



No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance: A History of the American Musical Theater

Phillip Patinkin

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Written by one of American theater's most avid and knowledgeable proponents, "No Legs, No Jokes, No Chance" traces the American musical from its rich and varied beginnings in European opera, American minstrel shows, and vaudeville through its many permutations to its current state--from, as Sheldon Patinkin puts it, *La Boheme* to *Rent*. Minstrelsy, burlesque, revue, dance, and choreographers, the "texts" of musical theater so often overlooked by its historians, finally receive due consideration in this thorough and thoroughly entertaining book about how American musical theater came to be and developed into what it is today.

Patinkin writes about the infancy of the musical--the revues, operettas, and early musical comedies, as well as the groundbreaking shows like *Oklahoma!*, and *Show Boat* that brought the form to its "golden age" during World War II. With insightful references to how history, literature, theater, fashion, popular music, and movies influenced musical theater generally and certain shows in particular, he traces a direct lineage from older forms to contemporary musicals. The result is a broad, clear, and detailed picture of American musicals within both an aesthetic and a historical context. Patinkin conveys the pleasure of the ever-changing forms of musical theater even as he gives readers the analytical tools and terms to understand and better appreciate this uniquely American art. The book features a selection of black and white photographs from historical musical productions, and each chapter includes suggestions for materials to watch and listen to at home or in the classroom.



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