
THE DALTONIAN

Menu

🏠 Home » 2024 » May » 10 » Broadway Roundup: Spring Season Edition!

ARTICLES , ARTS

Broadway Roundup: Spring Season Edition!

MAY 10, 2024 BY MIKA HIGGINS-WOO

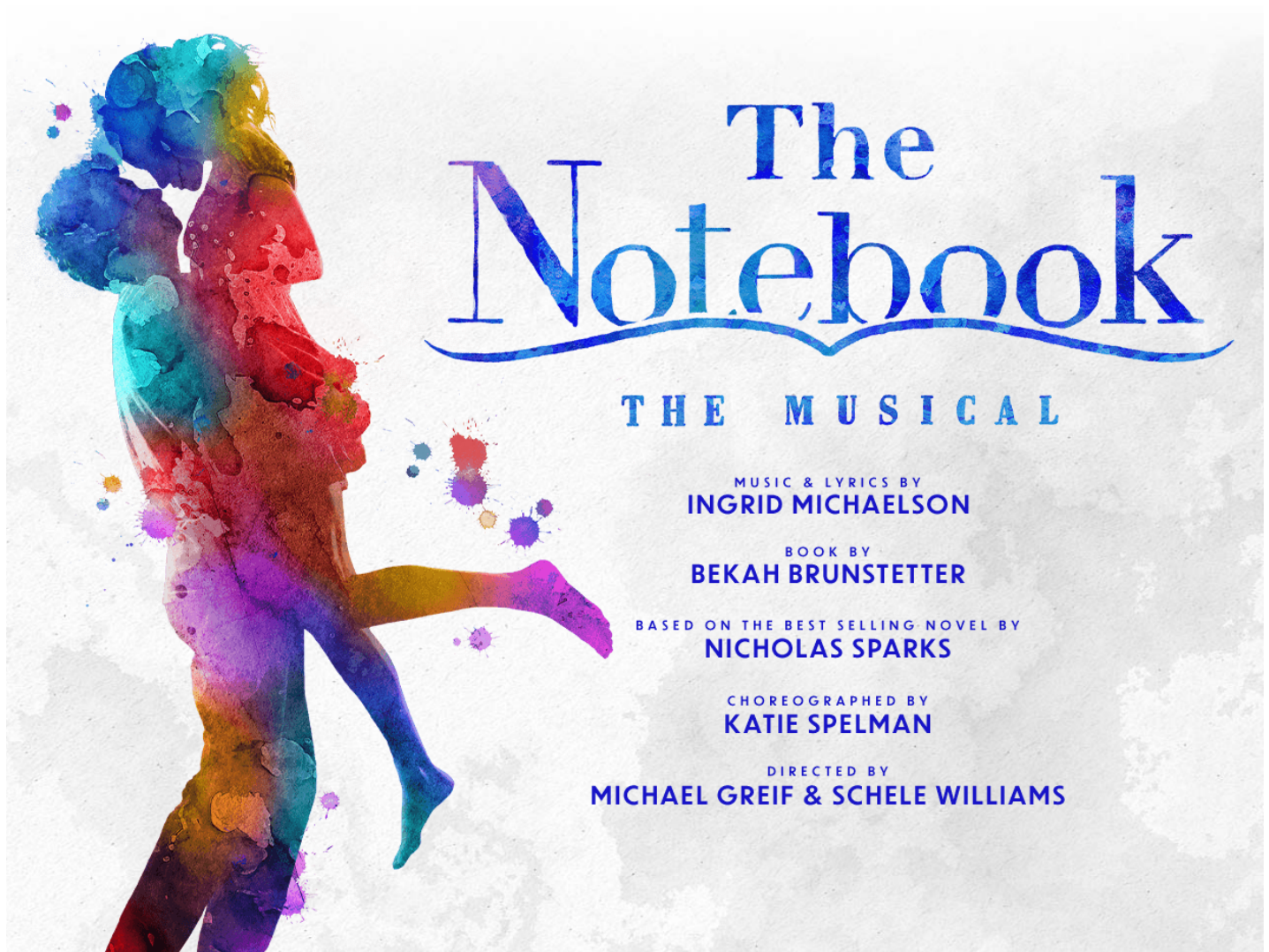
This season, Broadway will be absolutely flooded with all sorts of exciting new shows. On one nine-day stretch in April alone, a whopping 11 shows will open, bringing the total number of shows open on Broadway to 38. Although the phenomenon of a large cluster of shows opening in April is not uncommon, as it occurs before the April 25 deadline for a show to be considered for a Tony award, this April's openings are especially densely concentrated.

