



Bustle Fashions 1885-1887: 41 Patterns with Fashion Plates and Suggestions for Adaptation

By Frances Grimble

Reviewed by Rachel E. Pollock

Directoire Revival Fashions 1888-1889: 57 Patterns with Fashion Plates and Suggestions for Adaptation

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Stage Money: The Business of Professional Theatre

By Tim Donahue and Jim Patterson

Reviewed by Laurie Kincman

When Broadway Was the Runway : Theater, Fashion, and American Culture

By Marlis Schweitzer

Reviewed by Martha Marking

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et a designer provides to a shop foreman for a show set in the late 19th century. Academics may be disappointed by the lack of traditional citations, endnotes or footnotes, and the inclusion of only a selected bibliography. As comprehensive companion volumes, however, both are excellent additions to the library of a professional costume production facility.

Rachel E. Pollock is costume crafts artisan for Playmakers Repertory Theatre and a lecturer in UNC Chapel Hill's MFA program in costume production; she is the author of *Sticks in Petticoats: Parasol Manufacture for the Modern Costumer*.

Stage Money

The Business of Professional Theatre

by Tim Donahue and Jim Patterson; Columbia, South Carolina, University of South Carolina Press, 2010; 176 pp. Cloth, \$49.95; Paper, \$24.95.

Reviewed by Laurie Kinckman

Stage Money: The Business of Professional Theatre is among the newest offerings in arts management resources. As the title suggests, it focuses on the financing of theatrical productions, using standard economic concepts to explore the monetary considerations at play in commercial and nonprofit theatre.

At the outset, Tim Donahue and Jim Patterson, both recently retired from the University of South Carolina, identify the goal of the text to be an understanding of "the cost of theatre." They examine the structuring of commercial productions, theories and practices surrounding ticket pricing, and the differences between Broadway and the nonprofit world. The authors take on some of the conventional wisdom of the theatre business, finding some maxims to be well founded and others to be little more than rumor. These considerations are presented using a dual framework, providing examples from recent theatre seasons and also drawing comparisons to other industries in the United States. This approach provides readers with a solid grasp of important concepts and a clear way for applying these principles to their own experiences.

Well-chosen highlights

The authors have chosen productions from seasons between 2000-2007. Although these are not the shows making news in our daily papers, the examples do not feel dated. Instead, they are well-chosen highlights, recent enough to be recognizable but distant enough to receive an "after-the-fact" assessment. A future edition of the text may feature a new collection of plays and musicals, but the authors' choices serve this version of the book well.

Donahue and Patterson have a combined background representing both the business and creative sides of theatre. This thoroughness of perspective gives the book its accessibility. *Stage Money* is not a guide for aspiring producers but rather an investigation of how money is raised and spent. Business terminology is balanced with specific examples, making the



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information useful to theatrical managers both with and without an M.B.A. It will also appeal to arts management educators looking for new textbooks for the classroom.

Stage Money is organized into seven chapters. Beginning with a look at commercial theatre, it introduces the theatrical producer, how he or she acquires a property, and the legal structure under which the production is developed and run. After this introduction, the text explores risk and return, showing parallels between common investments such as treasury bonds or the stock market and the Broadway

investor. The notion of the hit and the flop is examined from the book's dual perspective, including statistics from the Small Business Administration and quotes from current producers who have seen both success and failure.

The authors appropriately expand the definition of commercial theatre to include not just Broadway theatres but also touring productions and the growing presence of theatre in Las Vegas. Donahue and Patterson explore the variety of producing structures on the road, discuss briefly the nonunion touring controversy, and follow the transformation of PACE Theatrical, one of the most important touring producers, from its beginnings as a boat show producer in Houston through various sales, splits, and reincarnations. While such a corporate biography might sound confusing, it serves as a solid example of the complexities and changes that are constantly afoot in our industry.

Helpful graphics

Throughout the book, the authors have included numerous charts to provide helpful graphical representations of key concepts. The visual learners

amongst us appreciate a secondary method for explaining such topics as union fee minimums, investment rates of return, revenue distribution, or the breakdown of income sources in a nonprofit theatre. Additionally successful are the sidebars. Presented as if the authors were pushing a pause button and stepping outside the text, these brief inserts often appear to be answers to questions they anticipate a reader to have at that moment.

The most potentially complex chapter in the book is the one that examines the intricacies of ticket pricing. But just when the reader might begin to feel overwhelmed by an exploration of operating leverage or price differentiation, the practical examples again bring the economic concepts within grasp. Discussions of the TKTS booth in New York or the premium seat strategy of *The Producers* help the reader appreciate the considerations needed to lead a show toward financial success.

At the end of each chapter is an extended case study related to some aspect of the previous discussion. These "intermissions," as they are called, take a more in-depth look at key players in the business. Our introduction to

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commercial theatre is followed by a portrait of Disney on Broadway. Risk and return segues into an examination of the Shubert Foundation. Other features include Actors Equity Association, *Playbill* magazine, and Steppenwolf Theatre Company in Chicago. Some of this material is summarized from other writings (as noted within the text), and while I would have appreciated a more direct citation in order to find the original sources to read further, these examples contribute greatly to the accessibility and usefulness of the text.

Nonprofit theatre

The least successful chapter in the book is that which sets out to explore the structure of nonprofit theatre and to differentiate it from the commercial model on which the book has focused thus far. Donahue and Patterson begin with a good discussion of the IRS definition, but they quickly lose the reader with a rapid introduction of a variety of theatre service organizations such as the Theatre Communications Group and

the League of Resident Theatres. While the point may have been to demonstrate the lack of clarity that the mere designation of "professional" provides a theatre, the reader must navigate several pages of confusing and only moderately useful information to find the heart of the chapter—important nonprofit terminology including mission, incorporation, and contributed income. A reorganization of the chapter would help the reader recognize the differences between these two theatrical worlds more quickly. This would also better set up the book's final chapter, which explores the intertwining of commercial and nonprofit theatre over the last several decades.

Despite these minor criticisms, *Stage Money* is a valuable addition to the collection of arts management literature. It is easy to find publications devoted solely to marketing or fundraising, but I know of no other book that takes on financial topics in such detail. Arts management texts typically devote a chapter or two to money matters, but they are not able to offer such useful explanations or extensive context.

Donahue and Patterson have also taken one final step to extend the value of *Stage Money*. The authors operate a website in conjunction with the text (www.stagemoney.net) which offers brief analyses of current issues and maintains a news feed of links to reports and articles relevant to the business of theatre from the major daily papers and service organizations. It is a nice companion and one that allows the authors to continue providing topical examples of the book's most important lessons.

Laurie Kinckman is assistant professor of stage management and arts administration in the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse Department of Theatre Arts. Her background includes production and administrative management positions for nonprofit theatre and dance companies. Her article "Stocking the Kit: Undergraduate Stage Management Training in the United States" was published in the fall 2010 issue of TD&T. She is a member of USITT and the Midwest Regional Section.

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