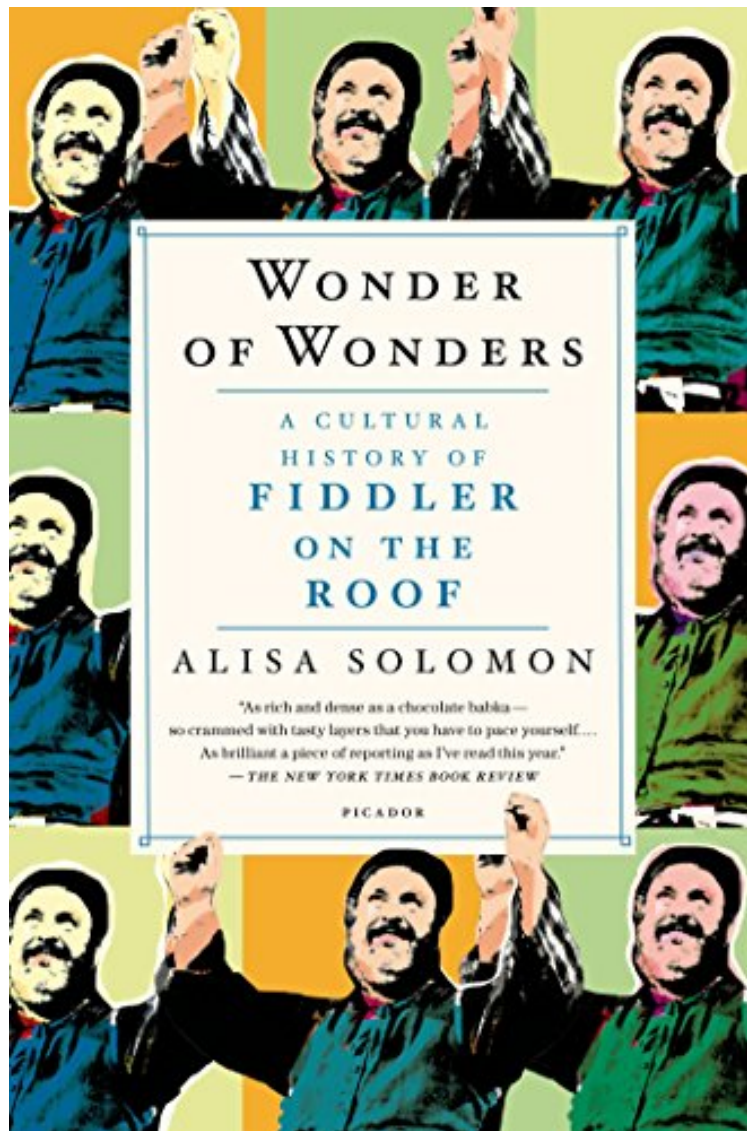


## Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof

Alisa Solomon

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**Alisa Solomon : Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Wonder of Wonders: A Cultural History of Fiddler on the Roof:

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Wonderful in every wayBy jjoMy only note of caution is that for those looking for nothing more than a backstage story of how this musical got made, you will only like part of the book. This is a cultural history, using Fiddler to examine how Jews have dealt with the notion of the Eastern European shtetl. It therefore starts with how Sholem Aleichem wrote what he wrote, and how his stories and plays were viewed in Europe and the U.S. It then moves on to Fiddler. While it does provide an extraordinary behind the scenes look, the

real focus is on how making the play caused the creators to reassess their heritage. Finally, it looks at how Fiddler has played around the world. The weakest section is on the creation of the movie, but even that had some interest. Extremely well written, so if the subject matter interests you, you should really enjoy the book. 6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A brilliant, meticulously researched scholarly book. By DKSforWriting I first fell in love with FIDDLER ON THE ROOF when I saw it performed on stage. I was twelve years old. My family played the record (LP) so many times, there were grooves within the grooves. In 1971, I again fell in love with FIDDLER when the movie, starring Israeli actor, Chaim Topol, was released. And now I have fallen in love with FIDDLER all over again thanks to Alisa Solomon's scholarly book, WONDER OF WONDERS, A CULTURAL HISTORY OF FIDDLER ON THE ROOF. Solomon is a brilliant writer who, through meticulous research (all notated) details a complete history and evolution of a phenomenon that, even today, 50 years after first appearing on Broadway, continues to 'speak' to a global audience, crossing many different cultures and faith backgrounds. Solomon's ability to recognize, impeccably research and cohesively and flawlessly describe precisely how FIDDLER became such a beloved global gem, is, in itself, a phenomenon. Solomon provides an encyclopedic knowledge of her subject, and in so doing, offers an erudite compilation that includes rare pictures and wonderful anecdotes taken from interviews (also meticulously documented) with surviving FIDDLER participants and their children. Anyone that loves FIDDLER will love-and learn--from this book. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Everyone can relate to Fiddler on the Roof--even the Japanese! By Vickie Rubinson Fascinating account of the history of the famous play "Fiddler on the Roof." Interesting behind-the-scenes stories of Zero Mostel and the other talented actors from the Broadway show. Interestingly, people from all over the world, including the Japanese, can relate to the story of an over protective father who wants his young daughters to marry well. Everyone can relate to this age old tale of "marrying upwards." I read this two years ago so I don't recall the details, but I highly recommend it. Zero Mostel was a wonderful actor.

