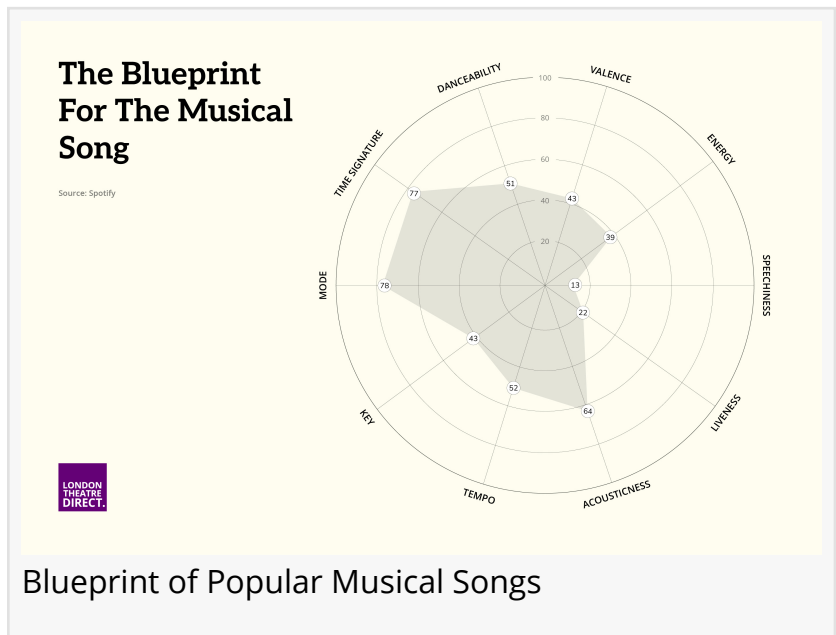


London Theatre Direct Maps Blueprint of Successful Musical Songs

Study explores 2,136 songs from top 100 musicals of all time to identify "blueprint" of musical songs

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- A new study by leading ticketing platform [London Theatre Direct](#) has mapped out the "blueprint" of the typical musical song to explore the key elements that make musical numbers unforgettable. By analysing more than 2,000 songs from 100 of the greatest musicals of all time, [the study](#) analysed 10 key data metrics (from Spotify's extensive list of audio features) to map out each song and identify the communalities (and differences) that define on-stage hits.



From West End classics like Les Misérables and The Phantom of the Opera to modern sensations such as Hamilton and Six, the research explores what makes these tracks resonate with audiences and thrive on streaming platforms.

A data-drive approach to decoding creative composition

To decode the anatomy of the archetypal musical song, the ticketing platform analysed data values for 10 key metrics that define each track on popular streaming platform Spotify: danceability, valence, energy, speechiness, liveness, acousticness, tempo, key, mode and time signature (all on scales from 0 to 100).

By mapping each song according to data points, the study was able to create a comparable data set that was then used to define the archetypal song.

The Blueprint - An average of on-stage songs

Averages were used to define the makeup of the musical archetype, a balanced musical song that supports storytelling, choreography and emotional engagement. This “average” musical song typically exhibits moderate danceability (51), moderate valence (43), moderate energy level (39), low speechiness (13) and high acoustics (64).

The biggest hits: why the most popular musical songs on depart from the archetype

While the initial research defines the median traits of an archetypal stage song, the list of most streamed musical songs on Spotify tell a completely different story.

“Alexander Hamilton” - Hamilton

Take Alexander Hamilton, the most streamed musical song on Spotify. Its values differ significantly from the blueprint, with high speechiness (30 vs. 13), faster tempo (91 BPM vs 52 BPM), low acousticness (28 vs. 64) and higher danceability and valence.

The reason why it’s the most streamed musical track on Spotify boils down to the following areas:

Genre crossover appeal

Blending rap, pop, R&B, and theatre gives it a massive reach. It doesn’t just appeal to musical fans, it speaks to hip-hop lovers, history buffs, and younger audiences who may not typically engage with musicals.

Replay value

The storytelling is tight, layered, and quick-paced, encouraging repeat listens. Fans pick up new lines, meanings, and references with each play.

Cultural impact

Hamilton redefined what a musical could be. Its success on Broadway and the West End, plus the Disney+ release, gave it huge exposure. This track is the gateway song to a groundbreaking show.

Accessibility

It’s the first track on the Hamilton cast album: easy to find, easy to play, and it hooks listeners immediately.

Narrative hook

"Alexander Hamilton" sets up the whole story. It has characters, backstory, drama, and foreshadowing, all in under four minutes. It's storytelling in motion, and listeners love songs that say something.

“Waving Through a Window” – Dear Evan Hansen

Coming in second, with high energy (70 vs. 39), low acousticness (32 vs. 64), higher danceability (58 vs. 51), low liveness (9 vs. 22), moderate valence (45) & low speechiness (8), this track is a standout in modern musical theatre and a major streaming success.

Why it's a streaming hit:

Emotional resonance

This is the anthem of Dear Evan Hansen. It captures feelings of social anxiety and the need to be seen. These are themes that hit hard, especially with younger audiences.

Pop-like structure

The track feels more like a Top 40 single than a traditional musical number. It's got a radio-ready sound, which makes it fit seamlessly into playlists alongside non-theatre artists.

Strong hook & refrain

The chorus, "Waving through a window...", is instantly memorable, relatable, and singable. It's the kind of refrain that sticks with you long after the song ends.

"Defying Gravity" – Wicked

An iconic power ballad and theatrical showstopper, Defying Gravity is the emotional and musical climax of Wicked. However, with extremely low acousticness (0 vs. 64), low danceability and valence (34 and 25 vs. 51 and 43), elevated tempo (73 BPM vs. 52 BPM) and low liveness and speechiness, it stands in sharp contrast to the musical song archetype.

What makes it a streaming success:

Showstopper value

This is the moment in Wicked. Whether you've seen the show or not, Defying Gravity is the standout, the emotional tipping point and the most recognisable number. Fans return to it to relive the moment.

Vocal powerhouse

It's a signature song for vocalists, especially Idina Menzel. The vocal range and emotional build are unmatched, and that kind of performance has replay value.

Cultural impact

It's become a theatre anthem. Referenced in pop culture, sung at auditions, featured in Glee, Defying Gravity has reached far beyond the theatre crowd.

Aspirational themes

Lyrics like "I'm through accepting limits" and "It's time to try defying gravity" speak directly to self-

belief and resilience. That message sticks with audiences, especially with younger listeners and fans of identity-driven stories.

"While there is a method to the madness of musical writing, and these metrics certainly matter to the magic of a song, they aren't all-encompassing indicators of success, either in popularity or critical acclaim," said Ryan Woods, Commercial Director, London Theatre Direct, "In many instances, when composers are creating a musical, they'll try to balance one trait of a song with another so that the overall work isn't too heavy in one aspect or another. Each piece within a production appeals to different aspects of musical quality."

London Theatre Direct's research offers a fascinating glimpse into the compositional mechanics of songwriting. Whether it's the scientific structure of an ideal stage song or the qualities that push certain hits into streaming superstardom, this study deepens our understanding

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