

Creating the Broadway Musical Libretto: A Comprehensive Guide

The libretto is the heart and soul of a Broadway musical. It tells the story, develops the characters, and provides the framework for the music and dance. Writing a successful libretto is a complex and challenging task, but it is also one of the most rewarding experiences in the theater world.



Words with Music: Creating the Broadway Musical Libretto (Applause Books) by Lehman Engel

★★★★☆ 4.8 out of 5

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In this comprehensive guide, acclaimed librettists Michael John LaChiusa and Amy E. Harmon share their insights and expertise on the art of creating a Broadway musical libretto. They cover everything from the initial concept to the final draft, with practical advice on every step of the process.

The Importance of a Strong Story

The most important element of any libretto is a strong story. This means creating a compelling plot with well-developed characters that the audience

can connect with. The story should be engaging, entertaining, and emotionally resonant.

To create a strong story, LaChiusa and Harmon recommend starting with a clear understanding of your theme. What is the central message that you want to convey to the audience? Once you have a clear theme, you can begin to develop your plot and characters.

Developing Complex Characters

The characters in your libretto are just as important as the plot. They need to be believable, relatable, and sympathetic. The audience needs to be able to identify with them and root for them.

To develop complex characters, LaChiusa and Harmon recommend using a variety of techniques, such as backstory, motivation, and conflict. Backstory helps to establish who your characters are and why they are the way they are. Motivation drives their actions and decisions. And conflict creates tension and drama.

Integrating Music and Dance

Music and dance are essential elements of a Broadway musical. They help to tell the story, create atmosphere, and evoke emotion. The librettist needs to work closely with the composer and choreographer to ensure that the music and dance are integrated seamlessly into the story.

LaChiusa and Harmon offer practical advice on how to integrate music and dance into your libretto. They discuss the different types of songs and dance numbers, and how to use them effectively to advance the story.

Writing the Dialogue

The dialogue in your libretto is what the characters say to each other. It needs to be natural, believable, and engaging. The audience needs to be able to follow the dialogue easily and understand the characters' motivations.

To write effective dialogue, LaChiusa and Harmon recommend using a variety of techniques, such as subtext, conflict, and wit. Subtext is what the characters are not saying explicitly. Conflict creates tension and drama. And wit can add humor and lightness to the dialogue.

Writing a Broadway musical libretto is a challenging but rewarding task. It requires a combination of creativity, storytelling skills, and technical expertise. With the help of this comprehensive guide, you can learn the secrets of crafting a successful libretto that will entertain and move audiences for years to come.



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