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.

"As rich and dense as a chocolate babka--so crammed with tasty layers that you have to pace yourself... As brilliant a piece of reporting as I've read this year." The New York Times Book "Exuberant." The Wall Street Journal "An illuminating and detailed history." The Jewish Daily Forward "Glorious... A thrilling, must-read book... In more than thirty years of reading, writing and thinking about theater as an actor, critic and fan, I've never read a book on the subject that taught or moved me as much--reflecting Solomon's ability to weave gobs of meticulous research into a compelling, beautifully written story." Milwaukee Journal Sentinel "The aptly-titled Wonder of Wonders is the richest, deepest, most far-ranging, continuously and delightfully surprising book about a single work of theatrical art I've ever encountered. An intellectually serious, playful, and insightful account of popular art's power to shape memory and transmute history into universal myth, it is a soul-stirring joy to read, and only Alisa Solomon could have written it." Tony Kushner, author of Angels in America "I expected that this book would revive many treasured memories, which it certainly did. What I didn't expect to find was the fascinating history of Sholem-Aleichem's Tevye's Daughters or the riveting and unexpectedly moving account of Fiddler's fortunes after the end of the musical's Broadway run. I have always been proud of Fiddler, but never more so than after reading this astonishing book." Sheldon Harnick, lyricist, Fiddler on the Roof "Alisa Solomon was put on earth to write this exceptional and essential book. A world-class theater critic, a learned Yiddishist, a trenchant journalist, and just a plain wonderful writer, she has brought all her skills to bear in tracing the history of the Tevye stories that became Fiddler on the Roof. The Broadway musical, in her hands, becomes a Rosetta Stone for understanding the Jewish journey." Samuel G. Freedman, author of Jew vs. Jew: The Struggle for the Soul of America "Wonder of Wonders is a wonder! Alisa Solomon explains in vivid detail how and why Fiddler on the Roof became iconic as both authentically Jewish and universally relevant. A fantastic storyteller, an astute cultural interpreter, and a superb critic, Solomon offers an elegantly crafted, moving,

thoughtful, and entertaining account of Fiddler's journeys across time and place. This is the story of Fiddler for the ages." Stacy Wolf, author of *Changed for Good: A Feminist History of the Broadway Musical* "If you think you have seen Fiddler on the Roof, think again. The wonder of it all is the magic that transformed stories by Sholem-Aleichem into a near universal icon of enduring power. How that happened, the multifarious forms and meanings of Fiddler on the Roof, is the subject of Alisa Solomon's meticulously researched and beautifully written book." Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, author of *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, and Heritage* "Wonder of Wonders combines probing theater history with incisive cultural studies and a compelling narrative. From Sholem-Aleichem's Tevye stories to the triumphant Broadway musical, from politically charged productions in Brooklyn, Tel Aviv, and Krakow to the sanctification of Fiddler numbers in Jewish ritual, Alisa Solomon traces the transformation of Fiddler into a cultural phenomenon that has powerfully spoken for American Jews as well as so many others around the world." Jeffrey Shandler, author of *Shtetl: A Vernacular Intellectual History* About the Author Alisa Solomon teaches at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, where she directs the Arts Culture concentration in the MA program. A theater critic and general reporter for *The Village Voice* from 1983 to 2004, she has also contributed to *The New York Times*, *The Nation*, *Tablet*, *The Forward*, and other publications. Her first book, *Re-Dressing the Canon: Essays on Theater and Gender*, won the George Jean Nathan Award for Dramatic Criticism. She lives in New York City.