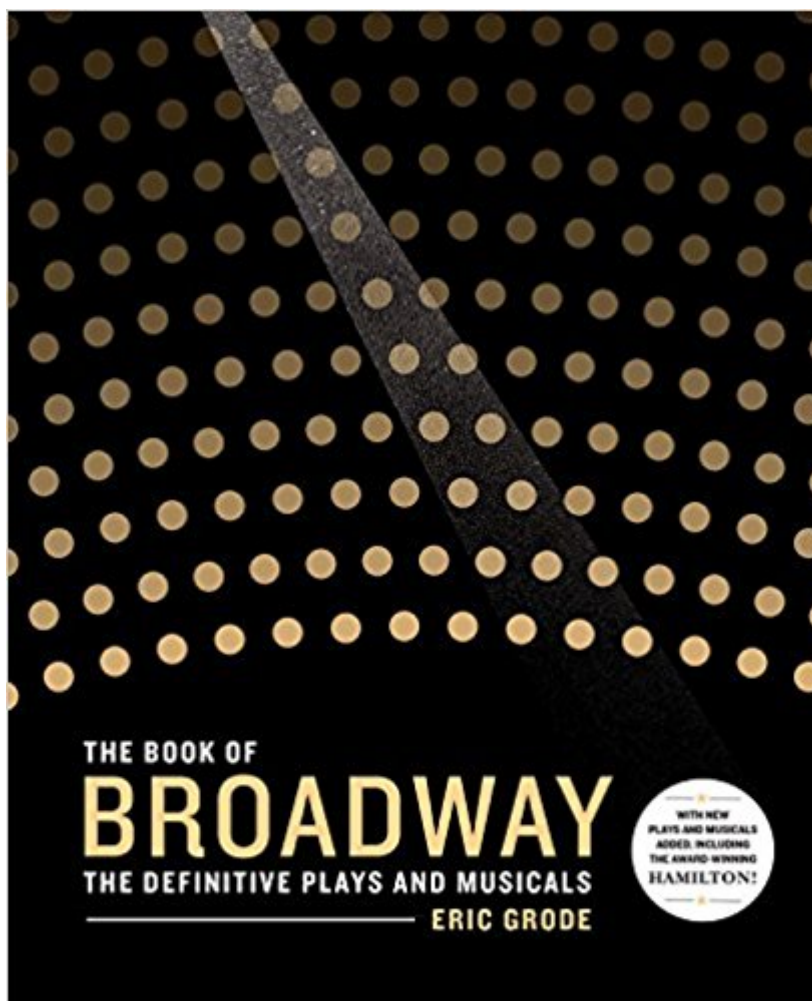


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The Book Of Broadway: The Definitive Plays And Musicals



Synopsis

The Book of Broadway is a celebratory, gorgeous tome dedicated to what is arguably the quintessential American art form: the Broadway show. Lose yourself in 150 profiles of the best, most influential, and most important Broadway musicals and plays ever produced. Shows profiled include everything from the 1860s musical *The Black Crook*, which captivated and titillated audiences for more than five hours, to *Hamilton*, Broadway's biggest story of 2016. The men and women who shaped Broadway history--such as Stephen Sondheim, Tennessee Williams, Bernadette Peters, Richard Rodgers, Oscar Hammerstein II, Ethel Merman, Marlon Brando, August Wilson, and Nathan Lane--are celebrated for their groundbreaking work and photographs throughout illustrate the stunning designs of the shows. This comprehensive book by Eric Grode--arts writer for *The New York Times*, and author of *Hair: The Story of the Show That Defined a Generation*--is the ultimate guide to Broadway shows. Even if you consider yourself an expert in the theater, you will be amazed by the fantastic Broadway trivia scattered throughout this volume, as well as the palpable sense of history in this encyclopedic treatment of one of our most beloved pastimes. Just a few of the titles included are: *Annie*-*The Book of Mormon*-*Bye Bye Birdie* -*Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* -*Chicago*-*Death of a Salesman*-*Fiddler on the Roof*-*Grease*-*Guys and Dolls*-*Hamilton*-*Hello, Dolly!*-*Kiss Me, Kate*-*Les Miserables*-*The Music Man*-*My Fair Lady*-*The Phantom of the Opera*-*Rent*-*Six Degrees of Separation*-*The Sound of Music*-*A Streetcar Named Desire*-*West Side Story* And so many more!

