



The American Musical and the Performance of Personal Identity

Raymond Knapp

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The American musical has long provided an important vehicle through which writers, performers, and audiences reimagine who they are and how they might best interact with the world around them. Musicals are especially good at this because they provide not only an opportunity for us to enact dramatic versions of alternative identities, but also the material for performing such alternatives in the real world, through songs and the characters and attitudes those songs project.

This book addresses a variety of specific themes in musicals that serve this general function: fairy tale and fantasy, idealism and inspiration, gender and sexuality, and relationships, among others. It also considers three overlapping genres that are central, in quite different ways, to the projection of personal identity: operetta, movie musicals, and operatic musicals.

Among the musicals discussed are *Camelot*, *Candide*; *Chicago*; *Company*; *Evita*; *Gypsy*; *Into the Woods*; *Kiss Me, Kate*; *A Little Night Music*; *Man of La Mancha*; *Meet Me in St. Louis*; *The Merry Widow*; *Moulin Rouge*; *My Fair Lady*; *Passion*; *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*; *Singin' in the Rain*; *Stormy Weather*; *Sweeney Todd*; and *The Wizard of Oz*.

Complementing the author's earlier work, *The American Musical and the Formation of National Identity*, this book completes a two-volume thematic history of the genre, designed for general audiences and specialists alike.

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