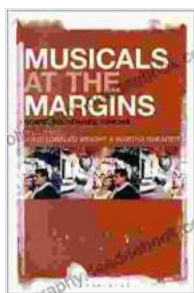


Musicals At The Margins: Genre Boundaries and Canons

The world of musicals has long been defined by its adherence to certain conventions and tropes. From the sweeping romances of Broadway to the energetic spectacle of West End productions, musicals have often been confined within a narrow set of parameters.



Musicals at the Margins: Genre, Boundaries, Canons

by Julie Lobalzo Wright

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However, in recent years, a new wave of musicals has emerged that challenges these established boundaries. These musicals, often referred to as "musicals at the margins," explore unconventional themes, employ experimental techniques, and defy traditional genre classifications.

Breaking the Mold: Form and Function

Musicals at the margins often push the boundaries of musical theater's form and function. They experiment with non-linear narratives, fragmented structures, and unconventional song styles.

For instance, the musical "Passing Strange" (2008) tells the story of a young man's journey of self-discovery through a series of vignettes and musical numbers. The show's unique storytelling style and eclectic musical score challenge traditional expectations of musical theater.

Similarly, the musical "Fun Home" (2015) explores the complex relationship between a father and daughter through a blend of autobiographical storytelling and dreamlike sequences. The show's unconventional structure and intimate, personal narrative set it apart from more conventional musicals.

Expanding the Canon: Diverse Voices and Stories

Musicals at the margins also play a crucial role in expanding the canon of musical theater by amplifying diverse voices and stories that have been historically marginalized.

The musical "Hamilton" (2015) is a groundbreaking example of this trend. By telling the story of the American Revolution through the lens of hip-hop and R&B, "Hamilton" challenges traditional narratives of American history and brings greater representation to marginalized communities.

Another notable example is the musical "The Color Purple" (2005), which adapts Alice Walker's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel into a powerful and moving musical. The show explores themes of race, gender, and domestic

violence, giving voice to experiences often overlooked in mainstream musicals.

Challenging Traditional Genres

Musicals at the margins often challenge the boundaries between traditional musical genres. They blend elements of opera, rock, jazz, and even electronic music to create unique and unexpected soundscapes.

The musical "Hadestown" (2019) is a haunting and atmospheric retelling of the Orpheus and Eurydice myth. The show's blend of folk, blues, and gospel music creates a captivating and otherworldly atmosphere.

Similarly, the musical "Six" (2018) re-imagines the wives of Henry VIII as a pop-punk girl group. The show's energetic and infectious score subverts the historical narrative and empowers marginalized female voices.

The Power of Experimentation

Musicals at the margins embrace experimentation as a means of pushing the boundaries of musical theater. They utilize unconventional staging, immersive technologies, and audience participation to create transformative and intimate experiences.

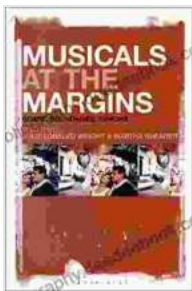
The musical "Sleep No More" (2011) is a groundbreaking immersive theater experience that allows audiences to explore a haunted hotel and interact with the performers. The show's non-linear narrative and interactive elements create a unique and unforgettable experience.

Another example is the musical "NATASHA, PIERRE & THE GREAT COMET OF 1812" (2012). The show's immersive staging and use of

audience seating within the performance space blur the lines between performers and audience, creating a truly immersive and emotionally captivating experience.

Musicals at the margins are transformative and groundbreaking works that challenge traditional genre conventions and expand the boundaries of musical theater. By embracing diversity, experimentation, and unconventional storytelling, these musicals create new and exciting possibilities for the art form.

As we continue to push the boundaries of musical theater, it is essential to recognize and support the groundbreaking work of musicals at the margins. These musicals not only entertain but also spark important conversations, inspire empathy, and create a more inclusive and representative musical landscape for all.



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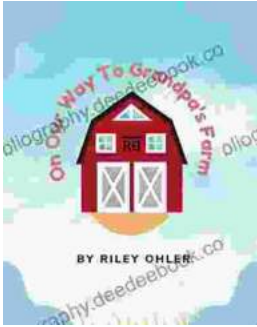
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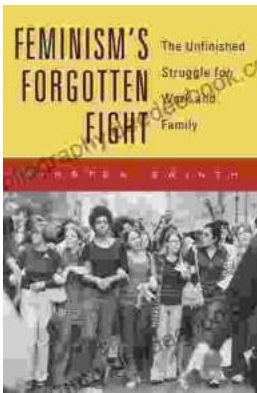
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