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Customer Reviews

"...informative without being too dry or academic...hefty, colorful, attractive and certain to stimulate debate among theater lovers" - Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
"It's a treasure trove of pictures, facts, and personal connections assembled by a knowledgeable and talented theater critic who clearly loves his subject" - Nashville Arts Critic

Eric Grode is the director of the Goldring Arts Journalism Program at Syracuse University's S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. He writes regularly about theater for the New York Times and is the author of "Hair: The Story of the Show That Defined a Generation." He previously was the head theater critic for the New York Sun and Broadway.com, and he has also written for New York magazine, the Wall Street Journal, the Village Voice and several other publications.

Eric Grode's *The Book of Broadway: The Definitive Plays and Musicals* was originally published in 2015, with the subtitle *The 150 Definitive Plays and Musicals*. Entries are alphabetical, from *Abie Irish Rose* to the *Ziegfeld Follies of 1919*. There are now more than 150 profiles of plays and musicals as there are new entries for *The Cradle Will Rock*, *Hamilton*, *Journey's End*, *The Threepenny Opera* and *Topdog/Underdog*. As well as providing the key facts about each production (opening date; number of performances; synopsis; awards; revivals and adaptations; and original stars) there's a brief but illuminating and anecdote-packed mini-essay placing each play or musical in context. The whole package comes lavishly illustrated in both black and white and colour. So what's not to like? In the Introduction Grode sets out his criteria for inclusion. Some, such as "inherent quality" he rightly admits are highly subjective. Otherwise the most obviously arbitrary criterion is his decision to ignore all works dating from the pre-Broadway era. Thus Ibsen (for *A Doll's House*), Shaw (for *Mrs Warren's Profession* and *Pygmalion*) and Wilde (for *The Importance of Being Earnest*) are all in but the likes of Sophocles, Shakespeare and Chekov are out (Shaw even gets a third bite of the cherry if you count

My Fair Lady (Richard Burton's towering Tony award-winning performance as Hamlet, which at 137 performances set the record for the longest run of the play in Broadway history, is excluded. Burton generally fares poorly in *The Book of Broadway*, for although there are name checks in passing in the entries on Coward's *Private Lives* and Albee's *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* his *Camelot* (which in its original production notched up 873 performances and 2 previews) is a notable omission. It almost seems as if there's some bias on Grode's part against Port Talbot! Thus although Peter Shaffer's *Amadeus* appears, his *Equus*, in which Anthony Hopkins played Dysart and which actually notched up more Broadway performances than *Amadeus*, is omitted. It is, however, the missing musicals which are most likely to raise eyebrows, as in addition to *Camelot* they include *Oliver!*, *Funny Girl*, *Half a Sixpence*, *Oh, What a Lovely War!*, *Sweet Charity*, *Starlight Express*, *Spamalot*, *Mary Poppins*, *Hairspray*, *Miss Saigon*, *Mamma Mia!* and *Beauty and the Beast*. Mind you, one of the beauties of *The Book of Broadway* is precisely the fact that it can give rise to endless debate about what should and what should not have been included. The only answer, and one devoutly to be wished for, is for yet another and substantially expanded edition.

The *Book of Broadway* by Eric Grode is a free NetGalley ebook that I read in mid-June. A giant tome of a book with a two-page snippet of nearly 200 Broadway plays (indicating their production dates, synopsis, awards won, original stars, revivals and adaptations, information about the playwright, the goings-on of American culture at the time of its release, the author's reactions, noted lines and songs, critical acclaim, etc.), alphabetically from *Abie's Irish Rose* to the *Ziegfeld Follies* of 1919. It's a highly comprehensive book that pulls no punches and that I learned a lot from.

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