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Theatre in Community

Theatre is a form of art used by numerous individuals to express themselves and to create entertainment for others. Broadway brings shows to a large audience and has a following of hundreds of thousands of fans across the nation. Located in New York City, the many Broadway stages are home to beloved shows such as *Wicked, My Fair Lady,* and more recently *Hamilton.* The latest addition to Broadway is *The Cher Show* which opened on Monday, December 3rd, 2018. The Cher show follows the life story of the famous singer Cher through three different stages in her career. Starring Michaela Diamond, Teal Wicks, and Stephanie J. Block, *The Cher Show* already has a large fan base and shows are becoming sold out at faster rates. When new shows are added onto the Broadway circuit, old shows that are not bringing in funds are often forced to close. Most recently *Once on This Island* announced that they would close after a run of a little over a year. Unfortunately, this is how Broadway is able to stay in business when their revenue is struggling with the rise of readily available medias such as movies and television shows on streaming sites.

Broadway is a staple part of New York City, located near Times Square, and often a highlight of a vacation to the iconic city. The Broadway Community is not only based out of New York, having a large online following, fans are often able to converse and discuss shows and follow performers on social media. This community is full of individuals that interact with one another on different platforms to share their love, their likes and dislikes, and the thing that brings these complete strangers together. On a smaller scale, the people involved with any show itself are a community that works hard to bring a work of art to the stage. Costume designers, directors, set designers, light and sound operators, choreographers, and actors are a small portion of what makes a Broadway show work smoothly. The good news is that shows that close on Broadway are able to be performed by smaller theatre companies and school productions. Shows such as *9 to 5 The Musical*, which closed on Broadway in September of 2009, had a short run on Broadway, but are still being performed across the United States today. These shows allow for classic Broadway shows to live on through aspiring high school actors, or community theatre actors looking to embrace their talents on a smaller platform.

Community Theatre is a great way for individuals who work in different fields to come together and create a production. A smaller scale than Broadway is often where people find themselves among other individuals who share the same love for theatre. *Doublewide Texas* is a show that was put on by Kenbridge Community Center in February of 2018. Starring local individuals from the surrounding areas of the small town, the Community Center was able to put on a show for an audience that brought people together. High School students from the nearby high school worked on the lights and sound, while teachers, accountants, secretaries, and college students were all in the cast as characters of the play. Every person involved was able to contribute their own unique talent to the overall production. Families came with one another to watch the show, small businesses had their ads in the program, and the community center was able to host in their auditorium. These aspects were all brought together because people shared a common bond with theatre.

Theatre is a beautiful part of life and brings communities together. Without theatre, many people would be without a job, they wouldn’t be able to participate in a hobby, and for many they would lose something that is part of their identity. Actors and the technical crew of any production works hard for months, perfecting lines, cues, and tiny details to bring the audience a production to the best of their talents. Both Broadway and Community theatres are full of talented individuals looking to express themselves and bring entertainment into the world. These two different medias for theatre are brought together by the love of the art. Performing in front of an audience is raw and emotional; actors have to have lines memorized, they bring out emotions night after night, and the tech crew has to have their light and sound cues down and scene changes are choreographed with little room for error. This all happens multiple nights a week often times with obligations such as school or work during the day. Many actors on Broadway are enrolled in classes, have a job or a family, community theatre actors do not get paid for their work and have day jobs, school or family to care for.

Different from Broadway and Community theatre, professional theatre companies operate throughout the United States. Wolfbane Productions is located in Appomattox Virginia and has done numerous professional level shows with paid and unpaid performers. Previously having done *Bubble Boy the Musical,* Wolfbane was able to bring in the writers to speak at a few shows bringing theatre and professionalism to a small town in Virginia. Wolfbane hires actors locally and from New York, paying leading roles and directors. The Appomattox community has welcomed them with open arms, embracing a new kind of culture. Wolfbane has had numerous sold out shows and has even been able to create and produce shows of their own. Theatre companies such as Wolfbane operate on a higher level than community theatre but are not as monumental as Broadway. Auditions are open to anybody interested and smaller roles are often given to members of the community interested in pursuing theatre. Local college and high school students are able to volunteer as ushers or with the box office giving them the opportunity to operate in a professional setting with little experience.

Communities are brought together through shared interests and settings that are able to provide them with a safe place to enjoy themselves. Theatre companies across the nation provide entertainment and opportunities for many. Theatre is an important part of keeping communities together, bringing individuals together for a cause bigger than themselves. It is a beautiful artform enjoyed by many and something that brings light to the communities they are part of.