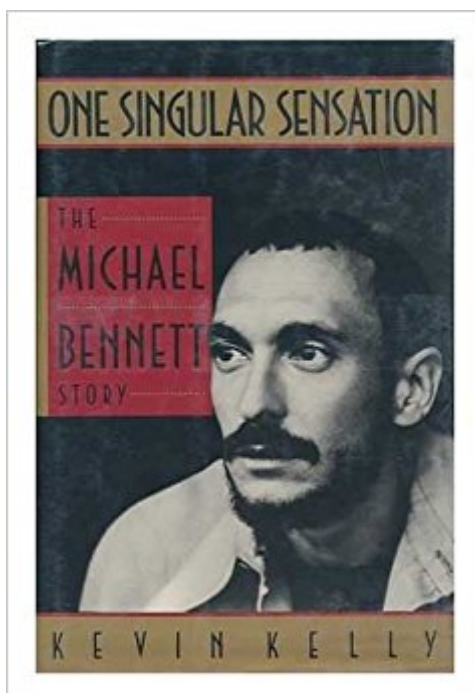


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One Singular Sensation



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Customer Reviews

Basing his biography on tape-recorded interviews with Bennett, his friends, lovers, associates and family members, and often preserving their own words, Kelly, theater critic for the Boston Globe, traces the career of the brilliant young choreographer-director of *A Chorus Line*, *Ballroom*, *Dreamgirls* and other important musicals. Bennett emerges as a complex and driven personality, enormously ambitious, single-minded about show business, ruled by the need to control, addicted to drugs, obsessed by fear of the Mafia and unable to establish lasting relationships. In the end, all of these disturbing characteristics seem insignificant compared to his remarkable accomplishments and the loss occasioned by his death from AIDS at the age of 44. Photos not seen by PW.

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Hard on the heels of Denny Martin Flinn's *What They Did for Love* and Ken Mandelbaum's admirable *A Chorus Line and the Musicals of Michael Bennett* (both LJ 6/15/89) comes the first full biography of the Broadway director-choreographer. Boston theater critic Kelly interviewed those closest to Bennett and explores his personal and professional relationships and love affairs with sometimes brutal honesty. Kelly is never tentative, and his account is far more gossipy and at times more spiteful than the others. Kelly does provide a fine balance between the life and the career, although Mandelbaum goes into greater detail about the shows. Bennett's creativity may have been undeniable, but despite claims of his enormous popularity and charisma, all three books point out his repeated cruelties and immense ego, so that the cumulative effect is an intense dislike of the

man on the part of the reader. Kelly's biography should be the talk of Shubert Alley for some time to come; theater collections will need both Mandelbaum and Kelly for completeness.- Eric W. Johnson, Univ. of Bridgeport Lib., Ct. Copyright 1990 Reed Business Information, Inc.

The definitive book about Michael Bennett's life. The unusual approach to a career that led to the Pulitzer Prize musical, A CHORUS LINE. It is a must read for anyone interested in writing for the theatre. His work on THE CHORUS LINE and DREAMGIRLS among so many others is fascinating. His self-education concerning theatre is amazing. He just had the gift and was able to demonstrate time after time that one does not need a degree in theatre to have the knowledge and ability it takes to do great things on stage. His personal life was equally fascinating, and tragic, but he managed to do so much in so little time. This book is a treasured part of my musical library.

Great biography of the man who brought us the great musical "A Chorus Line". From his roots in Buffalo, NY to his success on Broadway, his was a very unconventional life. The author brings Bennett to life through meticulous research and straightforward writing. Also, the author did a good job of honestly portraying Bennett's strengths and weaknesses--the mark of a good biographer.

Alot of inaccuracies. Many misquotes. Mr. Kelly obviously had no regard for his subject or the truth, only his own agenda and profit margin. Don't waste your time or money. This book is suitable for the circular file.

I was handed this book to read by my dear friend and colleague, a relative of the late Michael Bennett. It is a fascinating, if somewhat gossipy and at times downright spiteful, account of the Broadway choreographer/director who created "A Chorus Line" A global success at age thirty, Michael Bennett created such blockbusters as Seesaw, Dreamgirls and the longest running musical in history, A Chorus Line. Often compared to superstar director/choreographers such as Bob Fosse and Jerome Robbins, he worked with scores of sensational talents: Katherine Hepburn, Tommy Tune, Neil Simon and Stephen Sondheim. His public battles with producers made front page news and his frenetic private life was the stuff of steamy backstage gossip. Yet, despite his incredible fame, Bennett was a lonely, tortured man, craving intimacy and seeking it in incandescent omnigendered love affairs, yet never allowing himself to accept it or to partake of any genuine kind of intimacy. Boston theater critic Kevin Kelly interviewed Bennett's family, friends, lovers and co-workers and explores his personal and professional relationships and personal involvements

with often more-than-necessarily brutal honesty. The author does provide a good balance between the man's life and his career, although Kelly seems to go to lengths to point out his subject's repeated missteps, foibles and immense ego, so that the author's apparently intended effect is to engender an intense dislike of the man on the part of the reader. Michael Bennett emerges as a complex, driven personality, immeasurably ambitious, monomaniacal about show business, beset by an unremitting need to control, addicted to drugs and sex, obsessed by fear of organized crime and unable to establish lasting relationships. Notwithstanding the author's seeming effort, I found it impossible to dislike the man, who gave so much to the world but took so little real pleasure from it himself, as if to do more than "go through the motions" and experience real feelings would in some way diminish his talent. An interesting but flawed - and I suspect quite biased - account, but one worth the attention of Broadway historians and musical theater aficionados.

Engrossing and very frank interpretation of the life, genius and dark side of Michael Bennett. Interviews with Michael's mother, brother and his many collaborators helped the late author Kevin Kelly to paint a portrait of Michael as a driven and complex individual. This is brutally honest and fascinating.

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