical theatre in a city that offers more profound cultural experiences has its advantages.

*“When I was in New York, I started to realize I was viewed a very specific way... people said to me, ‘that's a Canadian thing, this is how the Canadian writers are.’ They said it was a ‘big-heartedness, a sweetness....’ So, I think that Canadian-ness can be an antidote to a lot of this...division.”* (FG2)

## **Bringing Us Together in Canada**

When asked if they would attend an MFA degree program for musical theatre creation, 43 participants said yes, they would. Seven participants expressed the following reservations:

- Pedagogy
- Cost
- Apprehensive of mixing art with academics
- Skepticism towards universities
- Time commitment

Even the skeptics, however, felt that “it can't hurt” (FG2) to have a place where producers would be encouraged to not “miss out on next *Come From Away*,” (FG2) or even a hub to “go get reinvigorated” (FG2) by meeting people who think like you and want the same thing. An MFA program based in an educational *space*, over enough *time* to be “immersive” and “rigorous”, while advocating for a system of “respect” (*body*) through its cultural and economic potential, while allowing for connections (*relation*) between learners and professionals was looked upon favourably by all fifty participants.

## Triangulation of Data

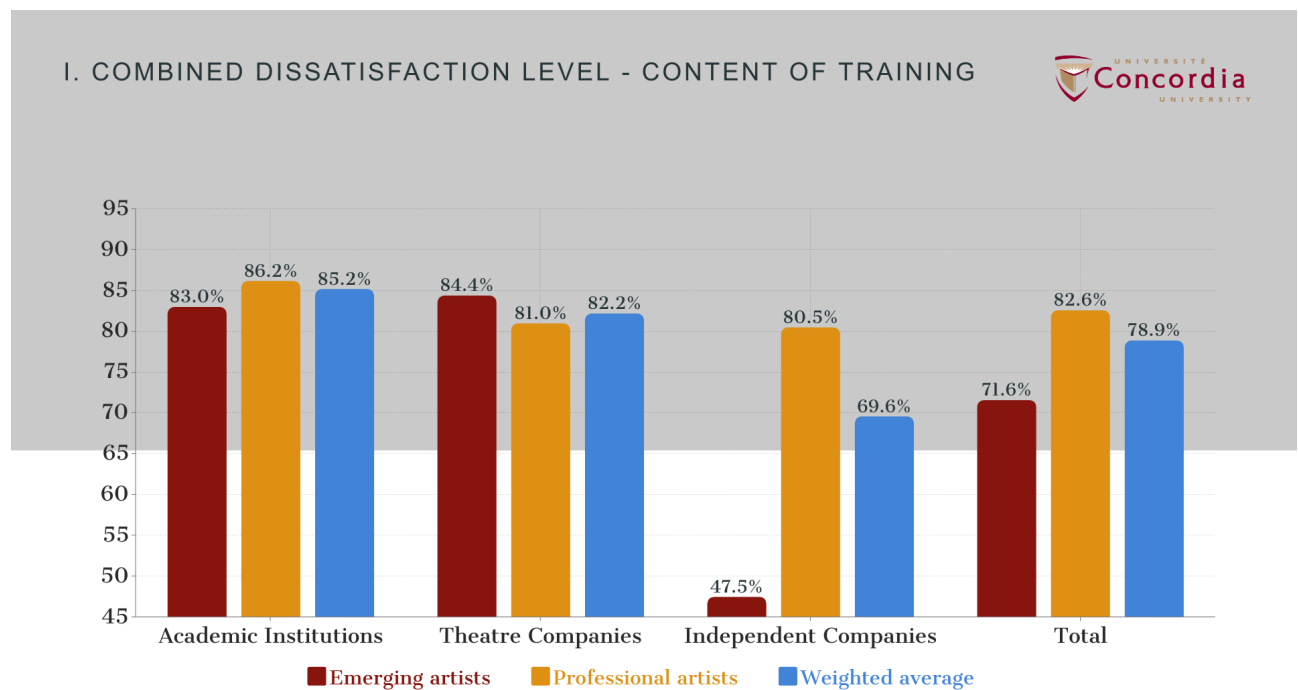
I mobilized a concurrent triangulation design to cross-validate the results between the two surveys and the focus groups and reduce potential weaknesses associated with each method. It also provided an opportunity for me to reframe the data using the components of Mezirow’s critical reflection theory.

## Content Reflection

Survey and focus group participants answered questions about what they felt was missing from current curricula and why. The surveys revealed that 78.9% of emerging and professional artists were dissatisfied with Canada's current training (Figure 37). The average was brought down slightly by the emerging artists, who advocated somewhat in favour of independent Canadian companies' training. The focus groups backed up these findings, noting that the offerings were “in snack sizes” (FG2) and no “rigorous” (FG3) training programs were available. Furthermore, when asked about content, the focus groups identified three elements they found to be unsatisfactory in Canada: due process (formal education, guidance, development), respect for the art form of musical theatre within and outside of the industry, and allure. It may be argued that the scarcity of these foundational elements supports the high level of dissatisfaction identified in the surveys.

**Figure 37**

*Content: Dissatisfaction with Training Programs*

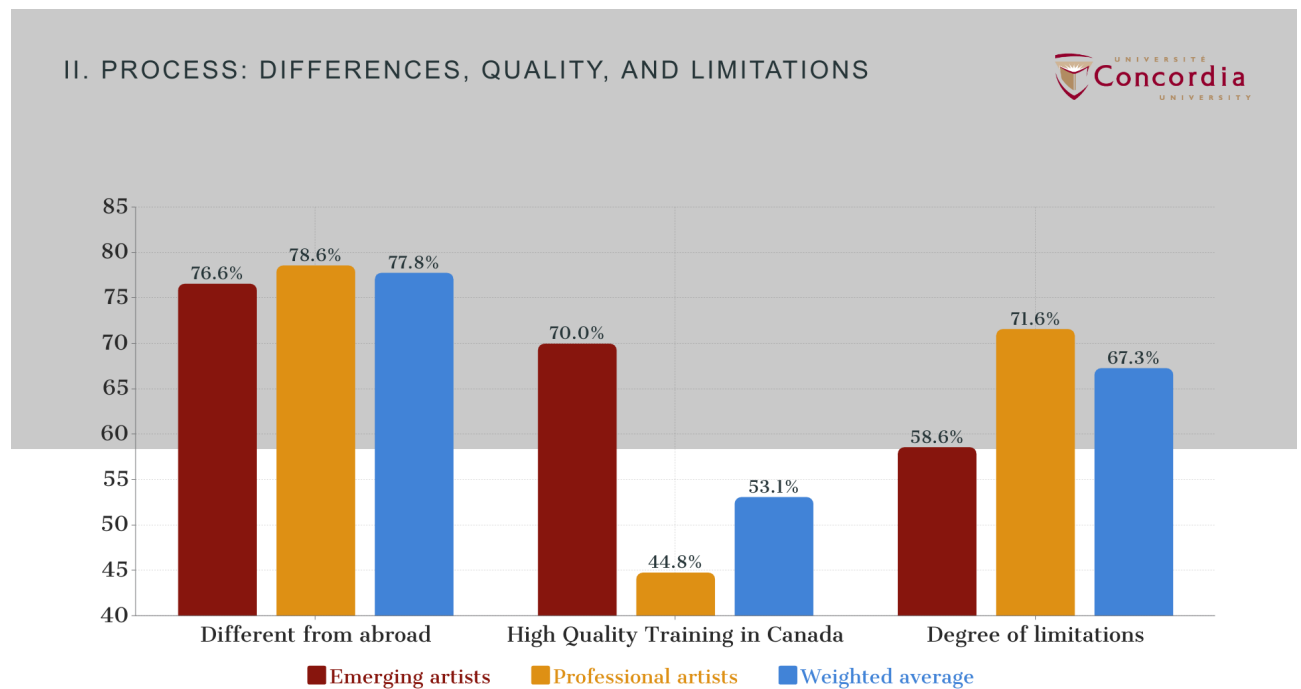


## Process Reflection

When asked the questions tied to process, the focus group participants identified mentorship, technique, practical experience, collaboration, and inclusion as the five elements they felt were “missing” (FG4-6) or “severely lacking” (FG5) in Canada. Survey and focus group participants were asked to compare foreign training to Canadian training and rate the quality and potential limitations of Canadian training. These totals, along with their weighted averages, can be found in Figure 38.

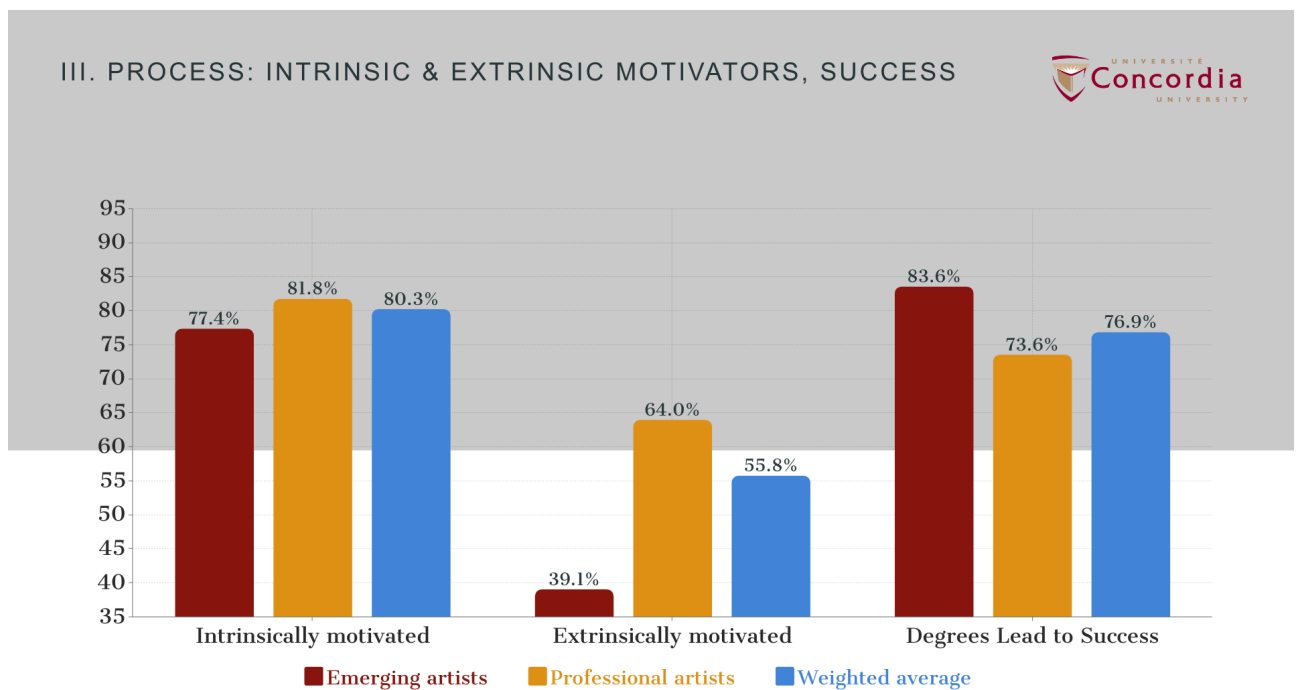
**Figure 38**

*Process I: Differences, Quality, and Limitations*



**Figure 39**

*Process II: Motivators and Links to Success*



When asked about motivators (Figure 39), the focus group participants discussed practical elements like the connection between a training program, mentors, and theatre companies. They felt that the design of these program components was linked to their decision to apply for training or not. The survey, though not as detailed, supported the focus group findings. Extrinsic motivators provided different results. Many focus group participants were keen to experience some component of life abroad, be it a cultural change, a vacation, or an opportunity to learn new types of theatre. They considered this life experience positively affected their artistic voice. The professional survey respondents also had higher numbers with these extrinsic motivators, suggesting that part of a professional musical theatre creator’s training requires some cultural stimulation.

