“Reading the Great White Way: Performance and Commercial Scripts of the American Musical Stage”

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Bibliography List

Please note that the creators of these musicals are in the same order as they appear in the scripts. As a result, there are variations in terms of whether the composer, lyricist, or author is listed first.


A first edition discarded by a library. This is a baseball take on the Faustian legend, where an old man trades his soul for the chance to become the Yankees’ star hitter only to find that he loves his wife more than the game. Originally starred Gwen Verdon as the devil’s sexy sidekick, Lola, who despite the song does not get what she wants.


This is an extremely beat-up performance script acquired through Ebay. A pajama factory dominated by female workers engages in a strike action over a 7 ½ cent raise. But the real conflict is between the new manager, Sid Sorokin, and the union representative, Catherine “Babe” Williams.


A performance script from the ubiquitous French publishing company, complete with a flesh-pink cover. This is a modern take on the 1920s vaudeville and burlesque shows. Full of bawdy humor and old-fashioned musical numbers; there is no plotline to speak of. Marked the Broadway debut of Mickey Rooney.


Strange tale of a mysterious bloodthirsty plant named Audrey and the poor sap, Seymour, whom it tricks into constantly feeding it. One of the most nihilistic Broadway endings ever: the plant kills Seymour, his (human) girlfriend, and starts a take-over of the world.

A performance script. Based on the movie of the same name, this melodrama revolves around a strong willed Virginia farmer who tries to keep his family neutral during the Civil War.


The first performance script I ever purchased once I knew what to look for in bookstores. The story is a fictionalized biography of sharpshooter Annie Oakley, featuring the famous song “There’s No Business Like Show Business.”


I found this performance script at a used bookstore in Scotland, and it is not in very good shape. Why someone in Scotland would be performing a Cold War-era musical comedy about an American diplomat is a mystery.


A relatively obscure musical that pokes mostly gentle fun at the more ridiculous aspects of “show biz” and at the conventions of the B-movie thrillers of 1940s Hollywood. A varied group of characters attempt to untangle the mystery of the Stage Door Slasher.


The first musical script I ever purchased. Beautiful hardcover edition of Blitzstein’s Brecht/Weill-inspired “play in music”. It is more famous for its first performance rather than the plot or music: the federal government tried to shut the show down so performers sang from the theater aisles to keep within the letter of the law -- it was illegal to perform the show on stage.

The cover, glaringly yellow, is singularly unattractive. This is the musical that inspired Marc Blitzstein to write his leftist musical *Cradle Will Rock*. However, this is probably Brecht’s least political work, even if it the most familiar to American audiences.


Set in Brechtian Chicago - it is the tale of a Salvation Army girl who falls for Chicago's toughest gangster and reforms him and his gang. Not particularly well known, certainly in comparison to *Threepenny Opera* or *Mother Courage*. Some scholars see this show as a forerunner for *Guys and Dolls*.


A glossy tie-in book designed for fans of the musical and the movie. Includes a fun essay by Mel Brooks about the process of transitioning his manic film into a workable piece of musical theater. The script includes some interesting margin notes on alternate jokes and lyrics.


A "film noir" musical that features two intertwined plots. Author Stine is attempting to write a Hollywood screenplay and save his marriage. Meanwhile, his fictional creation, private eye Stone, attempts to solve the mystery of a missing woman and keep Stine from selling out his artistic talent. Has a great pulp image for the cover.


This performance script has an unusually snazzy cover. The “Twentieth Century” is the ocean liner where the plot takes place. A flamboyant theatrical impresario tries to persuade a film star to appear in his next production, outwit rival producers and creditors, all while getting rid of a religious nut and the film star's boyfriend. Comden and Green were most famous for *On the Town* and their long-lived writing partnership.

One of the silliest and worst musical scripts I have ever read. It may someday be possible
to turn Sherlock Holmes into a believable song and dance man, but Baker Street is not
that show. Clearly trying to tap into the market for Victorian musicals started by *My Fair
Lady*.

Ebb, Fred (book and lyrics), Bob Fosse (book), and John Kander (music). *Chicago: A

French’s performance edition. A dark concept musical that proceeds in a series of
chronological sketches that is less about character development than it is about the ideas
of fame and fortune (and showcasing Fosse’s sexy choreography).

