



Loverly: The Life and Times of My Fair Lady (Broadway Legacies)

Dominic McHugh

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Few musicals have had the impact of Lerner and Loewe's timeless classic *My Fair Lady*. Sitting in the middle of an era dominated by such seminal figures as Rodgers and Hammerstein, Frank Loesser, and Leonard Bernstein, *My Fair Lady* not only enjoyed critical success similar to that of its rivals but also had by far the longest run of a Broadway musical up to that time. From 1956 to 1962, its original production played without a break for 2,717 performances, and the show went on to be adapted into one of the most successful movie musicals of all time in 1964, when it won eight Academy Awards. Internationally, the show also broke records in London, and the original production toured to Russia at the height of the Cold War in an attempt to build goodwill. It remains a staple of the musical theater canon today, an oft-staged show in national, regional, and high school theaters across the country.

Using previously-unpublished documents, author Dominic McHugh presents a completely new, behind-the-scenes look at the five-year creation of the show, revealing the tensions and complex relationships that went into its making. McHugh charts the show from the aftermath of the premiere of Shaw's *Pygmalion* and the playwright's persistent refusal to allow it to be made into a musical, through to the quarrel that led lyricist Alan Jay Lerner and composer Frederick Loewe to part ways halfway through writing the show, up to opening night and through to the present. This book is the first to shed light on the many behind-the-scenes creative discussions that took place from casting decisions all the way through the final months of frantic preparation leading to the premiere in March 1956. McHugh also traces sketches for the show, looking particularly at the lines cut during the rehearsal and tryout periods, to demonstrate how Lerner evolved the relationship between Higgins and Eliza in such a way as to maintain the delicate balance of ambiguity that characterizes their association in the published script. He looks too at the movie version, and how the cast album and subsequent revivals have influenced the way in which the show has been received. Overall, this book explores why *My Fair Lady* continues to resonate with audiences worldwide more than fifty years after its premiere.

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