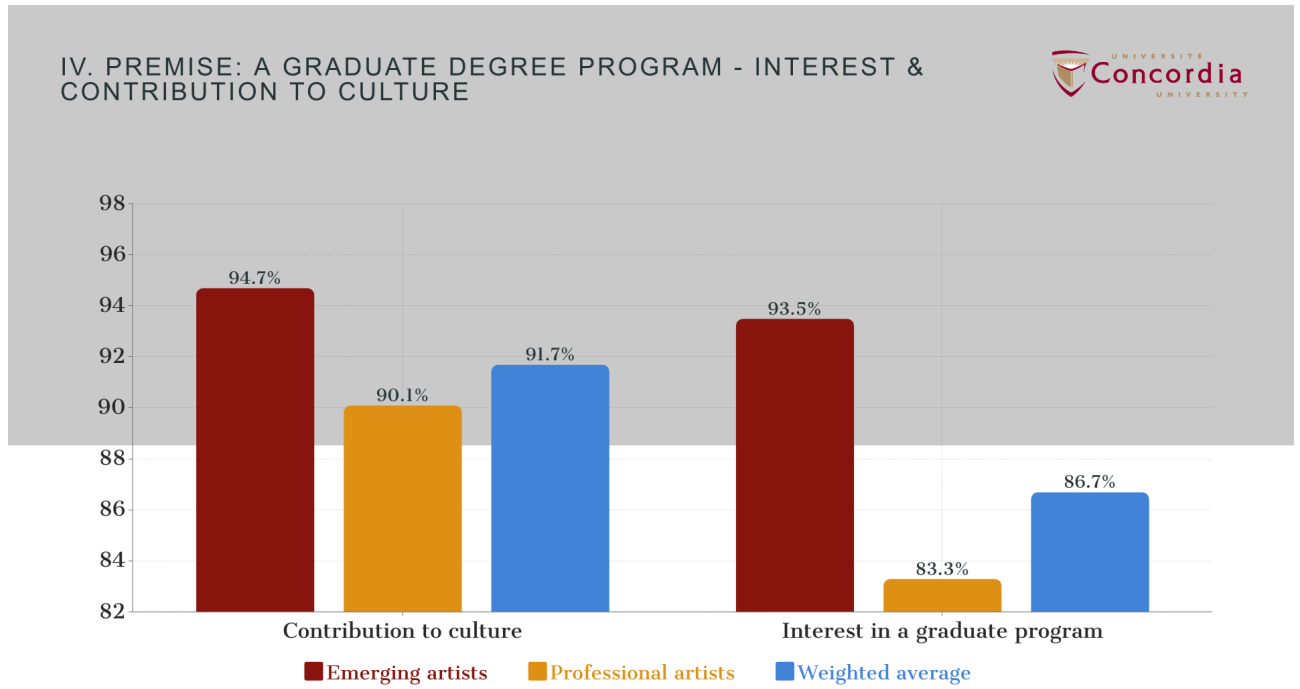
**Premise Reflection**

The final component was placing content and process in the larger context of a premise by considering the impact that a degree program for musical theatre creators might have on culture and gauging the level of interest in a master’s degree program for these artists. Notably, focus group members unanimously agreed that musicals impact culture. Still, some had reservations about a graduate training program producing a similar effect: “I am not sure about academics and creative work.” (FG1) As for the survey respondents, generally, 86.7% are interested in a graduate degree program, but like the focus groups, that number indicates a small degree of apprehensiveness. As for its contribution to culture, 91.7% shows strong support but does leave room for a few folks to question whether the program would have an impact or not. Figure 40 gives an overview.



**Figure 40**

*Premise: A Graduate Degree Program: Interest and Contribution to Culture.*



# CHAPTER 4: DISCUSSION, FUTURE RESEARCH, AND CONCLUSION

## Overview

Canadian musical theatre creators are still leaving the country to study abroad. While interest in training outside of Canada remains an exciting option, the results show that most would prefer to stay here in Canada to learn. Both survey and focus group participants favourably supported the idea of a graduate degree program for directors, musical directors, composers, lyricists, and book-writers. Those not in favour of such a program primarily worry about who would lead such a program or believe that artistic practices have no place in an academic setting.

Other factors that supported their desire to study abroad include little respect for the art form of musical theatre in Canada, insufficient interest in the development of musicals (from theatre companies and funding bodies alike), and the absence of a program that offers effective training, mentorship, and practical application. Even though the respondents strongly supported the concept that musicals contribute to the culture, they indicated that Canadians generally do not yet understand the cultural impact musicals have (or might have) on their culture or economy.

Despite the dearth of previous literature on this subject, the results are in line with my hypothesis and with Betts' (2012) assessment that Canadian musical theatre creators feel forced to leave the country because there is no professional training available in Canada. Additional results suggest that the quality of training in Canada is unsatisfactory, the training style is different, and the allure of international centres that support musicals is attractive. However, participants listed the cost of living and studying abroad as potentially prohibitive.

The results of this analysis provide insight into how one might proceed in the design and development of a degree program for musical theatre creators in Canada. More specifically, a degree program alone is not enough. Quality methods of training would require careful development, with constant scrutiny, evaluation, and a willingness to change to better methods as they emerge. As indicated by the participants, quality training would start in the classroom and end with a professional opportunity (i.e., full public production in a suitably large, equipped theatrical space with good acoustics, with a paying public audience). They also support Betts' (2012) statement that those who train and employ musical theatre creators would also benefit from education to develop a holistic ecosystem where Canadian musical theatre can thrive.

## Limitations

As a musical theatre creator, my researcher bias was evident and I made clear efforts to mitigate this bias through transparency, and distancing techniques. I based the survey and focus group questions on Mezirow's critical reflection theory and phrased them as neutrally as possible. They were edited and approved by the supervisory committee and the ethics office. Only the questions were posed during the focus group sessions to promote the discussions. I gave no further prompts and participants were allowed to discuss freely.

Obviously, as someone known in the field, they would be familiar with my work and know who I am, so the possibility of social desirability bias was strong. However, this was mitigated through my manifestation of openness to a variety of positions being expressed. The survey invitations were sent to potential participants through indirect means.

I also acknowledge the presence of bias in the survey and focus group participants, particularly in questions relating to culture. I would have benefitted from a control group comprised of members of the general population to generate a more balanced set of results.

The sample size of the surveys was too small for most quantitative studies, and thus cannot be generalized, but can only provide a support in a broader study. Despite contacting several theatre companies and educational institutions and repeatedly posting the surveys in open forums and on closed social media platforms over two months, the number of participants was limited, especially in the emerging creators' survey. This particularly affected the demographic diversity in both surveys, resulting in too small a sample size to give Chi-square tests significant power. It also weighted the combined survey results favouring the professional creators, slightly diminishing the overall impact of emerging creators.

The volume of the data was hefty for me to manage on my own. In the future, it would help to involve more researchers or research assistants to amass the data and analyze the results. In hindsight, double-coding the qualitative data would have been useful to help with survey analysis, focus group transcription, and cross-referencing themes. In the end, I purchased the Quirkos program to help filter the qualitative data and make it more visually compelling.

Finally, some focus group participants may have changed their behaviour or felt restricted in what they could say. For example, one participant wanted to discuss the trajectory of a musical that another participant in the same group had written. The result was perhaps a more restrained version of what needed to be said. Overall, the participants seemed to speak with candour, but there is no definite way to know what they might have wanted to discuss had they been in a one-on-one interview.

## **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research could investigate additional training methods for musical theatre creators, explore how they are perceived in Canada and abroad, and examine why they are often expected to work without compensation.

Musical theatre is an evolving art form, and education in the field could likely reflect its evolution. The comprehensive training methods I discussed in this study will probably change over time. Future research might explore which elements of that training are more suitable to the current theatrical trends of that time. Another study might investigate individualized approaches to address the importance of the artist's style and how that might apply to graduate training.

I determined in this report that mentorship is an essential element of training, but as one participant suggested, training for those mentors could also prove beneficial. Additional research might want to consider how to train mentors so that universities have plenty of

working professionals to choose from. Finally, it may be worthwhile to explore alternate avenues of formal training for those apprehensive of traditional academic approaches. In other words, might there be a way of designing a graduate program within an academic institution that defies perceptions of what a graduate program is supposed to be?

A primary concern voiced by the participants was a diminished sense of respect or understanding towards the art form of musical theatre. Future studies might want to explore how Canadians perceive musicals and the artists who create them. This could likely be carried out using various methodologies, from large-scale audience surveys to in-depth interviews with theatre professionals and policymakers. Additional research may examine ways to increase Canadians' appetite for homegrown musicals. As some participants discussed, if Canadians are encouraged to participate in the development process of new work, their stake in that process may stimulate interest. I would be intrigued to gain further insight into how one might accomplish this.