Does the fact that the season is, in the words of the New York Times, "crazily crowded" mean that Broadway has truly awoken from its long pandemic-induced slumber? Or will the density of openings lead some of the plays to close earlier than they would have otherwise because audiences are spread too thin?

Only time will tell. What we know for sure is that no matter what kind of show you prefer, there will be something for you this spring. Whether it is musical adaptations of cult classics such as *The Notebook* or *The Outsiders*, or revivals of well-loved old musicals such as *The Wiz* or *Cabarets*, this season on Broadway has something for everyone.

Out of the 17 shows coming to Broadway this season, this article will address 8 of the more high profile ones: *The Notebook*, *The Outsiders: The New Musical*, *Lempicka*, *Hell's Kitchen*, *Suffs*, *The Great Gatsby*, *The Wiz*, and *Cabaret*. Other shows coming to Broadway in 2024 that aren't mentioned in this article include: *Doubt*, *Water for Elephants*, *An Enemy of the People*, *The Who's Tommy*, *The Heart of Rock and Roll*, *Patriots*, *Mary Jane*, *Stereophonic*, *Mother Play* and *Uncle Vanya*.

From Book to Film to Stage...



% <https://notebookmusical.com/>

The Notebook

Coming to Broadway this season in the Gerald Schoenfeld Theatre (which most recently housed the *Life of Pi*) is *The Notebook*. This original musical chronicles the forbidden love affair between mill worker Noah Calhoun and rich girl Allie in 1940's North Carolina. It was adapted from the 2004 film of the same name (which starred Rachel McAdams and Ryan Gosling and became a cult-classic soon after being released, grossing \$110 million) as well as the 1997 romance novel also of the same name.

This Broadway musical adaptation features the directorial prowess of Michel Greid (*Dear Evan Hansen*, *Rent*) and Schele Willaims (*Aida*, *The Wiz*) with music and lyrics by popular singer-songwriter and first-time theater composer, Ingrid Michealson. *Moulin Rouge* associate choreographer Katie Spelman is the choreographer for the show and Bekah Brunsetter (*This is Us*) wrote the book (the script). *The Notebook*'s first preview was on February 10, 2024, and its opening night was on March 14, 2024.

Two Dalton sophomores went to see this show and came away with nothing but praise. Stella Miller ('26) exclaims that "[t]he show was lovely – really strong vocalists and dancers, an absolutely gorgeous set." Stella remarks that the plot was "cheesy – as the movie is – but I find that musicals support cheesiness very well." She recommends everyone go see it whether they've watched the movie or not because even though "it's not the most technically complex, it's a beautifully sentimental piece. Don't watch it too critically. If you go see it, just let yourself enjoy it!" Isa Graham ('26) similarly found that "the show was absolutely incredible. The acting was impeccable and truly emotional. The songs were a perfect addition, but the balance between song and scene was perfect for me, as someone who prefers the acting parts. The show made me cry multiple times, and even though I am a softie, I credit these tears to the acting and score."



% <https://www.broadway.com/shows/the-outsiders/>

The Outsiders: A New Musical

Another original musical that is based on a classic book and film that is coming to a Broadway stage this season is *The Outsiders: The New Musical*. This show closely follows the 1967 SE Hinton novel and its 1983 movie adaptation which starred 80's heartthrobs such as Ralph

Macchio, Tom Cruise, Matt Dillon, Emilio Estevez and Patrick Swayze. Alexis Soloski, a critic for the New York Times, summed up the musical as “[a]wkward, yearning, fast on its feet... effortless yet thoughtfully diversified... [with] gorgeous, mournful music.” This show, a Romeo and Juliet-like story, tackles the divide between the tough yet endearingly close ‘Greasers’ living on one side of an Oklahoma city, and the rich and aloof ‘Socs’ living on the other in the 1960’s.

