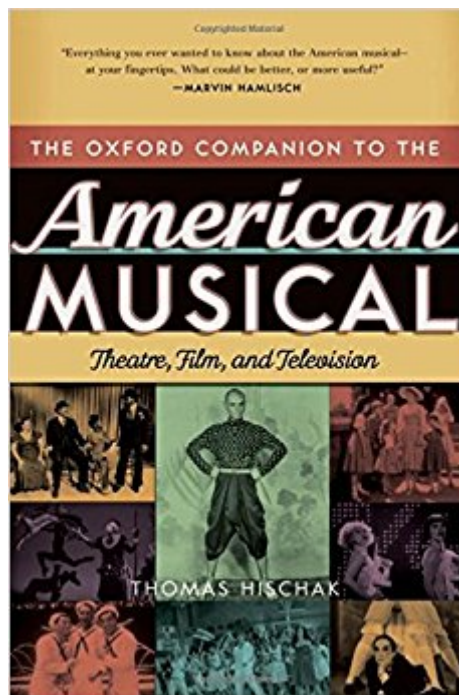




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# The Oxford Companion To The American Musical: Theatre, Film, And Television (Oxford Companions)



## Synopsis

From the silver screen to the Great White Way, small community theatres to television sets, the musical has long held a special place in America's heart and history. Now, in *The Oxford Companion to the American Musical*, readers who flocked to the movies to see *An American in Paris* or *Chicago*, lined up for tickets to *West Side Story* or *Rent*, or crowded around their TVs to watch *Cinderella* or *High School Musical* can finally turn to a single book for details about them all. For the first time, this popular subject has an engaging and authoritative book as thrilling as the performances themselves. With more than two thousand entries, this illustrated guide offers a wealth of information on musicals, performers, composers, lyricists, producers, choreographers, and much more. Biographical entries range from early stars Fred Astaire, Bing Crosby, Mary Martin, and Mae West to contemporary show-stoppers Nathan Lane, Savion Glover, and Kristin Chenoweth, while composers Irving Berlin, George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, and Andrew Lloyd Webber all have articles, and the choreography of Bob Fosse, Tommy Tune, and Debbie Allen receives due examination. The plays and films covered range from modern hits like *Mamma Mia!* and *Moulin Rouge!* to timeless classics such as *Yankee Doodle Dandy* and *Show Boat*. Also, numerous musicals written specifically for television appear throughout, and many entries follow a work-Babes in Toyland for example-as it moves across genres, from stage, to film, to television. The Companion also includes cross references, a comprehensive listing of recommended recordings and further reading, a useful chronology of all the musicals described in the book, plus a complete index of Tony Award and Academy Award winners. Whether you are curious about *Singin' in the Rain* or *Spamalot*, or simply adore *The Wizard of Oz* or *Grease*, this well-researched and entertaining resource is the first place to turn for reliable information on virtually every aspect of the American musical.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 9 Up • From The Beggar's Opera (1750) and The Black Crook (1866) to Wicked (2003) and High School Musical 2 (2007), this volume offers a clearly written, comprehensive overview of the American musical theater on the stage, silver screen, and small screen. The 2000-plus entries are brief but detailed accounts of plots; production histories; careers of actors, dancers, musicians, lyricists, composers, choreographers, and directors; organizations; and genres (animated musicals, frontier musicals). Small icons identify the title entries as stage, film, or TV shows. Cast lists in shaded text boxes include members of different productions of the same work. Other boxes list songs from many of the best-known shows and information such as "Longest-Running Off-Broadway Musicals" and "Musicals Nominated for the Best Picture Academy Award." Related biographies and autobiographies are listed at the end of the personal entries. Black-and-white captioned photographs are scattered throughout. The opening "List of Entries" helps make this a browsing delight for casual fans, while appendixes that include "Awards," "Guide to Recordings," and a bibliography of general works about musicals make it a valuable tool for researchers. This thorough work provides enjoyable reading for anyone interested in American theatrical history in general and musicals in particular.

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Hischak, author of 16 books on theater, film, and popular music, offers an informative look at American (and some non-American) musicals as they have been presented on stage, screen, and television. In his preface, he illustrates how the American musical has evolved over the past 140 years from the "five-hour-long extravaganza, The Black Crook, in 1866, to the popular teenybopper television event, High School Musical 2, in 2007. Entries are well researched and written. Among the 2,000-plus entries are those for composers, performers, directors, choreographers, etc., and for individual musical works. The personal entries feature basic biographical information and chronicle the works the artists helped create in a readable narrative

style. The remaining entries are for musical-theater works, with particular emphasis on those produced in more than one medium (e.g., *The King and I*, *Little Shop of Horrors*, etc.) Informative histories of the musicals are followed by separate entries for productions in different media, helping the reader to focus attention on the history of each, and Hirschak notes the similarities and differences and highlights the advantages or pitfalls of one medium over the other. He precedes each work entry with a theater, film, or television icon for easy identification. Hirschak also lists cast members for the major musicals, including the important stage, television, and film performers, along with dates of the productions; and in some cases, he lists the important songs. Useful appendixes include "Chronology of Musical," "Awards," and "Guide to Recordings." There are many encyclopedias on Broadway and musical-theater themes, most notably *The Virgin Encyclopedia of Stage and Film Musicals* (1999), *Encyclopedia of the Musical Theatre* (2d ed., 2001), and *Broadway Musicals, 1943-2004* (2006). Hirschak's new volume adds to this group admirably by offering more up-to-date works and expanding beyond Broadway. Recommended for public and academic libraries. --Steven York

