



The Great Parade: Broadway's Astonishing, Never-to-Be-Forgotten 1963-1964 Season

Peter Filichia

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It was the Broadway season when Barbra Streisand demanded "Don't Rain on My Parade" and Carol Channing heard the waiters at the Harmonia Gardens say "Hello, Dolly!". From June 1, 1963 through the final day of May 31, 1964, theatergoers were offered 68 different productions: 24 new plays, 15 new comedies, 14 new musicals, 5 revivals of plays, 3 revues, 3 plays in Yiddish, 2 in French, 1 double-bill and even 1 puppet show. Peter Filichia's *The Great Parade* will look at what a Broadway season looked like a half-century ago analyzing the hits, the flops, the trends, the surprises, the disappointments, the stars and even how the assassination of JFK and the arrival of the Beatles affected Broadway. *The Great Parade* is a chronicle of a Broadway season unprecedented in the star power onstage: Barbara Streisand, Carol Channing, Claudette Colbert. Colleen Dewhurst, Hal Holbrook, Mary Martin, Christopher Plummer, Robert Preston, Julie Harris, Jason Robards, Jr., Carol Burnett, Tallulah Bankhead, Alec Guinness, Kirk Douglas, Albert Finney, Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Richard Burton, Mary Martin, Beatrice Lillie, Hermione Gingold, Robert Redford and many more. Neil Simon and Stephen Sondheim burst on to the Broadway stage with *Barefoot in the Park* and *Anyone Can Whistle*. The '63-'64 season was one of Broadway's greatest and in *The Great Parade*, Peter Filichia gives us another classic.

The Great Parade: Broadway's Astonishing, Never-to-Be-Forgotten 1963-1964 Season Details

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From Reader Review The Great Parade: Broadway's Astonishing, Never-to-Be-Forgotten 1963-1964 Season for online ebook

Russell Sanders says

When I was in junior high in the early 1960s, I carted around a copy of David Ewen's Complete Book of the American Musical Theater. I was never without it, and it was heavy, I tell you. My point is this theater obsessed boy was fascinated by Ewen's accounts of the musicals that had played Broadway since Broadway began. Later in the decade, when I acquired a copy William Goldman's The Season, in which Goldman analyzed every production of the 1967-1968 Broadway season, I was enraptured. This never-out-of-Texas boy felt he'd gone to NYC, seen the bright lights of Broadway, and experienced Nirvana. That junior high theater nut, since then, has read countless books about theater, and they have never failed to enlighten, entertain, and fuel my lust for theater. Until now. Peter Filichia's The Great Parade, Broadway's Astonishing Never-To-Be-Forgotten 1963-1964 Season, for me, was a colossal bore. Filichia is so full of himself as a writer. His style is cutesy, riddled with puns and what he considers insider-information. He speaks of the musicals first, and then he tackles the comedies, the dramas, the revivals, the shows that featured anything about minorities, and the cast albums. So Filichia certainly did his research, and it is exhaustive. But the book is exhausting. Why do so many of the dramas need a four or five page summary from first word spoken to curtain call? And does Filichia love theater at all? I just didn't get that feeling, as he endlessly analyzes why shows failed but doesn't do much praising. Instead, he seems very focused on critics' reactions and the personal peccadillos of actors, directors, and producers. And he most certainly doesn't seem to have much love for women superstars. He has very few kind words for the first lady of musical theater Mary Martin. Elizabeth Taylor, who didn't appear on Broadway that season, is mentioned simply because Richard Burton was on Broadway then, and Filichia ridicules her for her many marriages, as if that has anything to do with his analysis of Burton's Hamlet. Filichia seems pissed off that Barbra Streisand chose the movies over theater, and yet, his opinion of Funny Girl is fairly low, so why does he care that she never came back to Broadway? He saved the most vitriol for American legend Carol Burnett. He lets us know that she can't sing and killed a show because she preferred TV to live theater, which seems to me to be an oversimplification of the turmoil surrounding her show Fade Out, Fade In. Furthermore, after trashing one of American's most beloved performers, he lets us know that she didn't return to Broadway for many years until "no other branch of entertainment was courting her." Somehow I can't imagine a woman who is almost worshipped by TV fans, made several well-received movies, proved herself a supremely wonderful dramatic actress in her TV film Friendly Fire, and did sold-out concerts returned to Broadway because she was desperate to work. I can see producers clamoring to present her in a show, however, and the show she chose, Putting It Together, a compendium of Sondheim songs, was quite delightful, showing off Burnett's comedic skills and her exquisite delivery of song. No, Filichia seems to be puffing, wanting us to believe he knows everything there is to know about theater. And for that, he gets an award: one of my few book reviews that rate one star.

