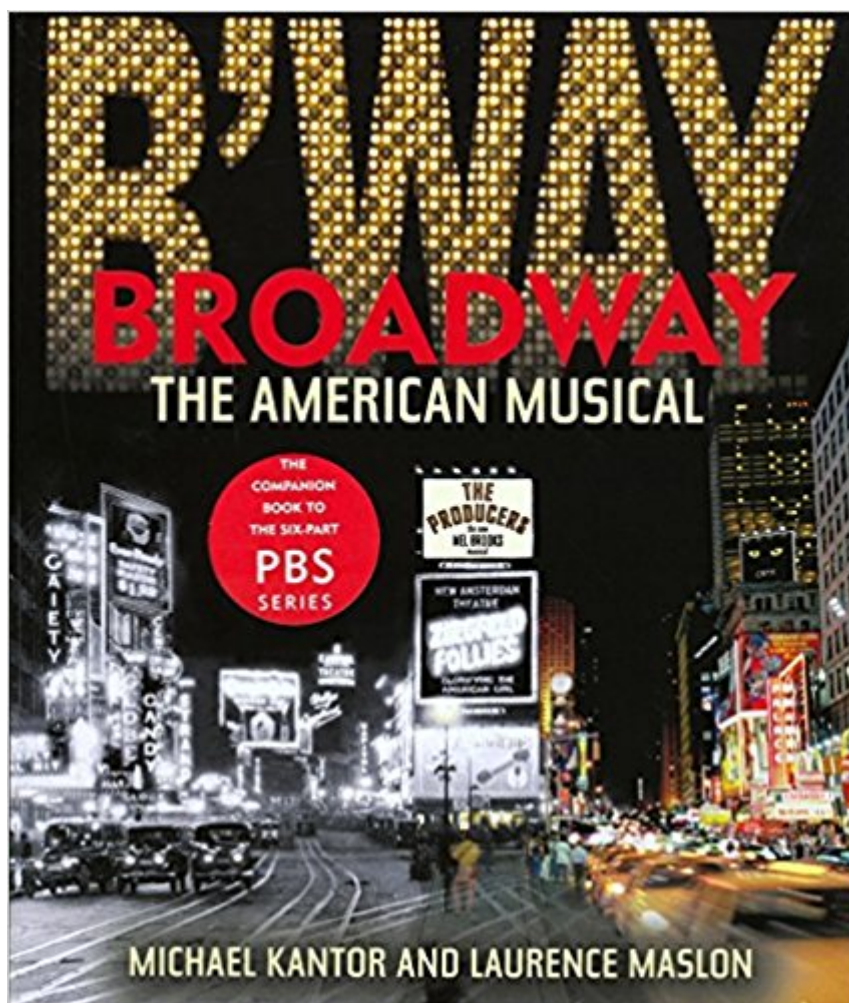


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Broadway: The American Musical



Synopsis

Along with jazz and abstract expressionism, the Broadway musical is one of the few uniquely American art forms. A companion to the six-part PBS documentary series, **BROADWAY: THE AMERICAN MUSICAL** is the first comprehensive history of the musical, from its roots at the turn of the 20th century through the smashing successes of the new millennium. The compelling, in-depth text is lavishly illustrated with a treasure trove of photographs, sheet-music covers, posters, scenic renderings, production stills, rehearsal shots, and caricatures, many previously unpublished. Complementing the narrative are lively sidebars that highlight the stars, the shows, and the songs--the key ingredients that make the musical great. Each chapter also included essays written by some of Broadway's most fascinating luminaries, past and present. An entertaining amalgam of unpublished material, candid and production photographs, and a trunkful of anecdotes and Broadway lore, **BROADWAY** will appeal to eighth-graders in their first high school musical as well as to connoisseurs of the art form.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

