



Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical

By Stacy Wolf

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From Adelaide in "Guys and Dolls" to Nina in "In the Heights" and Elphaba in "Wicked," female characters in Broadway musicals have belted and crooned their way into the American psyche. In this lively book, Stacy Wolf illuminates the women of American musical theatre - performers, creators, and characters -- from the start of the cold war to the present day, creating a new, feminist history of the genre. Moving from decade to decade, Wolf first highlights the assumptions that circulated about gender and sexuality at the time. She then looks at the leading musicals to stress the key aspects of the plays as they relate to women, and often finds overlooked moments of empowerment for female audience members. The musicals discussed here are among the most beloved in the canon--"West Side Story," "Cabaret," "A Chorus Line," "Phantom of the Opera," and many others--with special emphasis on the blockbuster "Wicked." Along the way, Wolf demonstrates how the musical since the mid-1940s has actually been dominated by women--women onstage, women in the wings, and women offstage as spectators and fans.

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Editorial Review

Review

"I found Stacy Wolf's book fascinating and surprising. It not only gave me a fresh perspective on the history of musical theatre, it revealed things to me about my own show I didn't know were there." --Stephen Schwartz

"This book is absolutely brilliant on many levels. Wolf manages, in one stroke, to place the musical's feminine fan base-long recognized but rarely valued-on the same critical plane that its gay male fan base has long occupied. This book truly defies gravity!" --Raymond Knapp, Professor of Musicology, UCLA, and author of *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity* and *The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity*

"This beautifully written - and desperately needed - feminist history of the Broadway musical is filled with exciting insights, humor, and great affection for the American musical. It's an important and interesting book, one I will read again and again." --Elizabeth L. Wollman, Assistant Professor of Music, Baruch College, The City University of New York, and author of *The Theater Will Rock: A History of the Rock Musical, from "Hair" to "Hedwig"*

"A valuable work with a strong and captivating feminist point of view. Scholars and serious fans of theater as well as those concerned with women's issues and studies will especially enjoy its detail-filled and imaginative perspective." --*Library Journal* (Starred Review)

"Carefully researched, elegantly written, and methodologically innovative...A rewarding and thoroughly enjoyable book that should appeal to a broad range of readers, especially those interested in the intertwined histories of gender, sexuality, and popular entertainment." --*The Journal of American History*

"Impressively broad in scope...Wolf is a worthy champion of the feminist scholarly approach to musical theater...The book as a whole represents a microcosm of convincing overlaps between "gender and genre" (p. 20)." --*Notes*

"Reflect[s] a superior level of scholarship that is user-friendly and content-substantive, providing narratives that students will genuinely enjoy reading...[A] welcome addition to the ever-increasing literature on musical theater." --*Journal of Music History Pedagogy*

"A brave, forthright attempt to engage critically and imaginatively with aspects of American musical theatre that matter." --*Text & Presentation*

"This book gives a fresh voice to Broadway's female writers, characters, performers, and audience members." --*Journal of the Society for American Music*

About the Author

Stacy Wolf is Professor of Theater and Director of the Princeton Atelier, Lewis Center for the Arts, Princeton University.

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From reader reviews:

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Dennis Carson:

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