



# The Musical Theatre Writer's Survival Guide

By David Spencer

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*David Spencer has written a book full of truths a young writer will not find articulated anywhere else. Most of us in the theatre gained our "experience" by making mistakes and learning from them. David's book lets you gain the "experience" and skip the mistakes part. Anyone maneuvering the treacherous waters of musicals will find it not nearly so lonely or baffling with this remarkable volume as a companion.*

- Richard Maltby, Jr., Director/Lyricist, *Miss Saigon*, *Ain't Misbehavin'*, *Baby*

*Consider The Musical Theatre Writer's Survival Guide your new best friend in the business.*

- Alan Menken, Oscar recipient and Tony-Award nominee, composer, *Little Shop of Horrors* and *Beauty and the Beast*

*At long last: a how-to book written by someone who actually knows how to. It hits so many nails on the head I could barely get through it for the sound of all that hammering.*

- Larry Gelbart, Award-winning co-librettist, *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum* and librettist, *City of Angels*

For its practitioners, musical theatre is an art, a passion, and a lifelong love. But it's also a complex landscape involving not merely principles of craft about book, music and lyrics, but also principles of collaboration, script/demo presentation, project/production development, venue, business, and - everybody's area of uncertainty - politics.

In *The Musical Theatre Writer's Survival Guide*, award-winning musical dramatist and teacher David Spencer provides a guide-to-the-game that helps you negotiate all those aspects of the business and more. This professional handbook will walk you through:

- getting your name and your projects into the hands of producers, instead of the rejection pile
- choosing the right producer, agent, or director, instead of surrounding yourself with people uninterested in your work and your career-or interested for the wrong reasons
- bringing your vision to life through stage-savvy writing, instead of watching it

sputter due to flaws in craft

- living a happy, healthy life in musicals, instead of dying a slow, showbiz death.

If you're taking your first steps, Spencer's counsel, anecdotes, and instructions will save you years of blindly stumbling about without results. Likewise, if you've been around the block a few times, *The Musical Theatre Writer's Survival Guide* can rescue you from the kinds of career-stalling traps, bad habits, and false assumptions that lead to dead ends.

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## **Editorial Review**

### **About the Author**

David Spencer won a 2002 Richard Rodgers Development Award (as composer-lyricist for his current project, *The Fabulist*), a 2000 Kleban lyrics award, and two Gilman & Gonzalez-Falla Theatre Foundation grants. He has been the lyricist-librettist for two musicals with composer Alan Menken: *Weird Romance* and *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*. He made his professional debut in 1984 with the English adaptation of *La Boheme* at the Public Theatre and has since written music and lyrics for *Theatreworks/USA's* all-new, award-winning TYA versions of *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Les Miserables* and penned the original *Alien Nation* novel, *Passing Fancy*. He is on faculty at the BMI-Lehman Engel Musical Theatre Workshop and is webmaster and principal New York drama critic for *Aisle Say* ([www.aislesay.com](http://www.aislesay.com)).

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**Eric Alaniz:**

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