

Fauquet, John-Stuart, University of Wisconsin-Madison. "The Genre Dilemma: Marc Blitzstein's *Regina* and the History of American Musical Performance"

Theatre historians have long overlooked the importance of musical theatre and opera in narratives of the American theatre. Whether because of bias against popular forms of entertainment or the musical's relationship to mass culture, the influence of these forms on the performance landscape as a whole has largely been ignored. The absence of musical theatre from narratives of American performance creates a history that ignores an art form that is distinctly American. This paper focuses on one such piece of musical theatre written almost exactly halfway through the twentieth century, Marc Blitzstein's *Regina*. A study of the creation, production, and reception of this little known work serves to not only document a contentious moment in theatre history, but also cite Blitzstein's influence on the development of musical theatre and opera in the twentieth century as well as to open up the door to more scholarship on the influences these genres have had on performance in America as a whole. The paper traces the development of *Regina*, documents its critical reception, and places it in a larger context of twentieth century musical theatre and performance. Because *Regina* has rarely been written about, the paper makes extensive use of the the Marc Blitzstein papers found in the archives of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research (WCFTR). Because of my access to the WCFTR collection, the paper was able to portray a more complete picture of American performance history in the twentieth century.

John-Stuart Fauquet is a PhD Candidate in the department of Theatre and Drama at the University of Wisconsin - Madison. He is currently working on his dissertation examining paratheatrical performance in early twentieth century America, specifically focusing on vaudeville and variety acts produced by the Federal Theatre Project in the 1930s. He is also an accomplished actor and director, most recently having written and directed "Revolt of the Beavers" (an adaption of an original Federal Theatre Project play) for UW's University Theatre last fall and directed "Man of La Mancha" for Strollers Theatre in Madison, WI this spring.