As Soloski mentioned, an important difference between the novel and 1983 movie, and this Broadway adaptation, is the casting. In both the novel and the movie, all of the Greasers are white, so for the casting directors to have chosen a multiracial cast of Greasers is a first. About this difference in casting, writer Cameron Pugh comments that “especially in Tulsa, where there’s so much history of racial violence and so much history of disruptions and those classes, of the haves and the have-nots. ... I feel like if we didn’t at least acknowledge it, and open it up a little bit, we’d kind of be lying, you know?” This production was originally going to premiere in Chicago in June of 2020, yet of course, COVID arrived in March and those plans were ruined. Now, with renewed excitement and the same group of actors, *The Outsiders*’ opening night was April 11, 2024. *The Outsiders* is playing at the Bernard B Jacobs Theatre, which housed *Parade* in its last season, and its first preview was on March 16, 2024.

Elliot Higgins-Woo (’29) saw this show in previews and remarks that “[t]hough the acting and singing were great in this show, it was the mix of choreography/stage combat and lighting that really left the biggest impact on me. Also, when re-listening to the songs, I found that even if I hadn’t previously known the plot of *The Outsiders*, I would have easily been able to follow the plot.”

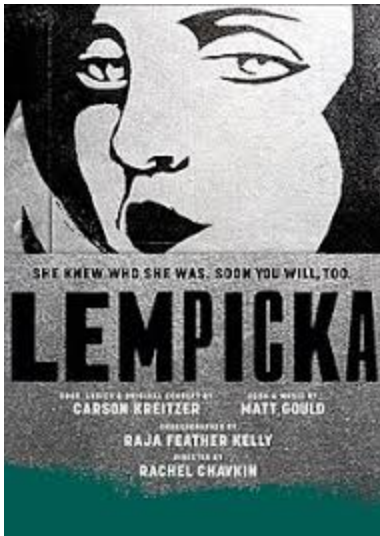
Since this musical mostly deals with younger characters, a large number of the actors are making their Broadway debuts! Some include: Brody Grant, Sky Lakota-Lynch, Joshua Boone, and Kevin William Paul. A folk duo, Jamestown Revival, is responsible for the music and lyrics. Unlike most Broadway musicals, this musical features country western style songs. American novelist Adam Rapp wrote the book, and the show was directed by Obie award winning Danya Taymor.

Something that sets *The Outsiders* apart from other shows is that the cast is almost all male. This is because unlike the race of the characters, masculinity is a clear theme in the show and

something that casting directors didn't think was changeable.

A fun fact that ties this show to Dalton is that the current seventh and eighth graders are all invited to watch it as a Dalton field trip on April 24. As *The Outsiders* (the novel) is required reading over the summer, watching a musical adaptation of this show will tie into the curriculum as well as being a fun outing for the middle school.

Autobiographical Musicals



% https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lempicka_%28musical%29

Lempicka

Following the increasingly popular trend of biographical musicals (such as *MJ*, *Beautiful: the Carole King Musical*, and *Tina: The Musical*), *Lempicka*, a musical about the Polish painter Tamara Lempicka, is coming to Broadway this season. This show follows main character Tamara Lempicka as she flees the Russian revolution and heads to Paris with her husband and daughter while simultaneously making a name for herself as a talented artist of her time. Once in Paris, Tamara is forced to choose between a free and happy life with her new friend Rafeala, or the comfortable and safe one with her family. Described in a New York Times review as a “massive epic,” this show was directed by Rachel Chavkin, well known for her directorial work on the successful Broadway show *Hadestown*. Other members of the

offstage team include Carson Kreitzer who wrote the book and the lyrics and Matt Gould who wrote the book and the music. Starring in *Lempicka* are Eden Espinosa (*Wicked*, *Rent*), Amber Iman (*Hamilton*), George Abud (*Oliver!*, *Annie Get Your Gun*) and child actress Zoe Glick (*Frozen*, *Sound of Music*). *Lempicka* is playing in the Longacre Theatre (which housed *The Prom* in 2018); its first preview was on March 19th, and its opening night was on April 14th.



