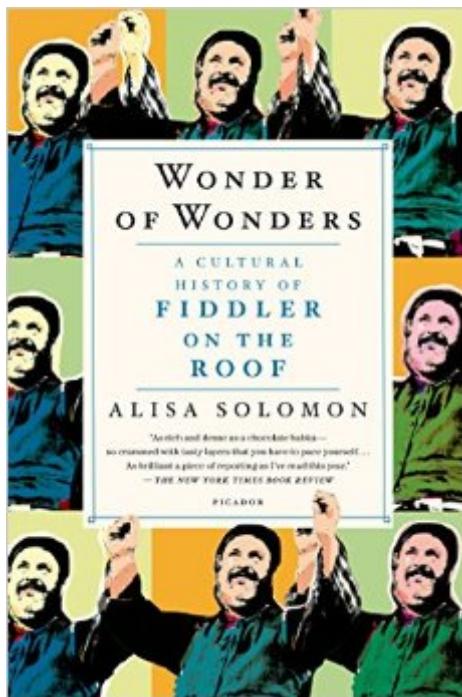


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Wonder Of Wonders: A Cultural History Of Fiddler On The Roof



Synopsis

In the half-century since its premiere, *Fiddler on the Roof* has become a supremely potent cultural landmark, beloved by audiences the world over. Now, in a history as captivating as its subject, award-winning drama critic Alisa Solomon traces how and why the story of Tevye the milkman, the creation of the great Yiddish writer Sholem-Aleichem, was reborn as blockbuster entertainment and a cultural touchstone, not only for Jews and not only in America. It is first a story of the theater, as Solomon follows Tevye from his humble appearance on the New York Yiddish stage, through his adoption by leftist dramatists as a symbol of oppression, to his Broadway debut and his starring role in a major Hollywood picture. And it is a cultural story, of a show that spoke to the deepest conflicts and desires the world over: the fraying of tradition, generational tension, the loss of roots. Entertaining and original, *Wonder of Wonders* reveals the profound legacy of a show about tradition that itself became a tradition.

Book Information

Paperback: 448 pages

Publisher: Picador; Reprint edition (September 2, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1250058708

ISBN-13: 978-1250058706

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 0.8 x 9.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (48 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #294,688 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #157 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > Performing Arts > Theater > Broadway & Musicals #192 inÂ Books > Arts & Photography > Music > Musical Genres > Musicals #1002 inÂ Books > History > World > Jewish

Customer Reviews

The story of Tevye and Anatevka has taken on a cultural life of its own, as has the music from the "Fiddler on the Roof". The worldwide impact is all the more impressive when we look at the story's origins in a series of Yiddish short stories written by Sholem-Aleichem in the decades that bridge the 19th and 20th centuries. The path from these beginnings to Broadway and Hollywood success was neither straightforward nor easy, and it was not clear that these stories would find wide acceptance. That the story has been so wildly successful is a tribute to the efforts of the many people who worked so hard to interpret and transform the stories, while preserving something essential that

seems to speak to widely diverse audiences. This book is a detailed examination of the history of that transformation, from the original short stories, through various efforts to adapt them to the stage, to the ultimate Broadway and Hollywood triumphs that mark the "Fiddler on the Roof". Along the way, it touches on issues as widely divergent as the immigration and assimilation struggles of Eastern European Jews in the US in the first half of the 20th century, the history of American theater in the middle of the century, and the cultural impact that the musical has had since it opened on Broadway in the mid-1960s. At times, the level of detail swamps the narrative, but it attests to the depth of the author's research into the history and impact of this work. There are parts of this book that are likely to appeal to a wide range of readers, from those who want to understand the effort it takes to construct a Broadway musical, to those who want to better understand the cultural and political concerns of Jewish immigrants a century ago.

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