Fratti, Mario (book and lyrics) and Giuseppe Murolo (music). *Encounter 500 (Cristoforo

A time-traveling (or even past lives) love story between two New Yorkers in the Public
Library on 12 October 1992, the anniversary of Columbus landing in America. The
modern characters magically transform into Cristoforo Colombo, Queen Isabella, and
King Ferdinand. Weird.

Friml, Rudolf (music), W. H. Post (book and lyrics), and Brian Hooker (book and lyrics).

An acting edition that includes photos of crowd scenes for staging purposes. Paris is
under siege by the forces of the Duke of Burgundy and popular support of King Louis XI
is at a low point. Thief and poet Villon, the darling of the Paris mob, has sent anonymous
love poems to the beautiful Katherine de Vaucelles, causing her to reject proposals from
the king. She goes to seek the mysterious poet at an inn, the king shadows her in disguise;
chaos ensues.

Hammerstein, Oscar (book and lyrics), Frank Mandel (book and lyrics), Laurence
Schwab (book and lyrics), Sigmund Romberg (music). *The New Moon*. New York:
Harms Incorporated, 1935.

A performance script for a British production. The musical takes place between the years
1792-1793 in New Orleans, and features the good ship New Moon on which romantic
adventures take place. The character list includes “courtiers, ladies, servants, sailors,
pirates, etc.”, all key ingredients for a “romantic musical play”.

Hanmer, Ronald (adaptation), Phil Park (adaptation), Paul Francis Webster (lyrics), and
A bright red performance script. This musical could be read as a 1960s gloss on *Annie Get Your Gun* given their similar plot-trajectories. The tomboy Jane learns to become more feminine over the course of the show and learns to love the right man.


A British performance script for one of Hammerstein’s pre-*Oklahoma!* musicals, with a focus on British subjects, typical of shows from this period. The story is as convoluted as it is silly, and focuses on three couples on a transatlantic cruise from England to the U.S. and various reasons for the romantic permutations that result. To start the plot moving: Sunny is trying to escape a forced marriage to Mr. Wendell-Wendell.


This show falls squarely in the category of “operetta”, both in terms of plot and musical style. A handsome rebel leader whose band of freedom fighters, the Riff, threaten the safety of a French outpost in the Moroccan desert. In reality, the Shadow is Pierre, unassuming son of French General Birabeau. Margot, a young French girl falls love with the Red Shadow, little suspecting his true identity.


This musical has a long and troubled history; Latouche was the original lyricist, but was fired from the project, Parker was only a temporary replacement. The story follows Voltaire’s play *Candide*, but never finds a consistent tone, in spite of Bernstein’s lovely score.


A London acting edition script that includes photos of stage designs for the production. Technically a “light opera” and not a proper musical, but it only cost $4.00. On the eve of the Franco-Prussian War, Lucy Veracity Willow is about to enter into an arranged marriage with Thomas Trout. However, she soon falls in love with the actor, Pierre Fontaine, and elopes with him instead.

A musical about two gay men—one a drag queen—who need to hide the true nature of their relationship when their son decides to get married to the daughter of a conservative politician. Broadway’s first “out of the closet” musical treats the subject with kid gloves.


It’s not the musical you’re thinking of. Long before Andrew Lloyd Webber interpreted Gaston Leroux’s novel, there was this version. MacNeill in fact composed very little original music; the score contains rearrangements of music by Offenbach, Verdi, Mozart, and others.


A performance script. This musical originally starred Mary Martin in “yellow face” as the bride (Tchao-Ou-Niang) abandoned by her scholar husband. He achieves success in Peking, but is forbidden to return or communicate with his beloved. His wife decides to travel alone to Peking; a confrontation with him and his new life follows.


Before the John Travolta vehicle there was this subversive parody of 1950s culture, full of everything that decade supposedly repressed.


This is technically a production history of the show that also includes the script as part of the package. This deceptively simple show—it is literally a boy-meets-girl-boy-loses-girl-boy-finds-girl musical—is an off-Broadway legend that originally starred the late Jerry Orbach.

A performance script. Set in a saloon in a western mining camp in the 1850s, *Gold Dust* is a very loose musical adaptation of Moliere’s *The Miser*.


