



Enchanted Evenings: The Broadway Musical from Show Boat to Sondheim

Geoffrey Block

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The classic musicals of Broadway can provide us with truly enchanted evenings. But while many of us can hum the music and even recount the plot from memory, we are often much less knowledgeable about how these great shows were put together. What was the inspiration for Rodgers and Harts *Pal Joey*, or Rodgers and Hammersteins *Carousel*? Why is Marias impassioned final speech in *West Side Story* spoken, rather than sung? Now, in *Enchanted Evenings*, Geoffrey Block offers theatre lovers an illuminating behind-the-scenes tour of some of the best loved, most admired, and most enduring musicals of Broadways Golden Era. Readers will find insightful studies of such all-time favorites as *Show Boat*, *Anything Goes*, *Porgy and Bess*, *Carousel*, *Kiss Me, Kate*, *Guys and Dolls*, *The Most Happy Fella*, *My Fair Lady*, and *West Side Story*. Block provides a documentary history of fourteen musicals in all--plus an epilogue exploring the plays of Stephen Sondheim--showing how each work took shape and revealing, at the same time, production by production, how the American musical evolved from the 1920s to the early 1960s, and beyond. The book's particular focus is on the *music*, offering a wealth of detail about how librettist, lyricist, composer, and director work together to shape the piece. Drawing on manuscript material such as musical sketches, autograph manuscripts, pre-production librettos and lyric drafts, Block reveals the winding route the works took to get to their final form. Block blends this close attention to the nuances of musical composition and stagecraft with trenchant social commentary and lively backstage anecdotes. Jerome Kern, Cole Porter, the Gershwins, Rodgers and Hart, Rodgers and Hammerstein, Lerner and Loewe, Kurt Weill, Frank Loesser, Leonard Bernstein, Sondheim, and other luminaries emerge as hardworking craftsmen under enormous pressure to sell tickets without compromising their dramatic vision and integrity. Opening night reviews and accounts of critical and popular response to subsequent revivals show how particular musicals have adapted to changing times and changing audiences, shedding light on why many of these innovative shows are still performed in high schools, colleges, and community theaters across the country, while others, such as Weills *One Touch of Venus* or Marc Blitzsteins *The Cradle Will Rock*, languish in comparative obscurity. Packed with information, including a complete discography and plot synopses and song-by-song scenic outlines for each of the fourteen shows, *Enchanted Evenings* is an essential reference as well as a riveting history. It will deepen readers appreciation and enjoyment of these beloved musicals even as it delights both the seasoned theater goer and the neophyte encountering the magic of Broadway for the first time.

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