Finally, I would recommend examining the suggested economic imbalance between musical theatre creators and the industry at large, possibly through a study that investigates why musicals are written for little to no money. Should future studies back up the participants' claim to a shortage of funding, solutions can be considered. For example, if the economic deficiency is at the educational level, how might a monetary incentive, such as a sponsor, venture capital fund, SSHRC or Arts Council grant motivate these artists to pursue an education? Other research could investigate why there might be a lack of financing for working professionals. It may also be worth looking into the possibility of a universal basic income for these artists, so they feel supported and can survive.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the available literature I have accessed, this appears to be the first study conducted about training for musical theatre creators in Canada. How can we know if Canada needs graduate training for musical theatre creators? In what ways could Canada benefit from such a program? While the results of this research suggest strong support via various methods, these were nevertheless conditional. When examining the data, this needs assessment evolved into a much richer exploration, uncovering unsettling truths about how Canadians and theatre professionals perceive musical theatre as an art form. It is not just a question of setting up a university program and letting the chips fall where they may. With further research, careful planning of curriculum content, training methods, and connections to professional theatre companies and facilities, many factors must be considered in order to ensure that any such program *will work*: that it will foster not only to the artistic success of its graduates but also their financial success and security, as well as further Canadian arts and culture while sowing the seeds for future generations. If there is a graduate degree program for musical theatre creators in Canada, potential students would need to feel confident that their academic efforts will help them earn a respectable living with community support as they mature into seasoned artists.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Structure of Focus Groups and Questions

Introduction: Today we will be discussing training for musical theatre creators in Canada, and how we might create a more substantial program to support all artists. In the room are [list artists and disciplines], as well as [list researcher and supervisor(s)]. [Make sure all forms have been signed.] [Ensure tech support/backup is available for those tuning in remotely.]

I personally want to thank you for your time, and I look forward to hearing your expertise and experience in the field during this ninety-minute session. Shall we jump in?

Question 1: What formal training have you received in your discipline in Canada?

Question 2: What elements constitute quality training in your discipline?

Question 3: Which of these elements seem to be missing in training programs in Canada?

Question 4: Have you received training, or do you intend to train outside of Canada?

Question 5: What are your primary reasons for wanting to train outside of Canada?

Question 6: If the reasons for your wanting to leave Canada were able to be implemented into a program in Canada, would you still want to study abroad?

Question 7: What elements of musical theatre creation can contribute to culture in Canada?

Question 8: Is there a type of training that you believe can increase your chances of success in the field?

Question 9: If there were a master's degree program for your discipline offered in Canada, would you consider applying?

Closing remarks: Thank you so much for your time, thoughtful responses, and valuable insight.



## Appendix B: Focus Group Coding Report



This report was generated by Jonathan Monro on Tue Dec 28, 2021, 15:19:05 GMT-0500 (EST) for the following file: /Users/jonathanmonro/Desktop/Focus Groups Analysis 2.qrk.

### Source Summary

Title	Author	Length	Quotes #
Focus Group 1	Jonathan Monro	66896	91
Focus Group 2	Jonathan Monro	68461	91
Focus Group 3	Jonathan Monro	80090	85
Focus Group 4	Jonathan Monro	71162	84
Focus Group 5	Jonathan Monro	81002	88
Focus Group 6	Jonathan Monro	63826	67

## Visual Summary of Coding Categories (Quirks)



## Quotes - Coded

When I turned a Shakespeare play into a musical for my master's thesis there was actually a debate among the department, it was to whether or not it would be eligible  
 Source: *Focus Group 1*

I've worked in various colleges and universities and, but most of the time it's not been doing musicals because they're not interested in them that much.  
 Source: *Focus Group 1*

Just to echo a little bit of what [REDACTED] said about the academics looking down a little bit on musical  
 Source: *Focus Group 1*

I was basically trying to do musicals and meet somewhere in the middle of that five writing musicals. With my composition teacher who was very supportive of that, unlike everyone else in the conservatory over on The Bachelor music side,  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

In musical theatre, if that's the thing at all respect to the form  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think there is a fundamental lack of recognition for what a musical is what it's supposed to do  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

And people sort of miss understanding what the point of anybody singing is, and singing be singing is incidental or doesn't further anything to do with the storytelling. It boils down to respect and understanding,  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

a respect for the youth of the art form and, and to take our time to understand what constitutes a musical at all,  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think there is a lack of respect and interest for the form in French.  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

In the beginning it's about respect  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

if the Safe Space doesn't exist, then I don't think it matters where you are in your process, you're not going to move it forward  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

I have a proclivity towards writing stuff for young people. And I don't feel like that's really well respected or looked upon in Canada,  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

when people talk about the great Canadian musical. I have to say, you guys you know you told Joseph and Mary there was no room at the inn that night. You didn't care about them, they had to go somewhere else to get produced  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

you know, people point to come from a way which did very well, but already... Well, the story though, you know, [REDACTED] will tell you and I read and [REDACTED] will tell you is that they couldn't get a damn theatre in Canada interested in it after the Sheridan College workshop  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

There's something about the term Canadian musical to the public at large that feels like quaint and provincial

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I got my directing masters from the University of British Columbia, which actively frowned on musical theatre

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I don't think like musical theatre was like ever like on the radar of ever being taught I think there's like some sort of like snobbism going on

Source: *Focus Group 2*

universities can squash things like art,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

where most composers, kind of go into stage works, we're not really considered valid

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I remember even having hard times getting grants from the Ontario Arts Council because it was a children's work

Source: *Focus Group 3*

it's very easy for us to forget that that stuff is valid as well.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I lived through decades where people were like “oh my god you do musicals Have you been in Hello Dolly?”,

Source: *Focus Group 3*

people who came up to me in the lobby after that and said, “I had no idea that musicals could actually be so lush and serious and funny, and heartwarming and heartbreaking.”

Source: *Focus Group 3*

in the 1980s I mean you remember this; musicals were like the lowest form of theatre – that's what most people in Canada thought about them.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

the idea that musicals are sort of flashy and kind of lowbrow or whatever that word actually means something like a really sort of developed and understood education process is the perfect solution

Source: *Focus Group 3*

here in Canada, we still seem to hang on to this idea that, “oh yeah that's what you take your grandma to go see at Stratford,  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

I will be honest and say that the level of respect for musical theatre performers is much greater in the States than it ever is here  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

I don't know how many of you have ever experienced this if you were a performer, but you came out after the show you just killed yourself, you know I did Mamma Mia. You came out after the show and people would go, “That was good. So, what do you do for a living?”  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

I think there was also something about a level of respect, and you could make a living in the States.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

on the meet and greet day, I was introduced as the Canadian imperative, and they made it absolutely clear that they weren't at all interested in me or my work.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

even though the Mirvishes was did start to hire Canadian performers and and Livent did there was nothing for writers.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

There are places you could go to take composition and orchestration like U of T and many places that music schools, but they almost all frown on musical theatre,  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

in terms of, you know, artists being respected. I think that's that's actually a quite an interesting conversation  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

I keep running into people who hate musical theatre and, isn't it funny that they can't wait to tell you that? They, they ask what you do for a living, and you tell them, and they can't wait to tell you how much they loathe all of that.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

I've watched so many of my colleagues, lose the opportunity to be mentored by commercial directors that have had years and years of experience because they're not interested in hiring someone from Canada at all. And I think that's what drives a lot of creatives out of this country.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

if I talked about a Canadian literary icon, I wouldn't be laughed out of the room right we have them in this country. If I talked about iconic musicians, you know who are known globally. Again, I wouldn't be laughed out of the room, but you can say the same of course what musical theatre

Source: *Focus Group 4*

there needs to be an understanding and appreciation of respect for the history

Source: *Focus Group 5*

how do we actually create an ecosystem that supports the art form, that respects the art form, and therefore then grows the art form

Source: *Focus Group 5*

we're in previews for a Dolly Parton musical that got like the worst like horrible reviews in Boston. And, like if that was a Canadian musical, you know, that would not see the light of day again.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

talking about the craft in the, in the US seems to be a little bit more acceptable than talking about here

Source: *Focus Group 5*

Maybe 3 years ago I was applying to Canada for the Canada Council a musical theatre writing grant, and I was shocked by the response, I got from the, I guess the person who was supposed to be helping me apply for this grant that they did not award grants to musical theatre, it was high kicking and smiles and and not artistically viable

Source: *Focus Group 5*

we're in this weird kind of never nether world where companies use us for money, but they only really use the American ones for money it's, it's pretty messed up. It's a problem.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

there was basically no musical theatre department and McGill, and I don't even know if there was today, but it was certainly sort of frowned upon it was looked down upon and the opera students were never never singing musical theatre.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

musical theatre tends to be accessible and quite universal. And because it's accessible well, therefore it can't be important,

Source: *Focus Group 6*

it's been mostly one on one mentorship that have been fostered that have helped like the Metcalf internship I did with musical stage

Source: *Focus Group 1*

working with [REDACTED] on [REDACTED] at the fringe was actually one of the best writing mentorships that I got

Source: *Focus Group 1*

she came to me and said, Can you give me a weekend a month for a year. And I said, Yeah, and she flew me down to Pittsburgh on the weekend, once a month, to work with the songwriting team

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think about yeah just just the idea of getting your education in urban hub where you can segue that next that next network that you get at school. into work or your mentorships are with people that can then give you work.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I would like to see a training that leaves the classroom and gets more hands on... I guess what I'm trying to say, and whatever sort of apprenticeship

Source: *Focus Group 1*

it has to be kind of nuclear and start small, it has to be a person helping a person or two people and then going up from there, it can work within a bigger environment.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

One of the more successful relationships that's gone on, not as a writer but you picture how you could transfer this is the way Paul Sportelli works with his interns and people at the Shaw festival.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

He brings them along. He gives them responsibility. He helps train them. He finally says go out of the nest little bird, you know, he helps place them in jobs. He's, but he's always keeping an eye on them on that small cohort he has every year, and they really get quality attention. Can't we do that with writers,

Source: *Focus Group 1*

having just really good teachers right, having really good people and having, you know, lots of different people who are people who are professionals

Source: *Focus Group 2*

it's nice when, when people teaching you understand the contemporary media and aren't haven't been teaching for years

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I think the only program that currently exists in the country is the one at Shaw. And you know they take one person every two years.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I was very lucky to have met [REDACTED] who was a Broadway writer living in Toronto, but from Toronto and living back in Toronto. So, in a lot of ways, it was a mentorship

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I did do an internship at the Shaw festival with Paul Sportelli there and that was very useful

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I just, you know, called everybody I knew and said, 'Can I come and watch you work? I'll get your coffee.' And I did that for a long time, and I figured some stuff out. And I failed, and I did more, and I failed, and here we are.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

our mentor was Leslie Arden for two years, which was incredible

Source: *Focus Group 3*

Bob Martin has been a pretty good mentor.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

the word that I think really carries weight for me was mentorship. I think that's been the most pivotal thing

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I think that would be a really vital aspect to have included in that is actually working with people who are in the field and are doing what, you know, younger people are hoping to do or are training to do.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

And then slowly and surely, you're doing, you're having more opportunities to do it in front of the public and mentorship. But doing doing doing.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I'm just saying mentorship

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I had some tremendous mentors and went through a process of mentorship with directors here in Canada.