Brandi says

Sometimes I feel like I was born a couple decades too late...

The only Broadway play I had the privilege of seeing was Andrew Lloyd Webber's "Starlight Express" when I was a kid. I've also seen a couple Off-Broadway, but it's just not the same.

In "The Great Parade: Broadway's Astonishing, Never-to-Be-Forgotten 1963-1964 Season", author Peter Filichia discusses the hits and misses of the 1963-1964 Broadway Season.

I would love to have seen "Fiddler on the Roof", "Hello, Dolly!", "Folies Bergère", "Funny Girl" and "The Owl and the Pussycat" back in their heyday, along with many of the other shows featured during that season.

Though that could obviously never happen, reading Filichia's book was the next best thing! I was surprised

by the sheer star power present on stage during the season as well. I would love to have seen Paul Newman, Joanne Woodward, Claudette Colbert, Carol Channing and Tallulah Bankhead back in the day.

Mr. Filichia's book provides an excellent historical view of the 63-64 season and I would recommend it to any theatre lovers who are interested in what the Broadway season looked like a half-century ago. I would definitely read more of this author's works in the future.

This book was won from the Goodreads.com website.

Ray says

The Great Parade contains everything you would like to know about the Broadway season that started in June of 1963 and wrapped up in May of 1964 - and quite a bit more. It is well researched and details each of the shows (musicals, comedies, dramas, revivals and other odds & ends) that played on The Great White Way, and even some that never actually arrived. The best known - Hello Dolly, Funny Girl, Barefoot in the Park, Any Wednesday, Dylan, The Deputy, Luther and The Subject was Roses. My problem with the writing was the author's imposition of his own critiques onto each production. It would irritate me to hear him talk about a 'possible' song that could have gone into a scene to enhance it, but, alas, was never written. It's one thing to give your opinion about a show, another to talk about how you would have made it better. That's what dropped a '4-star' revue to 3-stars, for me.

Richard says

Since I am a big theatre geek and a fan of Filichia's earlier writings, I expected this to be an excellent read. Unfortunately it was too geeky even for me--lots of details and speculation about completely forgotten shows. This is definitely a book for skimming--I don't believe anyone will read every single word.

V. Briceland says

Peter Filichia's survey of every theatrical production—whether play, musical, or revival—that hit the Broadway stages during the 1963-1964 season reads very much like a livelier, less cynical, infinitely less hateful response to William Goldman's *The Season: A Candid Look at Broadway*. Filichia isn't really concerned in exposing Broadway's seedy and less-than-masculine underbelly. He simply celebrates a year packed with unusually good productions, and does so show by show, regardless of whether it ended up running for more than seven years, like *Hello, Dolly!*, or for nine nights (sorry, *Anyone Can Whistle*).

I found the late-book chapter on minorities (both racial and sexual) on Broadway particularly interesting—who knew that African Americans comprised so much of the cast of *Here's Love*? If the book has a weak spot, it's in the plot summaries of some of the more obscure plays; Filichia has a tendency to romp through his synopses with great enthusiasm but a marked disregard for crystal clarity. I found myself having to re-read more than one of them closely to get the gist.

Dolores says

This information-packed book looks at the Broadway season of 1963-64, analyzing the hits, flops, stars, and even how the assassination of President Kennedy and the arrival of the Beatles in New York affected Broadway. The inclusion of the opinions of the daily newspaper critics and their differing viewpoints is interesting.

I particularly enjoyed reading about the major musicals, including Hello, Dolly! and Funny Girl. A couple of items: Louis Armstrong's gravelly rendition of "Hello, Dolly" resulted in his first No. 1 hit since 1932. And Barbra Streisand wasn't quite 22 when she opened in "Funny Girl". Many people thought she was too young to pull it off, but they were so wrong.

Anyone who is interested in Broadway shows and the theater should love this book....I certainly did. And I appreciate receiving it free from Goodreads First Reads.

James says

Unreadable. Venturing into 170 pages of this 260 page book was too far to go ... meandering, poor continuity, and usually just incomprehensible. Author Filichia, a Broadway critic, 'tries' to tell the history of the 1963-64 season of Broadway stage musicals and plays, but his fade-in and fade-out on the plays and their plots and the people involved is so badly constructed and confusing. It reads like really small musical inebricated tap dancer pranced on the keys of his computer without any sense of rhythm. A book on Broadway that you should 'close' before it opens.
