

The Broadway Musical in the 1970s: A Decade of Innovation and Change

The Broadway musical underwent a major transformation in the 1970s, with new genres, themes, and styles emerging. This decade saw the rise of the concept musical, the rock musical, and the musical revue, as well as a new focus on social issues and personal stories.

The Rise of the Concept Musical

One of the most significant developments in the Broadway musical in the 1970s was the rise of the concept musical. These shows were based on a single, overarching idea or theme, and their music, lyrics, and staging were all designed to support that theme.



One More Kiss: The Broadway Musical in the 1970s (The History of the Broadway Musical Book 6)

by Ethan Mordden

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

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Some of the most famous concept musicals of the 1970s include:

- *Company* (1970): A musical about a single man in his 30s who is struggling to find love and commitment.
- *A Chorus Line* (1975): A musical about a group of dancers who are auditioning for a Broadway show.
- *Chicago* (1975): A musical about two women who are accused of murder.
- *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street* (1979): A musical about a barber who murders his customers and bakes them into pies.

Concept musicals were a major departure from the traditional Broadway musical, which had typically focused on romantic comedies or historical dramas. These new shows were more complex and challenging, and they often dealt with darker and more controversial themes.

The Rock Musical

Another major development in the Broadway musical in the 1970s was the rise of the rock musical. These shows featured rock music, and they often dealt with contemporary social issues.

Some of the most famous rock musicals of the 1970s include:

- *Hair* (1967): A musical about a group of hippies who are living in New York City during the Vietnam War.
- *Jesus Christ Superstar* (1971): A musical about the life of Jesus Christ.
- *The Rocky Horror Picture Show* (1973): A musical about a group of people who are stranded at a castle during a storm.

- *Evita* (1978): A musical about the life of Eva Perón.

Rock musicals were a major departure from the traditional Broadway musical, which had typically featured more traditional music. These new shows were more energetic and exciting, and they appealed to a younger audience.

The Musical Revue

The musical revue was another popular form of Broadway entertainment in the 1970s. These shows were made up of a series of short sketches, songs, and dances, and they often featured a satirical or comedic tone.

Some of the most famous musical revues of the 1970s include:

- *Oh! Calcutta!* (1969): A musical revue about sex.
- *The National Lampoon Show* (1973): A musical revue featuring the cast of the National Lampoon magazine.
- *A Little Night Music* (1973): A musical revue about love and relationships.
- *Annie* (1977): A musical revue about an orphan girl who is adopted by a wealthy family.

Musical revues were a popular way to showcase the talents of a variety of performers, and they often featured a mix of comedy, music, and dance.

A New Focus on Social Issues and Personal Stories

In the 1970s, the Broadway musical began to focus more on social issues and personal stories. This was due in part to the changing social and

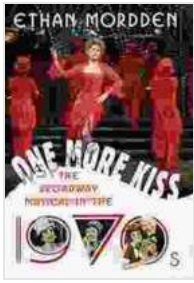
political climate of the time. The Vietnam War, the civil rights movement, and the feminist movement were all having a major impact on American society, and these issues were reflected in the Broadway musicals of the era.

Some of the Broadway musicals that dealt with social issues include:

- *Hair* (1967): A musical about a group of hippies who are living in New York City during the Vietnam War.
- *The Wiz* (1975): A musical about a young woman who travels to Oz to find her way home.
- *A Chorus Line* (1975): A musical about a group of dancers who are auditioning for a Broadway show.
- *Dreamgirls* (1981): A musical about a group of singers who are trying to make it in the music industry.

These musicals were a departure from the traditional Broadway musical, which had typically focused on romantic comedies or historical dramas. These new shows were more realistic and gritty, and they often dealt with the challenges and struggles of everyday life.

The Broadway musical in the 1970s was a time of great innovation and change. New genres, themes, and styles emerged, and the Broadway musical began to focus more on social issues and personal stories. These changes helped to make the Broadway musical a more relevant and engaging form of entertainment, and they continue to influence the Broadway musical today.



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