

A History of Queer American Theatre in Performance

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In America, queer identities have always been expressed through art and writing, despite facing controversy and censorship. Through each generation, plays like *The Children's Hour* (1934) by Lillian Hellman, *Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes* (1991) by Tony Kushner, and Harvey Fierstein's memoir, *I Was Better Last Night* (2022), depict what it was like to survive and find happiness in the face of death. Studying queer theatre and writing reveals how this art form was an act of liberation for their stories, voices, and history to be told. These factors have helped humanize the LGBTQ+ community and contributed to a more tolerant society today.

The goal of this research is to discover the meaning of happiness through the publications of queer American theatre and the production companies that featured these performances on stage. By studying the experiences of LGBTQ+ Americans through theatre, the outcome of this research will contribute to the understanding of ways that systemic oppression can be deconstructed and which areas marginalized Americans have been uplifted in. Awareness will lead to conversations and the development of tangible solutions for oppressed groups. To achieve this, reading through each play will provide necessary insight into attitudes people held in the past and present. Using the plays as a reference point to connect to additional documentaries and historical events, while including aspects of race and gender, will bring a rounded perspective on the evolution of queer identities and the reoccurring challenges the community still faces. By investigating queer American theatre, it is concluded that the overall theme of queer happiness and liberation means to find acceptance within yourself while striving for a more equal and better society.