Source: *Focus Group 4*



that was my ticket to a wonderful mentorship with Leslie, because the Ontario arts council had a program

Source: *Focus Group 4*

The mentorship that I received in many respects, was more valuable than anything I could have learned at school.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

the guidance of professionals, as opposed to just the book learning skills because I found that invaluable.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

the internship that I did with Paul Sportelli at Shaw. So, Paul is someone that I think he is this brilliant fusion of being an amazing teacher, as well as being an expert in, in what he does.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I really feel like that is a huge part of what would make a difference in a master's program is that side of mentorship

Source: *Focus Group 4*

the ability to have that mentorship and that practical ability is, is invaluable and I think absolutely necessary.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

try and put established directors and choreographers with young emerging artists and creators who want to do the work and be able to have a program for them by which they actually get paid to do it too. So, they're not starving to do it, that they're actually doing it for money. Yeah. So, it is missing.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I've watched so many of my colleagues, lose the opportunity to be mentored by commercial directors that have had years and years of experience because they're not interested in hiring someone from Canada at all.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

If you can't consistently work and make enough money in your chosen discipline in Canada. Then, you know, you'd have to find some way to get that mentorship, bring people up or have a connection with some with the institution in the states

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I learned more from my MD, that we had that we had for The Louder We Get who was American. I learned more about music preparation from him than I could have from anywhere else because he's in New York doing it every day

Source: *Focus Group 4*

Leslie was one of my mentors there. And I found that really helpful

Source: *Focus Group 4*

all institutions that I can think of, they really, they really embrace, and they do as much as possible, try to bring people in.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

NTS tries to do that the best they can, in terms of bringing people in for a certain amount of time that are professionals in their field,

Source: *Focus Group 4*

one thing I think we, I felt that was missing a lot. It's just the idea of mentorship.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I've stood on their shoulders, and I hope that the people that I mentor will stand on mine.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

we have a sort of system in place with the concept of internship,

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think mentorship would be, what would be most interesting to me.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I'd be interested in like some mentorship, or something like that within Canada too.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I would want the perfect storm would be a combination of the two. In terms of formal training with mentorship

Source: *Focus Group 5*

that little sort of like step in between seems to be missing for me of like when you're working on a show when you have a professional involved and look at that after, and yeah, the mentorship would be great.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I definitely agree with, with sort of the teacher the sentiment, I want to sort of angle it slightly more towards this idea of like mentorship.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I just think hands on experience is the most valuable type of experience which I think is through real active mentorship

Source: *Focus Group 6*

mentorship, hands on workshop experience I think would be the thing.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

music intern program.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

for me I think the notion of there being a certain sort of frozen knowledge that simply gets transported from mentor to the intern or the person learning the person taking the workshop. I like to think of that as something a little bit more fluid and a little bit more to weigh in terms of what that person brings to the table.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

you know the mentorship is, to me, is something that is formally missing.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

Where is the training to teach me how to be a good quality mentor?

Source: *Focus Group 6*

How do you get people with, with the life experience or the or the or the career experience that can be mentors that are set up to, to sort of take on that step?

Source: *Focus Group 6*

there are there are not many generations of mentors

Source: *Focus Group 6*

the best way to learn is to work on your own material is through mentorship and development.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

brought in another additional set of mentors for the creators

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I started the music intern program at Shaw, precisely because I had no training as a music director or a conductor.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

sort of hybrid model that is educational institution slash residency, that would be, I think, a game changer.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

how do you extract the value from something that's that that is sort of more codified and teachable, which I think you can pull out of AABA form/Rodgers and Hammerstein and looking, looking into that stuff while not excluding people?

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I am interested as well in musical theatre education that takes the best of what we have learned explains at a deeper root why it works in a sort of human way so that we can continue to empower the next generation of writers to reimagine those things and structures and tools,

Source: *Focus Group 1*

how do we take some of the supremacy in the colonialism, out of some of the teaching while keeping the best of what we've learned?

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I feel really committed to my little corner of the west coast of Canada and I feel like the stuff I write here is different than the stuff that I write, when I'm in Berlin, or other places like that and I feel like the world needs it even if they don't know it yet.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

one other thing about that that was so valuable was hearing other people's work. You don't mean like you just learned so much. I learned so much.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

it could be really interesting to maybe have like a program that will help, you know, people realize that like, they can be part of creating musicals and that it can be something that they can actually do too.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

a program that that can, can, can illuminate the great traditions of musical theatre and still make room for people to find, find their own way to find their own voice to find their own artistry

Source: *Focus Group 2*

for me it's more about giving writers that to express what they want to express in their own way

Source: *Focus Group 2*

theatre is a very can be a very localized things so getting people from different places you can. Okay. Yeah, let me let you in.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

how we can really find different ways and in different individuals to express their voices and expand what we think of as traditional music theatre

Source: *Focus Group 3*

it was really interesting seeing when we put people together, or when the management put teams together, how they would thrive, or not depending on just the amount of sort of openness in the room

Source: *Focus Group 3*

is it possible that can imagine a program that put the creators at the forefront and just the actors and singers and dancers were brought in to support us? I mean that would be pretty phenomenal.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

in watching a musical... And then later on in his life in writing a musical like the truth just pops out. There's a moment where the truth, just kind of hits you in the face, no matter what it like he was watching *Rent*, and something hit him about himself.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

understanding how the art form is connected to social and political changes because it is an art form that keeps morphing

Source: *Focus Group 5*

bedside manner, you know, as creators, as people who... how do you speak to somebody, especially in our socio-political climate right now you know how to give a note how to speak to actors.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

an understanding from the beginning how to kind of own your own creations

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think a diversity of instructions and voices and styles, is very helpful.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

optimizing that artist's voice giving them the craft and the tools that they need to do the thing that they want to do.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

for me I think the notion of there being a certain sort of frozen knowledge that simply gets transported from mentor to the intern or the person learning the person taking the workshop. I like to think of that as something a little bit more fluid and a little bit more to weigh in terms of what that person brings to the table.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

the collaboration and cross pollination of our industry with other mediums, whether it is the director of the music director think even the copyist

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I had the advantage of co-writer co-write musicals with [REDACTED] who knows all the rules. So, I've never had to learn the rules which is my preference.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

But the chance to put things up in the small and small form without any said, without any money or budget or even audience attached a chance to experiment, which would then mean absolutely having people of other disciplines and getting the experience that [REDACTED]'s talking about in collaboration like that seems like the most valuable thing I could imagine, giving to anyone.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

searching for authenticity in our collaborators, is where the collaboration, really truly flowers, is when everybody is allowed and not allowed. That's the wrong... well it is in some cases allowed encouraged nurtured to be their most authentic contributor

Source: *Focus Group 1*

the thing I love about musicals, seems to be a theme of mine today is collaboration all the different people that come in.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think when you're training that you are willing to open yourself up to criticism. And, and the people that are giving you the feedback are giving to giving you feedback and an honest and helpful and creative way, but aren't lying to you are trying to be nice just to make you help you feel better,

Source: *Focus Group 1*

being in proximity to two other pairs of creators who were who were doing the same thing I found that to be an important part of the learning process as well.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

being given like being given again like tools for communicating like as insightfully as possible.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I was, you know, going to talk about collaborating and I think you. You did so early on so articulately like I think that that seems to be to me like one of the central sort of unique things about musical theatre

Source: *Focus Group 2*

collaborating with another co-writer.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

learning, sort of, when, when you need to take yourself out like when you need to give space when you need to take space, learning that relationship I think is so beautiful

Source: *Focus Group 2*

a pool of musicians that have that expertise in that vocabulary to collaborate with writers, directors

Source: *Focus Group 2*

collaboration that's required for this is is massive.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I mean, in terms of that collaboration idea to like there's, there's so much different vocabulary that could be shared and better understood between choreographers and musical directors and directors and writers and lyricists and composers.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

a lot of people have said is like very collaborative and wonder, yeah if there was any possibility of even already opening up that collaborative like brain to make sure that everyone, every every area

of expertise is like understanding that like their work feeds into other people's work.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

the director of musical is a very collaborative, I mean they're in playwriting too but in in musical they're very collaborative.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

it's about really meeting the people that you need to meet and working on your craft.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I definitely think that any place where you can get together with like-minded people and feel that creativity will be just is always the best.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I thought kind of just learning, like, one way how to communicate like with your partners

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I think helps me to like to receive like comments better and like and really deciding like how I want to incorporate them or not.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

learning ways to communicate and critique one another's work,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

Collaboration, concepts, and cool experiences. I think there needs to be a balance between the abstract, the the sort of theoretical side of the craft and also the practical means to test those out.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

being able to create connections and pair people up and give people the chance to work with a bunch of new collaborative partners, I think, is that one of the most valuable parts of a workshop that I think would also be a really valuable thing to incorporate into a program

Source: *Focus Group 3*

pair students up as much as possible with people with different skill sets so they can develop a network of collaborators.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

whether or not you're going to collaborate in a writing team like as a librettist or a lyricist or a composer, you are going to collaborate with people to put your work on stage, so collaboration is is vital.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I would like to have more of in terms of the intersections between music and text and basically wanting to understand that that, that mentality and being able to apply that from, you know, into from a musical perspective.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

those really good directors are also really good educators because they do have a skill set that allows a room to be safe, allows actors to be heard, or performers to be heard, there's a strong collaborative feeling in that room

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I think it needs to be acknowledged that we're really a sum of a bunch of parts that none of us here just do one thing

Source: *Focus Group 4*

the thing I really enjoyed with our training was... Just how well it was integrated in terms of collaboration like from the beginning of, like, what it means to listen to another partner and forgive them

Source: *Focus Group 5*

understand what you do own and when you get into a collaboration.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

If someone sits down with you and says “this is how you give the note”

Source: *Focus Group 5*

if we're confident enough as leaders, we realized that it's a collaboration, especially at a professional level it's not a dictatorship,

Source: *Focus Group 5*



integrated in whatever curriculum is being designed, is this idea that you have to be working with the other people that you will be working with when you leave that education space

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I felt very lucky because I had been doing all of this copy work in between my degree like during the summer and sometimes late at night when I was crazy during the school year. Assisting Broadway writers, getting their scores ready, so I had been in the room, I kind of knew what was expected of me I had seen all of what well [REDACTED] was talking about of all this stuff happening and how your songs would take on another level, but a lot of the students had not because they weren't doing that, they hadn't done that work

Source: *Focus Group 1*

It can't just be a bubble of writers; I don't think that really helps anybody in the long run.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

Quality education might include or would include a larger... I guess a way to connect perhaps to the community at large musical theatre community beyond just the walls of a, of a writing unit, or writing department.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

apprenticeships or having people come in and or staging ten-minute musicals right away to start understanding how that functions.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

if there was a young person in my life who wanted to pursue a theatre, I would want them to find a program that's like connected to the industry

