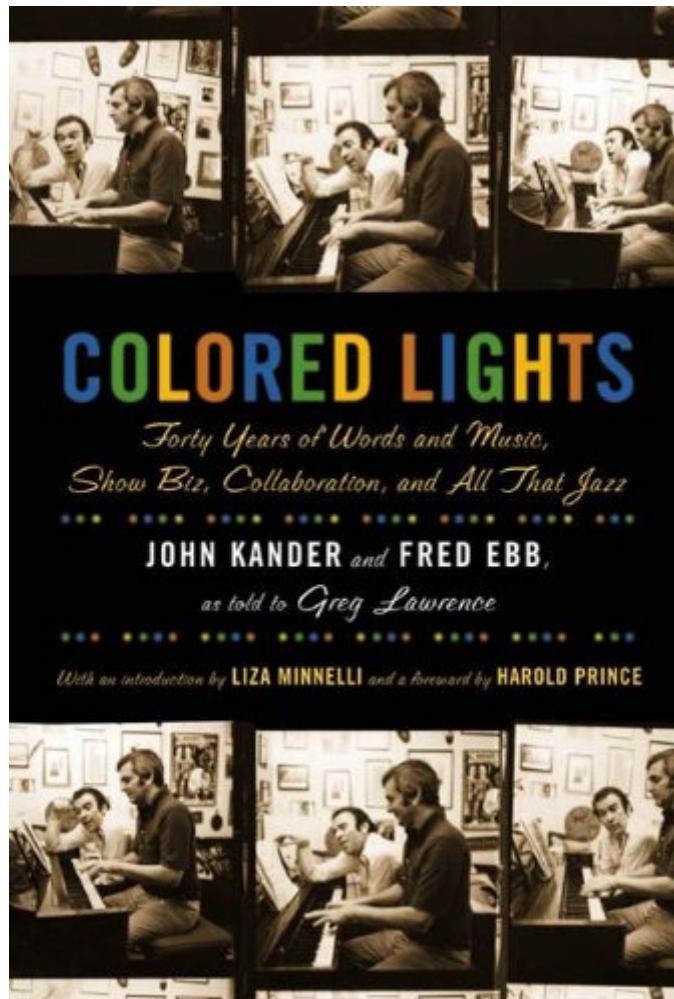


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Colored Lights: Forty Years Of Words And Music, Show Biz, Collaboration, And All That Jazz



Synopsis

The autobiography, in dialogue, of the composer and lyricist of Chicago and Cabaret as well as a wise and witty memoir of forty years of American musicals. Composer John Kander and lyricist Fred Ebb are the longest-running composer-lyricist team in Broadway history, having first joined forces in 1962. The creators of such groundbreaking musicals as Chicago, Cabaret, and Kiss of the Spider Woman, Kander and Ebb have helped to push American musical theater in a more daring direction, both musically and dramatically. Their impact on individual performers has been great as well, starting with the handpicked star of their first musical: an untested nineteen-year-old named Liza Minnelli (who writes of this experience in her introduction). Colored Lights covers the major shows of Kander and Ebb's partnership, from Flora, The Red Menace (starring a then-unknown Liza) to The Visit, due to open on Broadway in 2004. The pages and musicals in between reveal what has made theirs such a long-lived musical partnership--and one so valued by the artists they have worked with. In recounting the genesis and controversies of Cabaret, reflecting on the superstar mentality of such artist as Frank Sinatra and Barbra Streisand, and recalling their work with Bob Fosse on Chicago (as well as their views on the blockbuster 2002 film), John Kander and Fred Ebb provide a history not only of their own lives but also of the American musical theater of the late twentieth century.

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Customer Reviews

Good for Greg Lawrence for facilitating this oral history ad thinking of the right questions to get these two chatterboxes off and running, to the races! Lawrence wrote an OK biography of Jerome Robbins, and an as told to "by" Gelsey Kirkland which was good, but this book is terrific fun. The only thing is, aren't Kander and Ebb a couple? Or was that something they didn't want to talk about? Maybe they're not, who knew! But discussion of their personal lives is totally not on the menu here. Maybe after they are dead the whole story will come out. They tell some great stories here about working with Bob Fosse, maybe the best sustained account available of the great choreographer's ambitions, dreams, desires, and mania. I like the way that Liza Minnelli and Harold Prince also jump in to give their two cents here and there from the bleachers. It's a technique you often see in journalism, and here it works just fine. Liza is subject #1 of Kander and Ebb's discussions. They are always trying to make her look good, or rather to bring her natural talents to the fore. But in doing so they paint a picture of a talented actress who was thwarted by the commercial failure of THE RINK and therefore never tried to be anything but "just Liza" again, and being "just Liza" is pretty messed up what with having a mother who tried to take over her life in a drunken haze and at least one boyfriend (Martin Scorsese) who attempted to direct a whole show for her (THE ACT) via Moviola. Kander and Ebb also discuss writing for Lauren Bacall and the differences that affected WOMAN OF THE YEAR when Raquel Welch came in and replaced Bacall. It's all very illuminating and will make you laugh out loud as well.

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