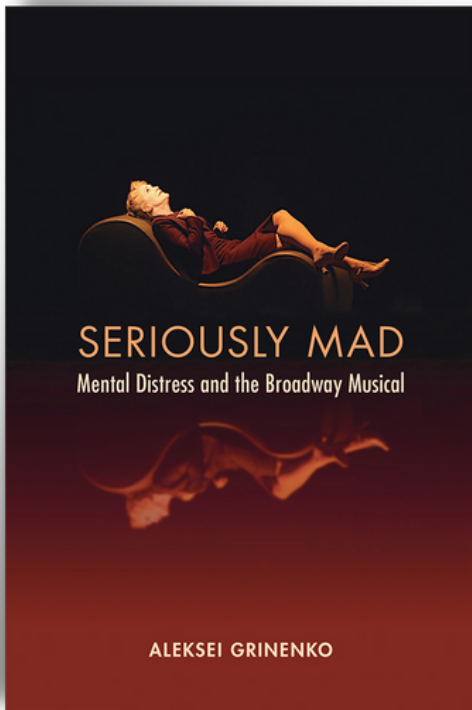




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SERIOUSLY MAD

MENTAL DISTRESS AND THE BROADWAY MUSICAL

Aleksei Grinenko

Theatermakers in the United States have long been drawn to madness as a source of dramatic spectacle. During the Broadway musical's golden age in the mid-twentieth century, creative teams used the currently in-vogue psychoanalytic ideas about mental life to construct troubled characters at odds with themselves and their worlds. As the clinical and cultural profile of madness transformed over the twentieth century, musicals continued to delve into the experience of those living with mental pain, trauma, and unhappiness.

Seriously Mad offers a dynamic account of stage musicals' engagement with historically significant theories about mental distress, illness, disability, and human variance in the United States. By exploring who is considered mad and what constitutes madness at different moments in U.S. history, Aleksei Grinenko shows how, in attempts to bring the musicals closer to highbrow sophistication, theater dramatized serious medical conditions and social problems. Among the many Broadway productions discussed are *Next to Normal*, *A Strange Loop*, *Sweeney Todd*, *Man of La Mancha*, *Gypsy*, *Oklahoma!*, and *Lady in the Dark*.

Aleksei Grinenko teaches theater history at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts.

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