



The Voodoo That They Did So Well: The Wizards Who Invented the New York Stage

Stefan Kanfer

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Manhattanites have always had a disdain for the rearview mirror. That's where trends begin, and the citizens of Gotham are concerned with the here and now rather than the then and there. Yet Manhattan's history is rich, filled with personalities who helped create the modern theater and made Broadway the center of show business—a distinction it still holds. *The Voodoo That They Did So Well* takes an endearing look at some of these giants. Stefan Kanfer writes about Irving Berlin, George and Ira Gershwin, Cole Porter, Richard Rodgers, and Stephen Sondheim, and considers the shining stars of New York's vibrant Yiddish theater, the colorful personalities who starred in two-a-day vaudeville, and the astonishing life of Lorenzo Da Ponte, a Renaissance man if ever there was one (Mozart's most brilliant collaborator landed in Manhattan after dazzling Europe, and wound up selling groceries and teaching Italian at Columbia University). Richard Rodgers's first song hit was "Manhattan," with lyrics by Lorenz Hart. The chorus read: "The great big city's a wondrous toy / Just made for a girl and boy / We'll turn Manhattan / Into an isle of joy." Manhattan remains an isle of joy in large part because of the men and women who led the way, and whose lives and art animate every page of this delightful gavotte.

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