% <https://www.hellskitchen.com/>

Hell's Kitchen

The New York Times describes new musical *Hell's Kitchen* as a "semi-autobiographical jukebox built on the life and catalog of Alicia Keys," that includes many of her original songs. *Hell's Kitchen* follows 17-year-old Ali as she navigates her changing relationship with her mother as she grows older, and starts a new, exciting relationship with a guy she met on the street named Knuck. Speaking about the plot's focus, Keys refers to her show as a "love story between a mother and a daughter." The show debuted at the Public Theater in October of 2023. When she got the news that it had transferred to Broadway, Keys said she was "out of my mind with joy, excitement, thrill." *Hell's Kitchen* is playing in the Shubert Theatre which previously housed the recent revival of *Some Like it Hot*. Its first preview was on March 28th and its opening was on April 20th. Alicia Keys, who wrote all of the music and lyrics, isn't starring in this show. Instead, Kecia Lewis plays Alicia in her musical. Additional actors include Shoshana Bean (*Funny Girl*, *Hairspray*), Brandon Victor Dixon (*Hamilton*, *Tina*) and Chris Lee (*Hamilton*). As mentioned, all of the music and lyrics are written by Alicia Keys and she is joined by Kristoffer Diaz who wrote the book. Finally, Michael Greif, known for directing *Rent*, *Dear Evan Hansen* and *Next To Normal*, is directing this show.

Original Musicals



% <https://msmagazine.com/2024/03/22/broadway-suffrs-play-women-history-equality-voting-rights/>

Suffrs

Suffrs, written by singer, composer and musician Shaina Taub, is an original musical with an all female and non-binary cast that explores the women's suffrage movement during the early 1900's. The musical doesn't just address women's rights movements in the past; it also explores the ways in which our society *hasn't* changed and the disturbing connections we can make with our world and the ongoing debate about abortion rights. *Suffrs* premiered at The Public Theater, and played night after night to sold-out audiences, yet the critical reviews were mixed. One writer for the New York Times remarked that "the whole production feels so attuned to the gender politics and protests of today, so aware of possible critiques that it takes on its subject with an overabundance of caution." After accepting feedback and preparing to move to Broadway, Taub rewrote scenes and reworked certain lines and moments in the script and afterwards remarked that she "feels really confident in what we've created." This production is playing in the Music Box Theatre (which has previously housed *Dear Evan Hansen* in 2016).

With the subtitle "If there isn't a trail, blaze one," *Suffrs's* producers include Hillary Clinton and Malala Yousafzai. Actors starring in *Suffrs* include its writer Shaina Taub, Nikki M. James (*Les Misérables*, *The Book of Mormon*), Jenn Colella (*Chaplin: The Musical*) and more. *Suffrs* first preview was on March 26, 2024, and its opening was on April 18, 2024. Finally, *Suffrs* was

directed by Leigh Silverman who is also known for her work on off-Broadway productions such as *Sweet Charity*.



% <https://www.facebook.com/bwaygatsby/>

The Great Gatsby

A much anticipated musical adaptation of F. Scott Fitzgerald's classic novel *The Great Gatsby* is coming to Broadway this season. Starring Jeremy Jordan (*Newsies*, *The Last Five Years*), Eva Noblezada (*Hadestown*, *Miss Saigon*) and Samantha Pauly (*SIX*) and playing in the Broadway Theatre (which housed *West Side Story* in 2020 and *Fiddler on the Roof* in 2015), this show had excitement from the theater world even before it's first preview on March 29, 2024.

Opening on April 25, 2024, and set in New York in the 1920's, this musical tells the story of mysterious self-made millionaire Jay Gatsby who will do anything for his love – Daisy Buchanan. *The Great Gatsby* previously played in the Papermill Playhouse theater and was praised in the New York Times for its "bewitching" costumes and "intricately balanced" lighting. Jason Howland (*Little Women*) and Nathan Tysen (*Tuck Everlasting*) paired up to write the music and lyrics respectively, Kait Kerrigan wrote the book, and Marc Bruni (*Beautiful: The Carole King Musical*) directed this show.

Interestingly enough, there is another adaptation of this story coming to off-Broadway theaters at a shockingly similar time to this production, just a month later in May. This

separate production is completely different from the one coming to Broadway: it has a different book, different songs and different casting. *'Gatsby,'* as opposed to *'The Great Gatsby,'* is starring Florence Welsh (of Florence and the Machine) and is being directed by Rachel Chavkin (the director for *Lempicka*, also coming to Broadway this season).