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I wonder if deep collaborations with companies producing musicals, could be part of a post-secondary training model.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I get a lot when I tell people that I'm interested in musical theatre is, "Oh yeah but it's really complicated to produce but like the means of production

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think the lab sort of system of training is useful to a point.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think that we have to redefine workshop

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I've seen better things come out of labs than workshops  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

the practical part is so integral to learning.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

I really appreciated with the musical stage program with that was that it was all people who were already knew who they were and what they were doing  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

you write a musical. And it gets workshop at the end of that year.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

what was great about that is working as a team that like directing, dramaturging with people who are able to write quickly rewrite quickly and that was very exciting because it really throws you in the middle of the process  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

a lot of it's workshop based so [REDACTED] would do an intensive. I guess workshop with them whereby he would work, sort of almost like a writers room in a way to write to to teach book writing to play rights and he would sort of write the music to a musical, but together they would sort of do it together  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

creating for the sake of creating  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

the most valuable thing that for me that came out of that program you have a piece of work that has gotten consistent feedback by very smart people over a period of a year.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

Collaboration, concepts, and cool experiences. I think there needs to be a balance between the abstract, the the sort of theoretical side of the craft and also the practical means to test those out.  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

And then slowly and surely, you're doing, you're having more opportunities to do it in front of the public and mentorship. But doing doing doing.  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

the writing process doesn't end with just entering it into your computer or printing it out on your score. It needs to be in front of people that's often the best way to see if something is working or not.  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

anything that's like concrete as a takeaway I think is something that's really important  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

I would need that right now anything that helps you in a practical sense  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

I feel like grant application should be built into education  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

I feel like the requirement of the art form at least from my like as a music director and the, the shifts that have happened in that industry in terms of the technological advances, working with stuff that actually is going to sound current if you want your material to feel like it reflects our times. I am very skeptical that that would ever come to play in a formalized university setting.  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

the writers within a six-month period, had a series of very pivotal experiences going through a writing process having dramaturgical work, collaborating, having another workshop, very quickly after that a cast of three and an orchestra three showed up and we started putting these pieces together and then we did them for solo performances  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

it's really about what is the real-world applications who are we really training with who can we we bring into the picture, versus the textbook learning  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

And if they don't get up and do it, there's no way they can. And then you're not preparing them it's not fair.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

the program that I did was a trade-off so instead of me paying tuition for it, they gave me a degree, but I had to provide certain skill set so I was kind of a pseudo like TA. And so, throughout the week like I had to accompany, and I had to play dance classes I and I had to like basically to provide my skills as music director. And then, and then after 12 months, they gave me a degree  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

I was subconsciously looking for in my training leading up to this point, is a program or a platform that would allow me to, over the course of two or three years, work on a project  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

to show process. I think people are drawn to that  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

something about the training being situated as part of the larger professional community.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think any quality theatre program should have some kind of live performance, with a live audience that is composed of not just people who are associated with the program but like regular people

Source: *Focus Group 5*

we are not always built to be businesspeople, but I think this is an important part

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think also pragmatism is something that we don't really teach a lot and I can only speak for as a music director. The business of the business.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

how do you do payroll, how do you do all those things is things that we don't talk about, and that's learned on the job, and it is such an important integral part of the job.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I was already working before I graduated as an assistant to huge designers.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

practical, hands-on work,

Source: *Focus Group 6*

so, to look at the music director, that stream, like, it's, it's, you know, are you creating... are you training in a way that is employable?

Source: *Focus Group 6*

the more you can learn by doing, and workshopping things and workshops leading to productions it's all, it's all essential in terms of learning.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

like a Soulpepper Academy or a Birmingham conservatory these kind of training programs where you get to be under the umbrella of an institution so that it doesn't kind of your work doesn't disappear into a vacuum

Source: *Focus Group 6*

then making sure that the work that they then go on to create has a life,

Source: *Focus Group 6*

In principle, I think it's a good idea, but I want to know the methodology, the people, what they are doing how's it working. You know I wouldn't want to sell my soul and get an interminable student loan and then find out it was a crock of shit,  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think it's a no, that's just me because I did a couple of years of school in my late teens and then I never went to school again so I just can't. It sounds fun. But I just kept myself busy outside of school always. So, and I didn't, and yeah, I, I'm not totally sure about academics and creative work for myself anyway.  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think having a program in Canada can help, you know, get more of those sorts of things written, I think that's the hope. And the more that gets written, that's you know well crafted. You know, the hope is that producers don't want to miss out on the next *Come From Away*.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

A musical theatre writing program, can't hurt the chances.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

I would love a place like that where you could go and get reinvigorated. you know, that would be amazing.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

I just wonder if being part of a larger institution is the best is the best way to do a thing like this.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

I feel like the requirement of the art form at least from my like as a music director and the, the shifts that have happened in that industry in terms of the technological advances, working with stuff that actually is going to sound current if you want your material to feel like it reflects our times. I am very skeptical that that would ever come to play in a formalized university setting.  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

I think if I were to go to university, I would do religious studies and art history and then go study theatre.  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

I wanted to immerse myself and get focused and and do nothing else.  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

like how many years, do I have to go through school to get to the master's level?

Source: *Focus Group 4*

who would be teaching me the master's program

Source: *Focus Group 4*

that's what I think too. Who would be teaching this program?

Source: *Focus Group 4*

Everybody. That's everybody. Unanimous.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

when you have these people who are true pedagogues at heart... And then, are also interested in the Canadian experience and then they can mentor the Canadians, if you do it that way, then yes, I think for me, that would be the caveat.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I would have stayed but it yes it would have, it would depend on who was teaching it.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

sort of hybrid model that is educational institution slash residency, that would be, I think, a game changer.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

Like the Canadian Film Institute, that really brought the level of film in in Canada way out there. Let's have a musical Institute to create musicals.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

Yeah, we need a school on creating musical comedy, or musical drama, any musicals.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I would be interested if it was outside of an academic institution

Source: *Focus Group 6*

if I could have access some maybe a part of it but having gone for degree. No, that's never been the goal.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I don't know if anybody cares if you have a degree in the industry, I don't care I don't know if anybody, it makes a difference to anybody,

Source: *Focus Group 6*

are they signing up for these programs because they want to become better artists and more fully realized versions of themselves, or are they doing this to make money?

Source: *Focus Group 6*

that education should allow the students to break the rules, once they have learned the rules, because it's kind of the bedrock of everything

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I feel like if you don't have the formal education, you're sort of learning that through trial by fire

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I think quality education in this particular art form needs to explain the history and show the development of the structure, so that you can understand those rules and then maybe break them or at least, play with them a little bit.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

a quality education is going to teach you how to be a good collaborator and understanding what that means

Source: *Focus Group 1*

the best of those are from creators that understand very well, the form and then are making educated choices to depart from the form.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

your voice in your individual artistic thrust is the most important thing, but you can only make that better with more knowledge.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I like to think that to this day they're still able to speak with their own voice because somebody came along and said, Who knew a lot about musicals, but could say speak with your own voice,

Source: *Focus Group 1*

take everything that's been done and been successful and find some something new and original to say through it or with it, or around it.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

that includes, you know, talking about stuff like the craft of musical theatre songwriting

Source: *Focus Group 2*

perfect rhyme as a tool again these are all tools and not saying you must Perfect, perfect rhyme all the time, but saying here is the tool. This is why this tool is valuable.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

looking at song form. Again, as tools for the craft and helping writers figure out when these tools are useful to them to express what they want to express clearly,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

it's great to give people context of, of, sort of the basics of what like say for writing a song with the basics are writing a song. So, there is some sort of structure there that they can understand

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I feel it's best to like to have everybody on the same page for a bit to understand what basics are,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

you have to walk before you can run in understanding why something works because of its structure

Source: *Focus Group 2*

it's really important just to understand that you can write in any style you want to but it's great to have some of those basic underlying to know what works and why it works

Source: *Focus Group 2*

the more musicals that the training is referencing the better

Source: *Focus Group 2*

balance between the art of writing and the craft of writing as well.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

a rigorous program, while at the same time allowing people to be free and be inspired and also to chart their own path.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

Also, rudiments.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

The music theory side of thing is like still there's lots of anxiety that I have around it so in like a post-grad thing or book secondary whatever, that would be so useful, I would go to it right now.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I would love if there was a program to be able to explore my work as a in my dramaturgical work as a music director.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

Collaboration, concepts, and cool experiences. I think there needs to be a balance between the abstract, the the sort of theoretical side of the craft and also the practical means to test those out.



Source: *Focus Group 3*

type of program where it's just completely immersive, and you're doing the craft experience, and you're working with instructors like form is extremely useful.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I wanted to take the course that would teach me how to use Sibelius, which is a tool I need to, you know, share the music with everyone.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

really being taught the craft of musical theatre writing and understanding musical theatre structure and understanding, kind of the basic principles that the great musicals are founded upon

Source: *Focus Group 5*

knowing and understanding what came before, so that you can keep expanding on that

Source: *Focus Group 5*

everything from the actual construction of songs and the structure, but also what I'll call the technical side of the craft

Source: *Focus Group 5*

if I was going to set up a dream program, it would be like getting with how to learn Finale

Source: *Focus Group 5*

the craft of writing a musical is on its own

Source: *Focus Group 5*

You really have to sort of have good chops at the piano I found that's been the most useful thing to me, and I see that's where other struggle the most if they can't really play piano super well, it's hard to be a musical director

Source: *Focus Group 5*

things like learning. Like, how to use Sibelius because pretty much in every job I've ever done. There's been some element of arranging

Source: *Focus Group 5*

about Sibelius I think that's like such an important aspect of the craft that people don't get an opportunity to understand

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think within the genre of musical theatre there's just such a fast journey of different types of songs,  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

having a certain base knowledge, for example, looking at a conductor score, whether that's five staves or 25 staves and not being afraid of it  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

a training program for musical directors whereas a little bit the same thing. If you already walk into the room, knowing, you know, how do use Sibelius, knowing how to use the technology the mainstage, logic, all of those things learning a little bit how to arrange knowing how to speak to people.  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

I would want the perfect storm would be a combination of the two. In terms of formal training with mentorship  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

I love the idea of knowing our history, and, and all of that, I think it's so important.  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

my training has really helped me in learning when people ask me, essential dramaturgical questions.  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

When people ask questions dramaturgically  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

sort of hybrid model that is educational institution slash residency, that would be, I think, a game changer.  
Source: *Focus Group 6*

optimizing that artist's voice giving them the craft and the tools that they need to do the thing that they want to do.  
Source: *Focus Group 6*

