

The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical

Category : Book Reviews

Published by [Staff](#) on 2004/12/15

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Story Submitted by Member JanetReid

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Many of today's Broadway shows, from Rent to The Lion King to Movin' Out, have become commercial hits, but do they have the cultural importance or the dramatic and musical artistry of such enduring productions as Oklahoma!, Show Boat, or Kiss Me, Kate?

This is just one of the compelling questions considered by Mark N. Grant in his provocative and outspoken new book, The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical (Northeastern University Press).

Grant's book is a panoramic history of the art form from 1866 to 2004 and is the first to explain how the gradual introduction of the microphone and sound design destroyed the dramatic impact of musicals; why the change from the foxtrot rhythm to the rock groove made the craft of lyric writing obsolete; and why the rise of the choreographer-director paralleled the fall of compelling book musicals.

The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical has already won accolades.

Writes Keith Runyon in the Louisville Courier-Journal, "The splashiest Broadway package, which is built around the PBS documentary series, isn't necessarily the most insightful or the best-written....Grant, a composer and winner of the ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award, is a wonderful writer who offers a true cavalcade of Broadway history."

Singer-pianist Michael Feinstein writes, "I thoroughly enjoyed this entertaining book. Mark N. Grant approaches the subject of Broadway with a fascinating and accurate perspective and writes with insight and fervor."

Eminent theater historian Gerald Bordman comments, "Mark N. Grant's analysis of the precipitous decline of contemporary American musical theatre is the most thoughtful and compelling of any I have ever read."

The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical is "clearly articulated and thoroughly documented...highly recommended" (Library Journal) and "lively and readable" (Booklist).

And Fiddler on the Roof composer Jerry Bock adds, "Most commentary on the musical theatre has been surface writing, citing the obvious and repetitive to a fault. Mark N. Grant digs much deeper to

discover a far richer vein."

Grant is a composer of music for the concert hall and the theater.

His previous book, *Maestros of the Pen: A History of Classical Music Criticism in America* (Northeastern: 1998), won wide critical acclaim and an ASCAP-Deems Taylor Award.

The book is available at local bookstores or online
at Amazon.com and Powells.com

The Rise and Fall of the Broadway Musical

Mark N. Grant

ISBN: 1-55553-623-9

Northeastern University Press

Price: \$40 cloth

352 pages, 21 illustrations

notes, bibliography, index

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