



The Migration of Musical Film: From Ethnic Margins to American Mainstream

Desirée J. Garcia

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Movie musicals are among the most quintessentially American art forms, often celebrating mobility, self-expression, and the pursuit of one's dreams. But like America itself, the Hollywood musical draws from many distinct ethnic traditions. In this illuminating new study, Desirée J. Garcia examines the lesser-known folk musicals from early African American, Yiddish, and Mexican filmmakers, revealing how these were essential ingredients in the melting pot of the Hollywood musical.

The Migration of Musical Film shows how the folk musical was rooted in the challenges faced by immigrants and migrants who had to adapt to new environments, balancing American individualism with family values and cultural traditions. Uncovering fresh material from film industry archives, Garcia considers how folk musicals were initially marginal productions, designed to appeal to specific minority audiences, and yet introduced themes that were gradually assimilated into the Hollywood mainstream.

No other book offers a comparative historical study of the folk musical, from the first sound films in the 1920s to the genre's resurgence in the 1970s and 1980s. Using an illustrative rather than comprehensive approach, Garcia focuses on significant moments in the sub-genre and rarely studied films such as *Allá en el Rancho Grande* along with familiar favorites that drew inspiration from earlier folk musicals—everything from *The Wizard of Oz* to *Zoot Suit*. If you think of movie musicals simply as escapist mainstream entertainment, *The Migration of Musical Film* is sure to leave you singing a different tune.

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