I would say is quality teachers  
Source: *Focus Group 6*

it's about the quality of the, of the person who's training.  
Source: *Focus Group 6*

from a person who has done everything the hard way through experience, I would have died to have had an instructor  
Source: *Focus Group 6*

I think a diversity of instructions and voices and styles, is very helpful.  
Source: *Focus Group 6*

I haven't in a real issue with (and I have since gone to school for jazz music) with art being graded.  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

I never understood how the person who didn't have to work at all got an A, and the person who had to work hundreds of hours didn't  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

I had come to NYU I'm at Tisch it's like everyone's like oh you're a test and I'm like, you must be working with all these amazing people I said we never leave our department. I've met barely any actors, I've met barely any directors and they were on the same floor as us, and I never met them. And I was like why are we not working with these people. Why are we not learning this process  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

there's something about going to an artistic space that you're allowed, and mentioned that you're allowed to fail. When you're an academic program you're not allowed to fail.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

the higher you go up on the level of the academic institution, the more complications that are involved  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

ideally it would be wonderful if example was saying you have a teacher was actually literally working on something in the moment, while they have one foot in the classroom, so to speak. At the same time, though, that creates huge challenges because to teach well I think requires an enormous amount of energy.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

You nailed it right on the head in terms of fine, finding and acknowledging people that are both skilled in what they do, as well as being skilled at teaching  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

Oftentimes they feel incredibly stifled by a set agenda or a limitation, and the vision of the school doesn't really align with what these amazing creators have to offer the students.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

all the students at these universities and institutions, they would say, "Where the hell is my money going?" And I think that that's a real disconnect between what the schools are trying to offer, and oftentimes what the student is actually receiving.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

there's nothing they hate more than going to the textbooks,

Source: *Focus Group 4*

teaching in and of itself is a craft and requires so much energy

Source: *Focus Group 4*

they sort of treat workshops like it's an opportunity to present this polished thing in progress and they spend all this time polishing what's there, rather than digging into like the dramaturgy of the book or rewriting a song

Source: *Focus Group 1*

the workshops themselves aren't structured enough to give the writers time to pivot rewrite and come back and hear it out loud.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I talked to people a week after they've had a workshop, and they're in tears because they said I didn't know why we did it.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

even well-intentioned theatres fling people into a room with a director and a musical director and some actors and expect magic to happen and it doesn't, because the writers are the most fragile people in that room, and they're not being given a voice

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I don't have any models for French for writing in French for musical theatre

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I was gonna say you know just dramaturgy

Source: *Focus Group 1*

Most people in Canada I don't think they even think about having a dramaturge or even know what a dramaturge is or even if there was one available for them, so that I think is like, it's like a huge gap,

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I feel like it's, it's just part of the process like to have, you know, musical stage for recognizing the imperative of a good dramaturge

Source: *Focus Group 1*

let's all build the blocks, based on what we have, rather than assume too much and, and develop the skills together and from that will emerge amazing dramaturges who have experience.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

to have a dramaturge that you trust in your court when you're in that process to support you and to like to be there, and to help you decipher a piece of work that you care about. It's super super helpful, otherwise you know I think you can get squashed a little bit like it's really easy to get squashed

Source: *Focus Group 1*

having a good dramaturge to work with, you know, that can be one on one work is often really crucial.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I've heard from so many writers and actors and directors that too often what they call the workshop in Canada is y'all sit around and learn some songs and do the script and everybody tosses their ideas around

Source: *Focus Group 1*

When we did [this here], I felt like everyone was so polite, that it was impossible to get anyone to be to help me with my [writing].

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I feel like there's a real gap in just teaching composition specifically for musical theatre.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I couldn't find anything in Canada

Source: *Focus Group 1*

writers emerge into workshop processes as well where they don't know enough about how they work, or how to communicate what they're after that they don't actually make full use of workshop processes

Source: *Focus Group 1*

there was funding to hire [redacted] who won a Tony Award for spelling bee and her input was like it altered everything about the structure and the storytelling, and I have never encountered anything like that here

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I knew I wanted to be in New York because at the time. Things hadn't taken off like they had in Canada, and I just felt, the only way I was going to be able to do this and see my work even put up, was to be here.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I would have done in here but there is absolutely nothing that I could find at all.  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

if there had been that opportunity there and then and then a vision of what I could do with that once I left that degree pro or whatever, formal education program it was. I don't know if I would have just so quickly picked up and moved here and spent all the money I spent on immigration and tuition fees to come here  
Source: *Focus Group 1*

We don't have the opportunity that's coming playing a sandbox together,  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

so, a place where we're in a director who has very little musical experience to be working with a musical director to be able to learn some musical literacy, it would be huge.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

I feel like that person in the mix is really important to bring in for people who are writing  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

It is shameful that they had to go elsewhere to get that development, and that it couldn't happen in Canada,  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

definitely a broader, you know, program that could provide a deeper dive into, into the art form is, is, is missing.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

all of this flexibility that's possible in musical theatre and that's like necessary. I don't think it's like really taught in like undergraduate music degrees.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

it was never institutionalized in a way that could survive,  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

we all like just expressed earlier that that the training that has been available in Canada is in snack sizes.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

Sometimes I feel like dramaturgy only plays maybe to one of the three.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

I hadn't heard of like an equivalent in the in Montreal  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

And as soon as I found that there was like an actual program or I could go study musical theatre writing, I was like, on board with it.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

knowing that I wanted this master's degree in musical theatre writing there really was no other option for me. So that's where I went.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

what's missing is the outlet to actually test it out on

Source: *Focus Group 3*

don't make people do a dance audition if they're a composer lyricist.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I think what we have in Canada is a series of great, you know, educational institutions that all offer bits and pieces of this, this process but it'd be great if there were, you know, actual places where you can get all of them at once,

Source: *Focus Group 3*

what's missing up here in Canada is the idea of documentation, and access.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

learning how to actually sell their material in a way that's accessible to people around the world.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

professional development like what's the next step for you to do professionally after you graduate is really, really important.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

Networking networking networking like as a specific thing not just a "Oh, you need to get to know people"

Source: *Focus Group 3*

we don't have anything here to get a Masters in directing.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I'll also say there's no master programs in Canada.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I've watched so many of my colleagues, lose the opportunity to be mentored by commercial directors that have had years and years of experience because they're not interested in hiring someone from Canada at all.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

the Public Theatre, which is very much an incubator for new works, and they welcome new teams and new artists,

Source: *Focus Group 4*

part of that using 2nd stage as an example, they have actually acquired the Helen Hayes theatre on Broadway, so that there can be a progression

Source: *Focus Group 4*

When the Mirvishes started to produce and one Livent started to produce... That was great for performers and other people of that ilk, but it didn't help us writers at all because they, they weren't hiring any Canadian writers.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

even though the Mirvishes was did start to hire Canadian performers and Livent did there was nothing for writers.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

There's no progression in Canada,

Source: *Focus Group 4*

building a musical takes progress and takes time.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

a platform that would allow me to, over the course of two or three years, work on a project

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I was going to learn how to do that and also make contacts with people that do do that. I knew I had to leave the country.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

because really back then there was there was really nothing happening up here.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

There wasn't any opportunity here to study it, or to audition for it or be here. And that's what made me go, South,

Source: *Focus Group 4*



so that program is, as far as I know, it's unique in the world for music directors and so obviously that was really attractive to me  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

If I knew that what I wanted to do was write musical theatre, there's no place to learn it as far as I know, in Canada.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

Etobicoke School of the Arts has been cut back here so much that they took away the music theatre program.  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

there's nothing you can find that music programs specifically for musical theatre in Canada  
Source: *Focus Group 4*

if you were talking to 10 artistic directors they would also say yes. But their actions say No, they are not programming, new, new Canadian musicals  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think the voice of Canada is going to consistently be moving forward, but it'll be way slower if these, these artistic directors don't have any impetus whatsoever  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

giving the keys to more young people and connecting universities or colleges with high schools and vice versa and then colleges and universities with with major theatre companies  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

we still have very, very few homegrown Canadian musicals,  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

the largest three companies in the country are producing predominantly American work.  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

we're in previews for a Dolly Parton musical that got like the worst like horrible reviews in Boston.

And, like if that was a Canadian musical, you know, that would not see the light of day again.  
Source: *Focus Group 5*

I would pose that question/wonder if that's a realistic implementation is can we, as a collective, bring up the concept that all theatre companies should be a bit more responsible to finding the Canadian story

Source: *Focus Group 5*

instead of programming a Dolly Parton musical like well How come you're not programming like a jukebox musical of like, I don't know Jann Arden songs or, you know, Shania Twain

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think the craft writing i think is missing in Canada,

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think that's what's lacking in Canada it's starting to cover those things, but I think it's the actual timing in, for you to actually learn it can't really be covered in two weeks.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

in Canada there aren't a lot of programs, I think programs will be helpful because when you're in the professional world, the shows don't have big enough budgets

Source: *Focus Group 5*

hands on experiences working with the voice teachers working with the students and then get feedback so that it becomes this collaborative experience for everybody

Source: *Focus Group 5*

to my knowledge, there's not really much happening in the rest of the country.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

There's no training almost at all for book writing. It's all about the songs.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

one thing I find with like younger people who are getting into musical direction or into showbiz or or musical theatre, is that they don't have a really vast knowledge of shows.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

it just seems like such a disconnect between the, the big theatres and the training programs where we're not bridging that gap.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

there's something really to be learned as an associate musical director also like being that person who's more than just assisting but working with

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I never had any formal training to become musical director because there was not really any kind of degree

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I felt like there was more to learn, and I couldn't get that in Canada.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I just felt like I had a glass ceiling when I was very young

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I feel like there's a Canadian habit to get a show to the finish line of its first production and then it dies and then that's it

Source: *Focus Group 6*

what would it mean to plan a trajectory for a show that would give it a life?

Source: *Focus Group 6*

in the States, there's this ecosystem and model of that being the

first step of a very long developmental journey which realistically, is how long musicals need to kind of grow into themselves.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

there's nobody leading the charge.

We need that person

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I think we have to find ways of how we connect across the country if we're really talking about a sort of Canadian culture of writing?

