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Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof

Alisa Solomon

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A sparkling and eye-opening history of the Broadway musical that changed the world

In the half-century since its premiere, *Fiddler on the Roof* has had an astonishing global impact. Beloved by audiences the world over, performed from rural high schools to grand state theaters, *Fiddler* is a supremely potent cultural landmark.

In a history as captivating as its subject, award-winning drama critic Alisa Solomon traces how and why the story of Tevye the milkman, the creation of the great Yiddish writer Sholem-Aleichem, was reborn as blockbuster entertainment and a cultural touchstone, not only for Jews and not only in America. It is a story of the theater, following Tevye from his humble appearance on the New York Yiddish stage, through his adoption by leftist dramatists as a symbol of oppression, to his Broadway debut in one of the last big book musicals, and his ultimate destination—a major Hollywood picture.

Solomon reveals how the show spoke to the deepest conflicts and desires of its time: the fraying of tradition, generational tension, the loss of roots. Audiences everywhere found in *Fiddler* immediate resonance and a usable past, whether in Warsaw, where it unlocked the taboo subject of Jewish history, or in Tokyo, where the producer asked how Americans could understand a story that is "so Japanese."

Rich, entertaining, and original, *Wonder of Wonders* reveals the surprising and enduring legacy of a show about tradition that itself became a tradition.
Wonder of wonders, miracle of miracles.

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