



Musical Theatre, Realism and Entertainment

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Ashgate Interdisciplinary Studies in Opera



January 2012
202 pages
978-0-7546-6670-7

234 x 156 mm
Hardback
£55.00

What is it about musical theatre that audiences find entertaining? What are the features that lead to its ability to stimulate emotional attachment, to move and to give pleasure? Beginning from the passion musical theatre performances arouse and their ubiquity in London's West End and on Broadway this book explores the ways in which musical theatre reaches out to and involves its audiences. It investigates how pleasure is stimulated by vocal, musical and spectacular performances.

Early discussions centre on the construction of the composed text, but then attention is given to performance and audience response. Musical theatre contains disruptions and dissonances in its multiple texts, it allows gaps for audiences to read playfully. This combines with the voluptuous sensations of embodied emotion, contagiously and viscerally shared between audience and stage, and augmented through the presence of voice and music. A number of features are discovered in the construction of musical theatre performance texts that allow them to engage the intense emotional attachment of their audiences and so achieve enormous popularity.

In doing this, the book challenges the conception of musical theatre as 'only entertainment'. Entertainment instead becomes a desirable, ephemeral and playful concept.

Contents

Introduction; Musical characterisation in HMS Pinafore and The Rocky Horror Show; Encoding the voice: Show Boat, Guys and Dolls, and musical theatre post-1960; Integration and distance in musical theatre: the case of Sweeney Todd; Layers of representation and the creation of irony: Aufsteig und Fall der Stadt Mahagonny, Merrily We Roll Along and The Last 5 Years; Alternatives to linearity: Cabaret, Kiss of the Spider Woman and Assassins; Illusions of realism in West Side Story and actor-musician performances; Experiencing live musical theatre performance: La Cage Aux Folles and Priscilla, Queen of the Desert; I've heard that song before: the jukebox musical and entertainment in Jersey Boys, Rock of Ages, Mamma Mia and We Will Rock You; Conclusion; Bibliography; Index.

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