

## **Dr. Valerie Lynn Schrader**

**Professor Tenure-Line**

**Communication Arts and Sciences**

**Title of your research project.**

Examining the “Histo-remix:” Public Memory, Burkean Identification, and Feminism in the Musical Six

**Description of research. Please provide a few sentences that explain the question and the methods employed in this research project.**

The musical Six has taken the United Kingdom by storm, earning five Olivier nominations in 2019 and crossing the pond, previewing on Broadway in the spring of 2020. Six tells the story of Henry VIII's six wives in what the musical portrays as their own words, with a twist – the six wives form a girl group performing a concert for their audience. Through a rhetorical analysis of the musical's script, cast recording, piano/vocal score, and field notes from two performances, I argue that Six creates public memory of Catherine of Aragon, Anne Boleyn, Jane Seymour, Anna of Cleves, Katherine Howard and Catherine Parr, focusing on their individual personalities and accomplishments, rather than simply on their relationship to Henry VIII, as documented history describes them. I suggest that by doing so, Six minimizes the role of place and time in the creation of public memory. Furthermore, I argue that this creation of public memory is intertwined with Burkean identification, as theatregoers find themselves connecting with one or more of the queens as they are portrayed in Six. By combining twenty-first-century language with the stories of sixteenth-century women, Six builds consubstantiality between its characters and its audiences. This article also explores how the final number, Six, reinvents the women's stories as they might have been if they had lived in the twenty-first century and the impact that this has on public memory. Finally, I suggest that Six is a feminist text, advocating for solidarity and the individually defined empowerment of all women.

**Did this project include Penn State students as researchers?**

No

**If yes to the above question, please state where it was published.**

Studies in Musical Theatre

**What problem do you address with your research?**

I look at how feminist messages and public memory of Henry VIII's six queens are created through Burkean identification in the popular musical Six.