



The Great White Way: Race and the Broadway Musical

Warren Hoffman

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Broadway musicals are one of America's most beloved art forms and play to millions of people each year. But what do these shows, which are often thought to be just frothy entertainment, really have to say about our country and who we are as a nation?

The Great White Way is the first book to reveal the racial politics, content, and subtexts that have haunted musicals for almost one hundred years from *Show Boat* (1927) to *The Scottsboro Boys* (2011). Musical mirror their time periods and reflect the political and social issues of their day. Warren Hoffman investigates the thematic content of the Broadway musical and considers how musicals work on a structural level, allowing them to simultaneously present and hide their racial agendas in plain view of their audiences. While the musical is informed by the cultural contributions of African Americans and Jewish immigrants, Hoffman argues that ultimately the history of the American musical is the history of white identity in the United States.

Presented chronologically, *The Great White Way* shows how perceptions of race altered over time and how musicals dealt with those changes. Hoffman focuses first on shows leading up to and comprising the Golden Age of Broadway (1927–1960s), then turns his attention to the revivals and nostalgic vehicles that defined the final quarter of the twentieth century. He offers entirely new and surprising takes on shows from the American musical canon—*Show Boat* (1927), *Oklahoma!* (1943), *Annie Get Your Gun* (1946), *The Music Man* (1957), *West Side Story* (1957), *A Chorus Line* (1975), and *42nd Street* (1980), among others.

New archival research on the creators who produced and wrote these shows, including Leonard Bernstein, Jerome Robbins, Stephen Sondheim, and Edward Kleban, will have theater fans and scholars rethinking forever how they view this popular American entertainment.

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