



Broadway: The American Musical

By Michael Kantor and Laurence Maslon

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Broadway: The American Musical By Michael Kantor and Laurence Maslon

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sheet-music covers, posters, scenic renderings, production stills, rehearsal shots, and caricatures, many previously unpublished.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 An entertaining amalgam of unpublished material, candid and production photographs, and a trunkful of anecdotes and Broadway lore, *BROADWAY* will appeal to eighth-graders in their first high school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.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

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

From Publishers Weekly

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*).

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Packed with color photos, printed on nice, thick, glossy paper, and weighing in at a little over seven pounds, this gorgeous behemoth is the ultimate coffee-table book for lovers of the American musical, though it is smarter and better written than such a glib description suggests. A companion to Kantor's six-part, Ken Burns-like PBS series--the six chapters roughly correspond to the six episodes in the series--*Broadway* is a great read in its own right, consisting of Maslon's well-researched, well-written history, which draws on material from Kantor's film, supplemented by 110 years' worth of excerpts from scripts, capsule biographies of noteworthy theater people, and contemporary interviews with great stars. Just in case you can't read, hundreds and hundreds of drop-dead beautiful photographs, many of them rare and rarely reproduced, make this a great grazing-and-gazing experience, too. If the history has a flaw, it is that it focuses so tightly on the Broadway musical it slighted noteworthy musical-theater events that took place elsewhere, such as the long, long running off-Broadway hit *The Fantasticks*. And, of course, it also overlooks much of Broadway's nonmusical history. Guess you could hardly expect one volume to contain all of America's rich theatrical history. *Jack Helbig*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Allen Goehring:

Typically the book *Broadway: The American Musical* will bring you to the new experience of reading some sort of book. The author style to explain the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to see, this book very suitable to you. The book *Broadway: The American Musical* is much recommended to you you just read. You can also get the e-book in the official web site, so you can easier to read the book.

Catherine Nelson:

The reason? Because this *Broadway: The American Musical* is an unordinary book that the inside of the e-book waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will shock you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who else write the book in such amazing way makes the content interior easier to understand, entertaining technique but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this ever again or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of gains than the other book have such as help improving your ability and your critical thinking way. So , still want to delay having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the book store hurriedly.

Clarice Stephens:

Broadway: The American Musical can be one of your starter books that are good idea. Many of us recommend that straight away because this book has good vocabulary that may increase your knowledge in words, easy to understand, bit entertaining but still delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to get every word into enjoyment arrangement in writing *Broadway: The American Musical* although doesn't forget the main position, giving the reader the hottest along with based confirm resource data that maybe you can be one of it. This great information can easily drawn you into fresh stage of crucial considering.

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