If you enjoyed the PBS series *Broadway: The American Musical* but wanted a bit more detail and substance, try curling up with the companion book to the series. Expanded from Michael Kantor's script by Laurence Maslon, it follows the same six-part structure but its 470 pages give it more space to stretch out with the history of key musicals and the historical context behind them, or add significant trends such as revivals. What makes the book easy to pick up from the coffee table are

the many subheads, the photographs (e.g., Julie Andrews in *My Fair Lady*) and poster art, and the sidebars and supplemental features. Occupying a page or two, the sidebars delve into such topics as original cast albums or shows that were glossed over or ignored in the series, such as *Gypsy* and *1776*. A particularly effective use of the text is reprinting the lyrics of certain songs, examining the structure of "Soliloquy," providing historical annotations for "You're the Top," and illustrating "Broadway Baby" with pictures of Ethel Schulte on stage in *Follies* and 50 years earlier. Archive sections offer vintage essays from key figures (Sondheim on Kern, Hart on Rodgers), and Who's Who blurbs spotlight performers or creators (Fanny Brice, Barbara Cook, Bernadette Peters, Audra McDonald). While *Broadway: The American Musical* can't compete with more encyclopedic work on the subject, it's an enjoyable and worthwhile reference overall, and does provide a year-by-year list of significant shows, a selected bibliography, and maps of the theater district ca. 1928 and 2001.

--David Horiuchi

Those critics and theatergoers who have for some time lamented the death of the Broadway musical can take heart: thanks to this glorious paean, the hills are once again alive with the sound of music—and much more. Though this nostalgia-laden tome is designed as a companion book to a forthcoming PBS series, it stands on its own as a particularly striking and comprehensive take on a uniquely American art form. The copious illustrations alone are worth "the price of admission," as history unfolds through archival and contemporary photos (Fred and Adele Astaire in 1924; Tommy Tune swooning over Twiggy in 1983's *My One and Only*); sheet music covers (the Prohibition-era ditty, "How Are You Going to Wet Your Whistle When the Whole Darn World Goes Dry?"); and vibrant photographic spreads (Paul Robeson in a 1928 production of *Showboat*; Patty Lupone in *Evita*). The meticulously researched text spans the years 1893 to 2004 in six information-packed chapters, each of which opens with a "Who's Who"—brief vignettes about the period's most celebrated personalities—and is followed by a "Broadway and" section, which covers, depending on the chapter's time frame, such topics as Tin Pan Alley, radio, Hollywood, original cast albums, etc. "Spotlight on" examines a significant musical of the period (from *The Follies* of 1919 to *Sunday in the Park with George*). The chapters conclude with especially interesting "Archives" segments—essays by theater veterans past and present. Even the book's endpapers reflect Broadway's evolution: both are photos of the theater district's famed Shubert Alley, but theater posters indicate that the first shot is circa 1962, the second is 2004. And, just as in real life, everything on Broadway that's old is new again. The current blockbuster *Wicked* (based on Gregory Maguire's novel twist on *The Wizard of Oz*) and 1975's African-American version, *The Wiz*? Old

news: Broadway audiences saw this classic's first musicalization in 1904. And those recent strikes by Actors Equity that have more than once threatened to close down the Great White Way? Nothing new there: the first Equity pickets were brandished in 1919. With its beguiling blend of entertainment and history, this splendid work is a must-have, whether you're a musical-comedy devotee (i.e., you know that Barbara Cook's Broadway debut was in 1951's *Flahooley*) or a neophyte (you're not sure who Barbara Cook is). Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Very well written, in an almost authoritative manner. A perfect companion to the DVD series hosted by Julie Andrews. A must-read for everyone who loves the American musical.

This is a must read for anyone who enjoys Broadway shows and its history. It gives you the ideas behind the music along with the social issues of that day and includes the modern musicals as well..

I had to purchase this book for college and it is great! If you are looking into becoming a professional performer, you've got to know who started and made their mark in the industry before you; this book is perfect for learning that information and it is an easy fun read.

It's always great to find a book that is so detailed about the history of musical theatre. And that's almost everything this gigantic tome has to offer you. Not that it's not good or enough. But it would have been nice to see all the major - i don't know - last Tony winners, for example. Still, it's a really complete book, with lots and lots of great great big pictures, which is always fascinating.

Very detailed about Broadway History! Had to use it for my class, and it's one of the best books I've read about Broadway

My grandson loved the book. It is an impressive tome and the pictures of the original Broadway sets are inspiring.

I bought the book, *Broadway The American Musical*, for my daughter. She enjoyed it very much. It gives much information about the genre, and it gives a very good historical perspective. It's a great book for a theater buff.

I had borrowed this book from the Public Library and wanted my own copy. Love it as I love the Musical Theater.

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