



# Music Direction for the Stage: A View from the Podium

*Joseph Church*

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Theater music directors must draw on a remarkably broad range of musical skills. Not only do they conduct during rehearsals and performances, but they must also be adept arrangers, choral directors, vocal coaches, and accompanists. Like a record producer, the successful music director must have the flexibility to adjust as needed to a multifaceted job description, one which changes with each production and often with each performer.

In *Music Direction for the Stage*, veteran music director and instructor Joseph Church demystifies the job in a book that offers aspiring and practicing music directors the practical tips and instruction they need in order to mount a successful musical production. Church, one of Broadway's foremost music directors, emerges from the orchestra pit to tell how the music is put into a musical show. He gives particular attention to the music itself, explaining how a music director can best plan the task of learning, analyzing, and teaching each new piece. Based on his years of professional experience, he offers a practical discussion of a music director's methods of analyzing, learning, and practicing a score, thoroughly illustrated by examples from the repertoire. The book also describes how a music director can effectively approach dramatic and choreographic rehearsals, including key tips on cueing music to dialogue and staging, determining incidental music and underscoring, making musical adjustments and revisions in rehearsal, and adjusting style and tempo to performers' needs. A key theme of the book is effective collaboration with other professionals, from the production team to the creative team to the performers themselves, all grounded in Church's real-world experience with professional, amateur, and even student performances. He concludes with a look at music direction as a career, offering invaluable advice on how the enterprising music director can find work and gain standing in the field.

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