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Words With Music: Creating The Broadway Musical Libretto



Synopsis

The dean of Broadway musical directors examines the dynamics of how the book, music and lyrics work together to create such hits as *My Fair Lady*, *Fiddler on the Roof*, *Guys and Dolls*, *Hair*, *Pal Joey*, *West Side Story*, *Company*, *South Pacific*, *Threepenny Opera* and *Porgy and Bess*. Howard Kissel, chief theater critic for the *New York Daily News*, extends the reach of Engel's subjects by bringing them up to date with commentary on such shows as *A Chorus Line*, *Nine*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, *Rent*, *Working* and *Falsettos*. Kissel offers a thoughtful history on how musical theater has evolved in the three decades since Engel wrote *Words with Music* (1972) and how Engel's classic work remains vital and illuminating today.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"To anyone who loves musical theatre, Lehman Engel's *Words With Music* will be a source of joy and knowledge... amusing and delightful." -Richard Rodgers"

Lehman Engel (1910-82) played an integral role in Broadway theatre during its golden years.

Howard Kissel, chief theatre critic for the *New York Daily News*, compiled and edited *Stella Adler: The Art of Acting*, and wrote *David Merrick: The Abominable Showman*.

I am still reading book. The slow speed is reflection of the valuable material that has been covered. It takes time to absorb the material. This book is a great learning curve for myself. It is a must for

music theater students. I only wish that Lehman Engel's other book, 'Their Words are Music' is re-printed or at least offered as a kindle book by . I can assure you, it would be picked up as a standard text for music theater students in many campuses across the US. The few copies that are available are old and often full of mold other other allergens.

One of the best books ever on making musical theater.

A little dated both in information and attitude, but still informative. Concentrates primarily on musicals prior to the Sondheim era.

Written by legendary musical director Lehman Engel in 1972, this book has been long out of print with copies selling for high amounts when you could find one at all. Now Howard Kissel, theater critic for the New York Daily News, has updated the book by applying the same analysis techniques to several modern shows such as 'A Chorus Line,' 'Rent,' 'Phantom,' 'Les Miz,' and 'Wicked.' To be sure, styles change over time as the modern audiences grew in a more rock oriented environment that Lloyd Webber was able to capture in his list of successful hits. But as the music has evolved, the basic rules of musical theater plot lines and character development have remained almost fixed. It is the current fashion to lament the passing of the musical, to look back to a supposed 'Golden Age' of the musical that is long past. This book ends with a quotation, 'The era of sterling drama and talented actors is in the past, perhaps never to return.' This came from a guidebook to New York that was published in 1868. The musical is not dead. And the same rules still apply when Mr. Engel wrote them in 1970. To be sure, most of the musicals put on Broadway are not so very good, but then one comes along ... And it is likely to have followed Mr. Engel's basic rules.

If WORDS WITH MUSIC: CREATING THE BROADWAY MUSICAL LIBRETTO sounds familiar, that's because it originally appeared in 1972, only to go out of print for years thereafter. Now it's back - and it sports an expanded version and updated commentary by NY Times theatre critic Howard Kissel to return a classic to new life. Engel's background in the Broadway heyday provides important reference material for his survey of major musical works, documenting major scenes, surveying how good musicals are written to stand out from mediocre productions, and revealing which basic theatre elements are employed to best usage for particular types of productions. An outstanding survey, recommended for any Broadway fan. Diane C. Donovan, Editor California Bookwatch

'The New Yorker' claims that "Everyone interested in the theatre can learn something from this book." Each chapter begins with a fitting quote, and Howard Kissel has updated and revised the original for today's reader.

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