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**Cries from Within:**  
**The Struggles & Triumphs of Creating a Singaporean Voice in Musical Theatre**

This thesis is presented for the degree of  
**Doctor of Philosophy**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research explores the plausibility of replicating a Broadway-type musical theatre industry in Asia. What would it take to establish a similar standard of musical theatre in an Asian country? With the problem being a lack of Asian representation in the genre, my aim has unashamedly been to see whether it was possible to increase the visibility of Asian musical theatre in form and content, with greater representation for makers and audience. By exploring the viability of creating a strong musical theatre platform in Asia, this research aimed to empower student/emerging Asian performers in believing that the dominant paradigm of musical theatre in the West could find a parallel or counterpart elsewhere.

Upon brief exploration of various Asian countries, Singapore was chosen as the country in which to conduct the research and experimentation. Through interviews, focus groups, workshops, directorial and choreographic experiences with students at the only undergraduate musical theatre honours degree programme in the country, and immersion in the professional industry, I sought to shed light on the viability of an Asian Broadway-type musical hub in Singapore. I found a burgeoning theatre industry, high production standards and sustainable growth for industry and audiences. Performers also showed interest and potential to develop their musical theatre skill-set, and educational programmes had the appropriate tools and curricula to guide performers, to hone those skills, and to help them achieve competitive and superlative standards of performance.

I have found through the course of the research that in the city-state of Singapore, musical theatre has generated much interest. If my recommendations are executed, I argue there will be the potential for not only an increase in visibility, but also quality, which will inevitably lead to greater performing opportunities for Asian performers. I argue for small changes in the musical theatre curriculum and arming musical theatre educators with greater skills in order to extend musical theatre workshop offerings nationwide. This will enable skill acquisition and the nurturing of talent, allowing for a greater advancement in the art form, priming individuals for success and eventual contribution to the quality and prominence of the growing industry.

This advocacy has the potential to sustainably and effectively promote musical theatre in the city-state and stimulate the education of audience and potential makers, and the nurturing of the next generation of performers and theatre enthusiasts. In addition, it will enable new Singaporean works to be developed, for eventual regional and subsequent international impact.

The declaration page  
is not included in this version of the thesis

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