Source: *Focus Group 6*

the Canadian Film Institute, that really brought the level of film in in Canada way out there. Let's have a musical Institute to create musicals.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

what's missing I feel instinctively that what's missing is institutions, offering space for creation.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

my feeling is if a lot of the institutions that could support the development of musical theatre

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I would say something that is immersive, that is truly immersive

Source: *Focus Group 6*

That's where the opportunities were, like, there were there were no options in Canada, so I had to be there.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

My main reasons for wanting to say it just wasn't available

Source: *Focus Group 6*

There was nothing available in Canada.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

if you're really trying to do stuff in Canada, you know, haven't y'all noticed that it kind of picks up a little bit when, when you go away

Source: *Focus Group 2*

as a person who's passionate about the craft like you can't ignore that influence and, and where that came from.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I trained as an actor actually in London, England for a very similar reason Daniel, because I was like, Oh, that's the place. That's where like they're, they're number one writers and play right like of all time.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I feel like there is something sort of mythological about New York or London or, you know, Paris

Source: *Focus Group 2*

the way they advertise is very tricky right they, they say, the, they put, they put the American Academy of Dramatic Arts, so they put all their famous graduates around it, people, the recent who just want Tony Awards, whatever it is. As a kid, you're saying oh my god this is the place to go.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

sometimes what's right in front of you is what you gravitate towards,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

But that was it. It was the siren call of New York City,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

that's a hard thing to overcome is that that... "It's New York"

Source: *Focus Group 2*

a week in London at the Meunier Chocolate Musical Theatre thing there and that was because there were artists that I that I looked at and when I, I want to, I want to hear what they have to say like they're doing amazing work I want to go there, and I want to find out what the heck's going on because they're they're doing something that's really exciting.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

it would have to be attached to somebody that I knew by name, that I wanted to study under, you know, like, I don't know if Sondheim...

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I think there's also a huge appeal to like, I don't know, leaving the country that you are born to like to go out and see what else in the world... There is to offer.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

one of the reasons that I was so interested in applying to do the Johnny Mercer songwriters project that was in Chicago at Northwestern was this idea to work with some of the greats

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I moved to New York when I was because I wanted to to go to New York

Source: *Focus Group 3*

ultimately, I went because I wanted to be in New York

Source: *Focus Group 3*

How many Canadian musicals can Canadians name from their youth?

Source: *Focus Group 3*

the allure of going somewhere like in New York has greatly

diminished, because of just the state of the world right now.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I think the allure of this kind of like star studded, New York, LA, London Sydney Opera House kind of lifestyle. I'm just not buying it as much anymore because the reality doesn't reflect the fantasy

Source: *Focus Group 3*

the location where the program is

Source: *Focus Group 3*

leverage the city where the program is as part of the program itself right.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

traveling going to place is like ■■■ said like ■■■ said like everybody has commented, it's, it is in and of itself and education

Source: *Focus Group 3*

something like a connection to a star professor or a star whatever or a connection to a festival or something like a location.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

for me it would be more just like as a curiosity thing.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

the pedigree of musical theatre in the US is just something that maybe is not as easily accessed as it can be sometimes in Canada.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

it was because I wanted to be Alan Menken, and that was where Alan Menken had studied.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I do think that the reason that BMI is so successful is because of the, the context and the city in which it is placed.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I definitely spent probably at least hours total like ogling the NYU master's website and fantasizing about it and wishing for it and it was just like I'm not wealthy and my family doesn't

have money so that that was the barrier for why I didn't pursue it

Source: *Focus Group 1*

Going to New York going to London. It's expensive,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

in Quebec, to tuition in Montreal is ridiculously low compared to anywhere else in the world. So, even if it's Toronto or in Ontario or anywhere in Canada. Just the financial aspect of it is massive.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

Tisch at NYU, great program, you get lots of awesome exposure to real Broadway production stuff and it's \$100,000, so it's like there's no way, right?

Source: *Focus Group 3*

we don't really have too much commercial theatre here. And so, if you, if it takes you five years to develop a musical and it gets done once, and the entire financial landscape of that was it was a \$2000 commission and in royalties you made \$783, that's not an enormous incentive.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

That's why I decided not to do it because I was like, do I really want to figure out the hassle of immigration and visa and waste a bunch of money because I'm doing what I'm supposed to do.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

the costs associated with things are also something things people think about

Source: *Focus Group 3*

The program that I did was a trade-off so instead of me paying tuition for it, they gave me a degree, but I had to provide certain skill set so I was kind of a pseudo like TA.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I'd like to believe a musical could change the face of this city, in a minute. I still believe that.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I just would be happy to know that Canadian musicals are happening on the regular so that people who are regular theatre patrons or even not regular theatre patrons just sort of on the idea of a Canadian musical comes up they know what the heck that means

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I would just like to see that become more of a regular thing, so that it's not just the people inside who know it but it's the public that are made aware of the idea of Canadian musicals, just literally the concept of it and the regularity of it on their cultural calendar

Source: *Focus Group 1*

Stephen Harper used to complain on the campaign trail but all the artists, they just want to like get their Canada Council grants and then go have fancy parties and I took such great offense to that because I thought it was so ironic on so many levels.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

in Canadian musical theatre, that to me is like the culture is getting is, is broadening because more people are employed in it.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

eliminating the word Canadian might be beneficial.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

we have to call it a new musical period. We don't say Oh look it's a new American musical or new British musical, you know, It's a new musical.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

everything that was new, Canadian anything was always kind of like and it was partially supported by the by the by the funding bodies, but you know it was kind of like the war of 1812 musical the Champlain musical the Laura Secord musical.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I always sort of felt like you weren't going to get supported for writing a play about us a musical about a family like it wasn't going to happen if you're going to read a musical about a dysfunctional family, and less the dysfunctional family was you know during war of 1812

Source: *Focus Group 1*

there doesn't seem to be a culture of cooperation between the companies and the risk of like you know more risk averse places in partnership with places that can afford to take a larger risk because they don't have to raise certain money, or they can afford to lose money because they're budgeted to lose money on these productions like post-secondary institutions.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

Canada seems to care a lot about like international stuff like if you're really trying to do stuff in Canada, you know, haven't y'all noticed that it kind of picks up a little bit when, when you go away and come back not just musical theatre but like in all the disciplines like we really seem to that's like part of our culture,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

so many different backgrounds and you know artistic backgrounds that coming into one room and get to create something new.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

someone who writes a bit of folk music with a director that has a background and, you know, with Shakespeare, and then that's that gets created and it's that just enhances the culture that we all have in one room one city one country,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

make it more and more our own.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

when I was in New York. I started to realize I was viewed a very specific way in my, in my class now I'm like this anyway, maybe even in the Canada circles, but people said to me, they're like no no that's a Canadian thing this is what this is how the Canadian writers are.



And... They said it was a, like a big heartedness like a sweetness, like, Like a happy ending-ness,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

So, I think that maybe that can that Canadian-ness can be an antidote to that are anecdote, or anecdotes can be antidotes to a lot of this division and the coming together

Source: *Focus Group 2*

musicals are about a lot of things and they're all about different things, but a lot of them really tend to be about belonging and finding a place to belong and be accepted. And, and, and to feel like home and a lot of them kind of riff on that, in their kind of ways so yeah i think that i think that our Canadian, this is, is really needed right now.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

the musicals that I love are musicals where the music transports us to time and place and or interior landscapes of the character

Source: *Focus Group 2*

as the Canadian musical theatre scene evolves, I would hope that we, we get better at that voicing our own stories and all the forms that they come in that we that we examine the notion of content dictates form

Source: *Focus Group 2*

there's something about the content of our stories that deserve a rethink in, in, in some way, and that by discovering that it may be illuminates our Canadian culture in a, in a, you know, in a way that that provides for deeper, more meaningful, understanding.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

I've never understood culture more as live as since living in Quebec, where culture is actually prioritized

Source: *Focus Group 2*

it's a place where culture and identity, it there's a there's a, there's a politic to it, which is about keeping a language and a culture alive that makes it

Source: *Focus Group 2*

To me this whole city is this culture.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

in theatre is not musicals in Quebec, it has pushed the form to this extremely like poetic sophisticated way that the popular, the population in general is is interested in,

Source: *Focus Group 2*

there are these backgrounds that all of the people that that because musical theatre is a form that needs lots of different people to come together to work together, I think, to me, that is, the, the spirit of culture in Canada, that I would like to see in the future  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

it can't have an influence unless it gets done [produced].  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

if there's this program that can act as both that place for creative artists to cultivate themselves as artists, but also be a place that cultivates, they'll work and get productions through, you know, through the years of their in through their toddler years and into their teenage years and into a place where they're actually ready for a professional theatre company to rehearse them, that could actually have a huge impact on Canadian musical theatre across the country,  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

more vibrant work, ready to go out to producers that didn't put such a heavy burden on the companies in terms of the resources required that could actually have a huge impact.  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

Come From Away, we haven't talked about it at all, but it's had a huge cultural impact,  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

I think that like having a kind of institutionalized program to really actually incubate the talent and to, to allow for people to realize that, like, there are different types of stories that can be told, could be really valuable and just in terms of like the culture  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

you can understand it through like the music you can understand it to the movement on stage like dancing, that there's something that surpasses like linguistic things  
Source: *Focus Group 2*

like you can bring it to the show, and they can kind of learn and appreciate and kind of see it. I don't know, there's I just feel like that could be part of like the culture in general.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

back in the day, the songs that people listened to at home on their record players were songs from musicals.  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

there's stuff out there that could totally become part of popular culture. And then, in turn, turn it around and then make our art form a little bit more popular in culture  
Source: *Focus Group 3*

musical theatre and theatre in general are tied to a physical location, and we are evolving culturally

Source: *Focus Group 3*

the cultural impact of musical theatre, I think, is shifting away from what it once was. And I actually don't know what it's going to look like

Source: *Focus Group 3*

One of the things that's really cool about musical theatre is that it almost creates local celebrities. I remember

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I think of the, you know, what's happened with *Come From Away* and what that has done for Canada in terms of establishing a sense of culture and a specificity

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I would love to see us finding ways to explore our own identity more and finding ways, and I think ways that tie it to pop culture is going to be a way that actually makes these things marketable and commercial and actually be able to be produced in theatres across the country.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

it is about location is about geography and creating culture locally.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

if we're talking about like our current culture and our heritage nationally in Canada. Almost all of our commercially successful shows have gone south of the border to become successful

Source: *Focus Group 3*

*Brothers Grimm* that piece, which is you know it's had like 600 performances like about 250,000 kids have seen that opera, and I don't know if they're going to go on to be huge opera fans, but at least we put a real piece of art in front of them.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

there's a lot of research been done about the way that musicals, make people feel in a way that a lot of other forms of entertainment don't make people feel and how that that emotion can lead to forms of attachment to community development

Source: *Focus Group 3*

emotional engagement and empathy and feeling has a lot of political potential in terms of creation.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

Come From Away, when it gets political when it talks about like the way that 9/11 affected Muslims in their everyday lives. I like that, the emotional impact of like that scene it and being in heightened by the fact that it was a musical

Source: *Focus Group 3*

if we want to think about like Canada as a community becoming like a more politically mobilized and, like, informed community as well as when it foregrounds Indigenous perspectives and Muslim perspectives and other perspectives and being able to show those perspectives through musicals as a way to communicate them in a way that I think has a strong emotional resonance that makes it a really politically important