Freshman Andy Bergan ('27) saw this musical in its previews and exclaims that "[t]he *Great Gatsby* is visually and vocally stunning. Although it lacks some of the complexities of the novel, it remains an incredibly fun watch, and the emotion of the plot is well supported by the remarkable cast (Jeremy Jordan, Eva Noblezada, Samantha Pauly, Noah J. Ricketts, etc). The set is incredible, the dancing is incredible, the lighting is incredible, and the songs are pretty darn catchy. The show is still working out some kinks, seeing as it still is in previews, but in general is an extremely enjoyable performance!"

Broadway Revivals



% <https://www.broadwayinbound.com/shows/the-wiz>

The Wiz

Coming back to Broadway for the first time since its original 1977 run and following its tour of 13 American cities, *The Wiz* is playing in The Marquis Theatre (which housed *Beetlejuice* in 2022). The *Wiz* originally started out as a "rock, gospel and soul" movie starring Micheal Jackson and Diana Ross. This joyful movie was based on the classic Judy Garland movie 'The Wizard of Oz' which follows Dorothy as she tries to find her way back from Oz to her home in Kansas, along the way meeting new friends the scarecrow, the tinman and the cowardly lion.

This production has been described by Playbill.com as a “groundbreaking twist on *The Wizard of Oz*”. The New York Times described its goal as to “celebrate...the richness of Black American history and culture.” Its first preview was on March 29th and opening night was April 17th. This show stars Nichelle Lewis who was discovered on TikTok by producers of the show, as Dorothy. Canadian singer-songwriter Deborah Cox will be playing Glinda. The Voice contestant Avery Wilson will be playing the scarecrow, and comedian and television host Wayne Brady will play the Wizard of Oz. This production isn’t changing anything about the music and lyrics (written by Charlie Smalls) or the book (written by William F Brown) from the original Broadway musical. Directing this show is Schele Williams who is also known for her directorial work with *The Notebook* (also coming to Broadway this season, as mentioned previously) and *Motown the Musical* which was on Broadway in 2013 and then again in 2016.



% <https://www.broadwayworld.com/shows/Cabaret-at-the-Kit-Kat-Club-334560.html>

Cabaret

The theater world couldn’t be more excited that a revival of the Fosse classic *Cabaret* is coming to Broadway this season for the first time since 2014. Playing in the August Wilson Theatre (which housed *Funny Girl* in 2022 and *Mean Girls* in 2018), this show’s first preview was on April 1, 2024 and its opening night was on April 21, 2024. This production of *Cabaret* stars Eddie Redmayne (*Les Misérables*), Gayle Rankin (*The Greatest Showman*) and Bebe Neuwirth (*The Addams Family*, *Chicago*). Its music and lyrics were written by the dynamic duo John Kander and Fred Ebb (*Chicago*, *Zorba*). With a book by Joe Masteroff and direction by Rebecca Frecknall who, according to the New York Times, “is one of those directors who will stay with us for a long time,” this show is set in 1929-1930’s Berlin during the time when the Nazi party was rising to power. The musical is centered around nightlife at the seedy ‘Kit Kat Klub’ and cabaret performer Sally Bowles and her relationship with writer Clifford Bradshaw.

Created as an immersive experience, imitating the club in which the musical is set, the entrance to “The Kit Kat Club,” or the theater, is already a set, transporting the audience to a late 1920’s Berlin bar before the show even starts. In a stunning overview of the show, Playbill.com describes this show as “intimate,” “electrifying” and “groundbreaking.”

Finally, Dalton theater teacher and enthusiastic theater-goer Mr. Boyd commented on this season on Broadway: ‘It’s an exciting and promising moment for Broadway! I think I read that there are eighteen new productions set to open over the coming month or so. That’s an unusually high number and an indicator of good health in the industry. Particularly that so much new work is being brought to the table demonstrates that producers are feeling confident in the artistic output of contemporary writers. From an original musical inspired by universal suffrage movement *Suffs* to Alicia Keys’s debut as a Broadway composer with *Hell’s Kitchen*, and circus-inspired *Water for Elephants* to the long anticipated musical adaptation of *The Notebook* and more, there’s much new work to take in. And that should be celebrated!’

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