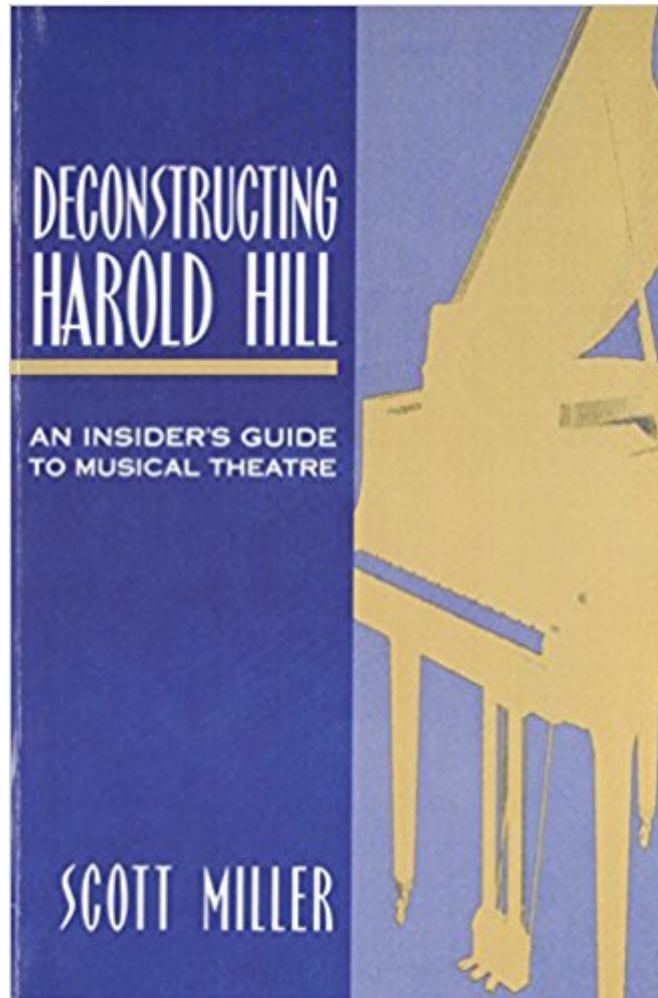




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# Deconstructing Harold Hill: An Insider's Guide To Musical Theatre



## Synopsis

Following on the success of the very popular and well-reviewed *From Assassins to West Side Story* comes *Deconstructing Harold Hill*. This is a book for all fans of musical theatre, and a must for directors and actors. Scott Miller's thoughtful analyses of some of the great works of the musical theatre take the buff or the professional on a journey of discovery. Each chapter looks at one musical, addressing: textual and musical themes ways in which production design can support those themes insight into the motivation and background of the characters historical and social context of the action of the show and much more. Miller spotlights *The Music Man*, *Chicago*, *The King and I*, *Passion*, *Ragtime*, *Sunday in the Park with George*, and others. All are innovative works, providing a springboard for the kind of in-depth discussion among directors, their actors, and designers that can make working on a musical - or just seeing one - the most satisfying experience you've ever had. You'll never look at musicals the same way again! Visit the website of Scott Miller's company New Line Theatre at [newlinetheatre.com](http://newlinetheatre.com)

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Miller contends that Americans don't take American musicals seriously; more precisely, American directors don't. That is why, he argues, most of the most imaginative and daring recent Broadway revivals have been directed by Brits and Australians. American directors are less willing to plumb the depths of musicals and to uncover, for instance, *Camelot's* dark subtext or the deep structure of *The Music Man*. Miller strives to set things aright by analyzing *Camelot*, *Chicago*, *The King and I*,

March of the Falsettos, The Music Man, Passion, Ragtime, and Sunday in the Park with George. He intends for regional and community theater directors to use the book to penetrate to the heart of a show--something he accomplishes admirably well, for music, plot, character development, and performance style each gets a turn under Miller's microscope. In fact, Miller's book is too fascinating to be hogged by would-be directors. Students of theater will find it a godsend, and general audience members for musical theater should find it quite appealing. Jack Helbig