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I don't know an art form that is as versatile as musical theatre and can reach as far as it can.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

When that piece of music came along, and the entire audience en masse lifted toward the stage, and you could feel this collective thing and I thought well that's church. That's God.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

I think there is there is movement towards this idea that possibly these labels on our institutions, aren't as important as we might have thought, that's a much broader cultural evolution

Source: *Focus Group 3*

Just look in Quebec, and how they do have a huge appetite for what they create.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

Newfoundland right same thing is likely an appetite within Newfoundland, for culture it's specific to Newfoundland

Source: *Focus Group 4*

They still have a star system in in Quebec, they still in French Canada, they still have a star system and those artists of all kinds of artistic mediums are held in high esteem.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

Etobicoke School of the Arts has been cut back here so much that they took away the music theatre program.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

And if we keep cutting budgets, society goes “this isn't important anymore. Obviously, it's not important.” So, I mean I think that it comes back to how we view, culture, the development of culture and development of all the arts.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I'm someone who believes in, in art being absolutely a necessity for life.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

musical theatre is like the perfect marriage of all three disciplines, because when we can't dance, you know, or it goes when you can't speak anymore you sing when you can't sing anymore you dance I when you don't know what to do with yourself, you do a frickin musical.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I can't imagine what are expressing ourselves in through our writing through direction dance, everything can't bring to every aspect of society

Source: *Focus Group 4*

musical theatre does, it allows us to come together and community

Source: *Focus Group 4*

oftentimes, that the pictures that people love to reminisce about in high school are not the ones in math class are the ones where they're backstage in their costumes right like doing a show and so, it's memory making, it's connecting with people

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I also think there's so much other stuff that comes along with, with the value of training musical theatre that that is almost intangible.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

musical theatre can examine, well I think it should examine, the human condition, and it should have something to say, and a point of view and a theme that's worth exploring.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

we are training people to love art, and to love the theatre and become patrons of it,

Source: *Focus Group 4*

hopefully what we're able to do through it and through that is the education of it so that we actually can continue to do it. And they're going to be the people that make sure that it becomes important enough that it happens for us.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

think long and hard about how we make something so valuable accessible in a way where that value is recognized and felt in our bones.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

there's so much good marketing behind like and a lot of history in America behind making someone excited to pay \$800 for a ticket to go see Hamilton

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I'm going to either go see this musical, or I'm going to watch Netflix right but like that's the false equivalency that has been created.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

we had that moment like in the pit of your stomach or it was just like, BOOM, like, this is what life's all about right. I saw West Side Story that's what I was like, "oh, like I need this" is it.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

in, in watching the musical I walk away knowing more about myself.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

music really is the only common language that we have as human beings

Source: *Focus Group 4*

to react and listen and enjoy a piece of music, it can bring us so close together, and bring a commonality to our experience

Source: *Focus Group 4*

I'm still waiting for the quintessential Quebecois musical,

Source: *Focus Group 5*

the voices that exist in Canada that maybe haven't been expressed or that should be or will be expressed is the huge part of that equation

Source: *Focus Group 5*

musical theatre is a folk art in America, it is the quintessential folk art which is why it keeps growing it changes with the socio-political landscape

Source: *Focus Group 5*

what is Canada's folk art and if we don't have them, we don't have a traditional understanding, or even a sophisticated, or even an audience who understands and appreciates that folk art, how do we grow the art form

Source: *Focus Group 5*

we have all these stories we don't really have an art form that links us all. Whereas musical theatre links the entire America.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

how do we actually create an ecosystem that supports the art form, that respects the art form, and therefore then grows the art form

Source: *Focus Group 5*

the story is so important. I find musical theatre songs in general; the really good ones have something important to say the lessons that you can learn from it are important

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I think that musical theatre really has a place and our culture, and it's just going to take time because we don't have that tradition like Americans do

Source: *Focus Group 5*

is an art form that can help build or repair culture?

Source: *Focus Group 5*

What's great about watching a play or a musical is you're sitting with all these people that you wouldn't normally hang out with, who are maybe disagree with you or they're from different backgrounds, and you're all facing the same way and experiencing

the same media together

Source: *Focus Group 5*

that's going to be really important for building community and culture as we emerge from this like super Netflix dominated era of pandemic

Source: *Focus Group 5*

it's more entertaining, it's more engaging, it's more accessible to people and that's where I feel actually where Canadian musical theatre might have an edge

Source: *Focus Group 5*

it is an art form that is unifying many elements like that that in and of itself can be a template for how we bring people together.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

How it will be it will have an effect on culture and how it will be positive, you know it's like to not stay in our own worlds because we do have a concept of ourselves as being tolerant and open, but we should look around and see who's not in our audience and why you know like why their stories are not being told,

Source: *Focus Group 5*

why is there not a radio station I can turn to, to hear the type of music that I'd like to hear?

Source: *Focus Group 5*

the largest three companies in the country are producing predominantly American work.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

25% of all content needs to be Canadian made of some sort. Does that exist in the major theatre companies or do they just do whatever because I think there is a point where they should be held accountable from the point of view of are you just doing this as a cash cow, because that's not a that's not cultural decision

Source: *Focus Group 5*

I would pose that question/wonder if that's a realistic implementation is can we, as a collective, bring up the concept that all theatre companies should be a bit more responsible to finding the Canadian story

Source: *Focus Group 5*

instead of programming a Dolly Parton musical like well How come you're not programming like a jukebox musical of like, I don't know Jann Arden songs or, you know, Shania Twain

Source: *Focus Group 5*

they need to understand like when something isn't that wild crafted, you know, because it will eventually it will translate, you know something that's well-crafted to bucks we hope we hope.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

the larger climate of the health of, like, musical theatre audience and musical theatre community and and are people interested in seeing new shows

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I think we have to find ways of how we connect across the country if we're really talking about a sort of Canadian culture of writing?

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I've had the experience of speaking with audiences or people who have seen newly created musical theatre and they're very moved.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

any story we choose to tell whether set in Canada or not, about Canadians are not about this planet or not, it still constitutes as culture, Canadian culture and because it was with created by Canadians or it within Canada.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

Canadians have a specific voice, I think. We live in a very specific place. And I think anything we're going to write about will contribute to the culture of Canada.

Source: *Focus Group 6*



Yes, is the short answer the longer answer is not for me personally because right now I don't feel like I'm in the Zeitgeist of what is constituted Canadian culture.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

whatever gets new work gets made in a place, changes the fabric of that place

Source: *Focus Group 6*

Work doesn't have to be about Canada to be Canadian. Excellent work that reaches a lot of people contributes the fabric of our culture.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

I find overwhelmingly people are open to new stories and new pieces and so for me that's, that's sort of my way into this notion of the culture and how musical theatre can and does affect the culture, and I think it does.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

Come From Away and Drowsy are the examples we always bring up and it's because those are the two the two that got approval from the States, and then they could come back to us.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

instead of flying to New York to see Come From Away, maybe [Trudeau] could have seen the Toronto production.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

we sort of culturally have this thing where we can't stamp something the gold star, We need someone else to give the gold star of approval, and then it comes back and it's awesome

Source: *Focus Group 6*

there's this certain like stamp of approval from outside that we seem to crave as Canadians sometimes.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

And I always sort of felt like you weren't going to get supported for writing a play about us a musical about a family like it wasn't going to happen if you're going to read a musical about a dysfunctional family, and less the dysfunctional family was you know during war of 1812,

Source: *Focus Group 1*

I'm not going to get funding so now I'm like okay well you know now what do I do? Like, you know, I'm going to be writing this musical it's not going to get any funding, it's not going to get any attention.

Source: *Focus Group 1*

come from way had the advantage of being workshops in the US and getting tons of development and and you know I i hope that producers will step up in Canada and take that risk.

Source: *Focus Group 2*

success doesn't just mean a big Broadway show.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

if it takes you five years to develop a musical and it gets done once, and the entire financial landscape of that was it was a \$2000 commission and in royalties you made \$783, that's not an enormous incentive.

Source: *Focus Group 3*

Everyone is waiting for the buy one get one for \$ sale or when is that tickets going to be \$13 or do you have a student ticket for 20, where the conversation is on Broadway, are very much like, oh, Hamilton premium seats are now \$799, let's jump on that.

Source: *Focus Group 4*

in the States. I mean even for me, you know, is it a new musical Six the musical is you know premium seats are \$225. That's an awesome deal, you'd be hard pressed to find someone in Toronto willing to pay \$225 American to see a show for one evening

Source: *Focus Group 4*

How do you convince someone you know in their in their teens or their early 20s to spend the same on one ticket to a theatrical production, which would be the equivalent of an entire year's subscription on Netflix?

Source: *Focus Group 4*

there's so much good marketing behind like and a lot of history in America behind making someone excited to pay \$800 for a ticket to go see Hamilton

Source: *Focus Group 4*

we're in this weird kind of never nether world where companies use us for money but they only really use the American ones for money it's, it's pretty messed up. It's a problem.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

they need to understand like when something isn't that wild crafted, you know, because it will eventually it will translate, you know something that's well crafted to bucks we hope we hope.

Source: *Focus Group 5*

if we had commercial theatre producers in the country going. I got money I want to do some producing, then those regional theatres would jump on the bandwagon to start creating that work. But as it is, it's, it's, that's a gap in the kind of economy of creation for us.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

the economics of what we do are also part of the culture. You know the success of a show like *Drowsy* or *Come From Away* attributes in enormous or *Anna Green Gables* the Musical that like this thing is this thing is made over, you know has contributed to over a billion dollars to the island in 56 years.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

the physical the literal accessibility of going to a show and needing to pay \$80 to see a show, you know, that you're spending on one evening for a two hour thing like of course you're blocking out a massive swath of population,

Source: *Focus Group 6*

in terms of like what my goal is to finish as a, as a writer is is to be able to make an okay living doing what I do.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

am I able to make a living as a music director.

Source: *Focus Group 6*

## Appendix C: Focus Group Word Cloud



## Appendix D: Ethics Certification



### CERTIFICATION OF ETHICAL ACCEPTABILITY FOR RESEARCH INVOLVING HUMAN SUBJECTS

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Name of Applicant: Jonathan Monro  
Department: Faculty of Fine Arts\Music  
Agency: N/A  
Title of Project: Does Canada Need a Graduate Program for Musical  
Theatre Creators?  
Certification Number: 30015407  
Valid From: September 03, 2021 To: September 02, 2022

The members of the University Human Research Ethics Committee have examined the application for a grant to support the above-named project, and consider the experimental procedures, as outlined by the applicant, to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard DeMont".

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Dr. Richard DeMont, Chair, University Human Research Ethics Committee