The cover is decorated with the iconic Roman frieze that was the musical’s signature image. The musical, based on the Fellini film *8 ½*, concerns forty-year-old Guido Contini, famous Italian film director with three women in his life: his wife Luisa, his mistress Carla, and the actress Claudia (his protégé). Much of the show takes place as fantasy movie sequences or as flashbacks to Guido's childhood.


Truly the “little musical that could”, *Urinetown* is the brainchild of two men who hate musicals. Amazingly, the show avoids scatological humor for biting social and political commentary, all while maintaining a great sense of humor and great music.


Another acting edition script found in London. It includes photos of set designs and diagrams for the dance numbers. Set in and around Vienna in 1914. A typical romantic musical featuring flower girls and princes.


A true cult show -- it had 8 performances before closing and Sondheim fans insist no one has given it a fair shake -- about political corruption and what it means to be sane. A truly convoluted plot involving fake miracles and escaped lunatics from the local asylum.


A musical version of George Bernard Shaw’s *Pygmalion*. In the Lerner and Lowe version, Professor Higgins and Eliza Dolittle fall in love at the end. Perhaps one of the best examples of the type of "heterosexual closure" for which classic Broadway musicals are known.

A very basic performance script. A musical-within-a-musical set within Brookville High School as a variety of high school kids audition for the musical version of *David Copperfield*.


A dark concept musical about how we are all complicit in the great evils of the world. German cabaret performance is used as an analogy for German indifference to the Nazi take-over of their country.


Originally a film about working class British men who resort to stripping down to “the full monty” as a way to reclaim their masculinity, the musical transplants the story to upstate New York. The focus on male legs on the cover is interesting given the traditional emphasis in musicals on the feminine form.


This seems to be a “bootleg” performance script, given the dire warning label on the front cover about not reselling the script. Bought through Ebay, with no questions asked. A musical based on a comic strip character, Little Orphan Annie.


A performance script. Set in the Salzkammergut region of Upper Austria, this musical romance concerns the headwaiter of the White Horse Inn in St. Wolfgang. Leopold Brandmeyer. He’s in love with the owner of the inn, Josepha Vogelhuber, who at first only has eyes for one of her regular guests, Dr. Siedler.

A commercial script for the musical retelling of the classic children’s story by Frances Hodgson Burnett. This is the only musical on this list where the creative team is women-only.


Another glossy piece of tie-in merchandise; it includes stunning photographs from the original production and an interesting layout for the text of the script. The story is based on the film by John Waters.


A London performance script for the first “integrated” musical. In spite of its basic boy-meets-girl-plot, *Oklahoma!* changed the face of musical theater in America by focusing on American subjects and using music to advance, rather than interrupt, the plot (as was previously the case during the 1920s and 1930s).


A performance script for the musical, notable because this is the original version, before the show was revised to reflect the popular 1965 film adaptation. This show is unfairly characterized as “saccharine”; the original has much sharper edges that were blunted by Hollywood.


As Miss Brooks tries to deal with school problems, she dreams of an exotic vacation where she may meet a wonderful man. Unfortunately, the man of her dreams is the athletic coach, and all he thinks about is the team. Worse still, Miss Brooks has stolen his top athlete for her theatrical production.


A performance script that includes suggestions regarding how to milk the physical comedy in the show. This is not surprising. The show is partly a nostalgic tribute to, and
partly a send-up of the operetta form. Every convention of the genre is used, but many audiences might not be familiar with them, hence the reliance on physical comedy.


Commercial script. A frenetic musical comedy based on the works of Plautus, laced with double entendres, mistaken identities, and general silliness. Sondheim’s songs comment on the action and provide a rest from the laughter rather than being integrated with the plot.


A musical based on the real-life relationship of composer Marvin Hamlisch and lyricist Carole Bayer Sager. Vernon Gersch, winner of three Emmy Awards and one Academy Award for his music compositions, agrees to partner with young lyricist, Sonia Walsk. Even though Sonia already has a boyfriend, she and Vernon soon fall in love.


Charity Valentine is the eternal optimist. While working at the seedy Fan-Dango ballroom, she is taken advantage of has a string of bad relationships. When she meets the very nice Oscar, she hides her true profession and tells him that she works in a bank. (The musical works hard to avoid answering whether or not Charity is actually a prostitute.)