This book fills a giant void. It covers every major Broadway Musical (and some minor ones), most important musical movies and even most musical TV specials. It has biographies of thousands of performers, directors, choreographers, composers, etc. Filled with informative charts and lists. Well Done! Is it complete? Of course not, but it's still the best source I know. Does it have any mistakes? A few, but nothing important. Is it interesting? You bet, I'm reading it page by page. I own the Oxford Companion to the Theater and this volume is far superior. Any serious fan of American Musicals has got to have it!

I love the setup of this book, everything is organized alphabetically by last name!!!

Outstanding reference

The great fun of a book like this, for me, anyway, is: before reading it in depth, to flip through and get a sense of its range, strengths (inclusions & obscurities), and weaknesses (omissions & errors). After spending about an hour with *The OCAM*, I find it an anomaly. On the one hand it is awesomely filled with nitty-gritty (How many books on the American Musical include "Follow That Bird", let alone Richard Adler's TV "Damn Yankees" rip-off "Olympus 7-0000"?), yet surprisingly incomplete. An

article on opera singers on Broadway omits Cesare Siepi's turn in "Bravo Giovanni". Also, the show itself is missing (granted, neither was a major high-point, but... "Follow That Bird"?). The recent musical drama "Parade" is covered, but not Jerry Herman's earlier off-broadway musical of the same name (nor, Herman's "Mme Aphrodite" in the bio on him). The book goes out of its way to mention that the '50s TV version of "The Great Waltz" is NOT on DVD. It is, from a company called VAI. And the musical version of "Destry Rides Again", cited in an article on the "frontier" in musicals, was called, simply "Destry". Anyhow, you get the idea. Amidst some truly mind-blowing trivial "completeness" there is ALSO some surprising gaffes. Nevertheless, the completeness outweighs the gaffe by such a degree, that the book is WELL WORTH your while.

The Oxford Companion to the American Musical is a surprisingly detailed overview of the the American musicals of Broadway, film and television as witnessed/researched through author Thomas Hischak. The most exciting part of this book is its careful research of the television musical, until now all but glossed over in books on the subject of musical theatre. There was a point in time where television churned out musicals and it is nice to see them get their due. Holiday Specials by Rankin and Bass added much to our song lexicon and it is nice to see them so well represented. Obviously, the book has its omissions, something that is inevitable when a book has this size and scope. But entries are lovingly chosen and carefully researched and those that are left out are judiciously put aside, or accounted for under other entries. For example: I am a big fan of the musical flop Nick and Nora. N&N does not have it's own entry, but it is mentioned in several other places such as under Joanna Gleason's entry. It is amazing, through cross referencing, just how much author Hischak has accounted for. One special note: an earlier reviewer of this book makes mention of the musical Destry Rides Again as being named merely "Destry." This is false, as any student of Stanley Greene's Broadway Musicals: Show By Show will tell you. The musical was indeed called Destry Rides Again. Any true fan of musical theatre will find minor quibbles with any book that may leave out the particular pieces of minutia that fascinate them. However, this book is one of the best of its kind and it is cram packed FULL of wonderful details and oft cast aside information. A must read.

Poor stupid me! After 60 years of seeing musicals on Broadway and myriad other theaters, in films, and on television, after directing many and even writing one, I derived infinite pleasure from wandering through the pages of Thomas Hischak's Oxford Companion. Little did I know that I should have been looking for omissions and confusions to carp about. I was just enjoying the

fantastic feast of theatrical lore, trivia, and history spread out before me. I'd start reading one of the entries and find myself eagerly chasing down cross-references that usually fed me interesting facts I hadn't known or had long forgotten (and what a pleasure to have something long forgotten brought back to one's consciousness!). For example, I had never known of Louise Beavers's career as a singer, having known her only as the perennial maid/cook roles that Hollywood put her great talent into. But I was looking at Holiday Inn, one of my favorite of all time Christmas treats, and came across that surprising cross-reference. Oh, one could carp. Why is there no entry for James Jewel, the handsome tenor who toured the country with Nancy Walker in *On the Town*? Why doesn't the author list all the songs of the seminal *Mask and Wig Club* productions? Why doesn't he mention Richard Whiting's other daughter, Barbara? Who cares? There is enough material there for a lifetime of pleasurable browsing. Take Marni Nixon's advice: "Simply enjoy it." I sure am.

Hischak's new book is a tour de force. I own many books on the theater, including several others by Hischak. I bought this book (at a nice price through ) and started flipping through, and couldn't put it down. Ronald Reagan as musical performer? Who would have guessed? The sheer ambition of this project, its extravagant cross-referencing, and wide-ranging coverage are deeply impressive. Among Hischak's many other books on the theater, this is his crown jewel.

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