"A deep-dish analysis (for actors and directors alike) of [The Music Man] and others like the current Chicago and the dearly departed Ragtime." --Playbill"Miller's book is too fascinating to be hogged by would-be directors. Students of theater will find it a godsend, and general audience members for musical theater should find it quite appealing." --Booklist"The chapters are all presented in an infectiously readable, undeniably intelligent manner that should be a happy help to theatre professionals interested in producing a particular show." --Backstage"Miller's insights and analyses are consistently fresh and fascinating." --Encore"I have a feeling from this book that there is one American director who is imaginative and daring with his new productions of classic American musicals: Scott Miller." --Peter Filichia, Theatre.com"œ[Miller] aims at the heart of each work and reaches it with artistic insight. Those who participate in the theatre at any level as well as those with an avid interest in the subject will discover some fresh ideas here.â •â "Library Journal on From Assassins to West Side Story

I am about to launch into directing a community theatre production of THE MUSIC MAN. Our group always makes a habit of researching every possible resource before we begin. Reading the chapter in this book (which does a thorough analysis of the show) was a requirement. Mr. Miller does an exceptional job of pointing out the backgrounds and motivations of the major characters, and even points out how certain musical themes serve to underscore important plot points. Although written in simple language, you come away feeling like an expert. There are a total of eight shows under the microscope in the book, including CAMELOT, CHICAGO, and THE KING AND I. I'd recommend it to anyone who is involved in any way with a performance of one of the shows--and, for that matter, anyone who enjoys musical theatre.

This book is a wonderful companion piece to From Assassins To West Side Story from the same author. It continues his detailed reviews and clues as to how to look at some common musicals. The information he provides about the librettists' and composers' conceptual intentions has definitely

helped me to look at some shows I once considered stale and overdone in a completely new light. An invaluable tool for any director or theatre teacher.

I loved this author's first book, *From Assassins to West Side Story*, but I wasn't prepared for the further depth and greater brilliance of his second book, *Deconstructing Harold Hill*. This is a man who knows his theatre, who understands human nature, and who cares enough about great art to treat it seriously and respectfully without being afraid to criticize it or demand fresh approaches. This is a work of great intellect that is still accessible to readers with no theatre or music background (a rarity), and yet, I would guess, in depth and surprising enough to aid the most experienced professional. In his introduction, Mr. Miller complains that American directors don't come at older American musicals with fresh enough perspectives, and the rest of the book does what those directors can't -- it looks, as if for the first time, at a collection of wonderful, important musicals, looking at them fresh, taking the time to think about and question the things nobody else will. His discussion of the use of musical themes in *The Music Man* is incredible -- there's so much there I hadn't noticed before -- and his writing makes it all accessible for someone with no music background. His discussions of the character of Harold Hill -- basically a villain who acts like a hero -- is fascinating. He sees glorious little details in this show I've never seen before. His chapter on *Camelot* opened my eyes like never before to the depth and possibilities of this show that usually falls into the shadow of *My Fair Lady*. Mr. Miller sees complexity and nuance in these characters that I've never seen explored before. How amazing it would be to see a production of *Camelot* that used Mr. Miller's ideas. The show would be transformed instantly from a pretty musical into a soaring, searing piece of tragic theatre. His chapter on *Chicago* makes a compelling case for why the revival doesn't do the show justice. And his chapters on Sondheim musicals (*Passion* and *Sunday in the Park*) confirm for me that Mr. Miller is the preeminent American interpreter of Sondheim's works. Though I live in Seattle, I may just venture down to St. Louis to see Mr. Miller's ideas at work on his own stage. How lucky the people of St. Louis must be to have an artist this intelligent, this passionate, and this emotional working in their city.

I am a Lecturer in Acting and Music Theatre at the Central Queensland Conservatorium of Music (Bachelor of Music Theatre program) and *DECONSTRUCTING HAROLD HILL* is on my book list for the students. Why? Because underneath your writing is an undeniable energy, love, support for our craft; this fragile crystal of a business called 'show'. I am not really concerned whether or not I agree with your opinions, apothesis, arguments, discussions etc...what I want is my students to be infected

by PASSION and your book is an undeniable example of that. Like you and me, I WANT them to have opinions, to engage in lively and researched debate, to listen to/see the works of the repertoire, to know which song/scene comes from what and that takes energetic, rigorous and PASSIONATE research. If your book goes a wee way to get them off their arses and into action...so be it. I thank you for a book that has not only enthused my students but that goes one step further towards securing the fragile architecture of our business...WILL CONYERS

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