A musical retelling of a series of fairy tales, including the Baker and his wife, Jack and the Beanstalk, Cinderella, and Rapunzel. Loosely based on the theories of Bruno Bettleheim, the musical explores the dark side of “happily ever after.” Considered to be Sondheim’s most mainstream musical.

A beautiful fictional biography of the painter George Seurat; the first half focuses on his attempt to paint *Grand Jatte*, the second act focuses on his great-grandson’s attempt to create his own art. The cover is a reproduction of Seurat’s most famous painting.


This is a revised version of the original groundbreaking 1970 show. *Company* is often credited (or blamed) for changing the face of the Broadway musical because the show centers on an idea (“the concept musical”) rather than a straightforward romantic plot.


This musical explores the dangers of romantic obsession and the difficulties of heterosexual love so typical of Broadway musicals. In many ways could be defined as an anti-boy-meets-girl musical, since it is the very plain, but passionate, Tosca who pursues a man who is ultimately unworthy of her. Sondheim is clearly working with an operatic palette.


Known as Sondheim’s “Grand Guignol” musical, it was recently revived on Broadway in a scaled-down version with the actors playing their own instruments on stage. The story concerns a vengeful and murderous barber, corrupt law officials, and truly interesting meat pies.

Spewack, Sam and Bella (book), and Cole Porter (music and lyrics). *Kiss Me Kate*. 1948. London: Emile Littler, 1952 [?].

A beat-up performance version for a 1950s London production of this musical, found in a used bookshop in Michigan, and in remarkably good shape. There is no publication date noted; the musical was originally produced in the United States in 1948. This is perhaps one of Cole Porter’s best-known musicals. The plot is of the show-within-a-show variety: a feuding romantic couple frames the production of *The Taming of the Shrew*. Includes the hilarious song “Brush Up Your Shakespeare,” sung by a gangster duo.

A commercial script and University of Michigan library discard. Musicals during the 1960s were becoming edgier as they tried to appeal to younger audiences. The story follows Zorba (the Greek) and his traveling companion Nikos, a young American who has inherited an abandoned mine on Crete. Zorba falls in love with Hortense and Nikos falls in love with The Widow. A mentally unstable man, Pavli, commits suicide after witnessing Nikos and the Widow together. Then, a member of Pavli’s family murders The Widow.


A commercial reprint that includes images from the original production starring Zero Mostel. Arguably one of the most popular musicals of all time, it tells the story of the Russian Jew Tevye and the slow shift from his traditional way of life to modernity and migration as told through the romantic entanglements of his three daughters.


This script is a cheap tie-in book that corresponded with the release of the big budget flop movie version of the stage show. The script, oddly, is for the stage version. The musical was itself a remake of the play *The Matchmaker*, which was also made into a film.


This show ran for a total of five performances on Broadway. The story concerns two nineteenth century vaudevillians Edward Harrigan and Tony Hart as they strive to create a new form of entertainment: the Broadway musical!


A commercial hardcover book with a significant number of photographs from the original production. The Doonesbury gang tries to figure out their futures as they graduate from college amidst the dawn of the Regan era.

Commercial script. One of the more unattractive book covers—a very ugly brown with neon-yellow lettering—which detracts from the classic Al Hirschfeld sketches. The musical tells a version of *Don Quixote* and includes the song “To Dream an Impossible Dream”. On stage, the show is actually quite disturbing; it features an on-stage near gang rape of the female lead character, Dulcinia.


One of the most interesting things about this musical is that the entire score is in waltz time. Based on the film *Smiles of a Summer Night*, the musical focuses on the romantic tribulations of four couples during a long summer weekend. Features what is perhaps Sondheim’s most famous song, “Send in the Clowns”.


The title does not refer to meat products, but to Tenderloin, Manhattan, part of New York’s red-light district during the 1890s. The Reverend Brock tries and fails to reform the Tenderloin; this musical is clearly part of the “edgier” type of musicals that emerged during the 1960s.


This musical features an original script and lyrics set to the music of jazz great Jelly Roll Morton. A fictionalized biography of the famous jazzman, with striking cover art reminiscent of art from the Harlem Renaissance.