

On March 13, 1947: Brigadoon Opened on Broadway

Summary

The article describes the history and impact of the musical "Brigadoon". The musical, which premiered on Broadway in 1947, tells the story of two American tourists who stumble upon a mysterious Scottish village that only appears for one day every 100 years. The musical is known for its iconic songs, including "Almost Like Being in Love" and "Come to Me, Bend to Me," and its memorable choreography by Agnes de Mille.

Audiences at the Ziegfeld heard such Alan Jay Lerner and Frederick Loewe classics as "Almost Like Being in Love" and "Come to Me, Bend to Me."



Company of *Brigadoon* Fred Fehl/ New York Public Library Digital Collections

The magical, mysterious [Brigadoon](#), penned by [Alan Jay Lerner](#) and

[Frederick Loewe](#), officially opened on Broadway March 13, 1947, at the Ziegfeld Theatre, where it would continue for 581 performances through July 31, 1948.

The musical tells the story of Tommy and Jeff, two American tourists who happen upon a peculiar Scottish village—Brigadoon—that only appears for one day every 100 years. Tommy falls in love with Fiona MacLaren, a relationship that threatens doom for the entire town, in a story that blended dream and reality. At the time, Lerner and Loewe had written three previous musicals together; it was *Brigadoon* that put them on the map as musical theatre composers—the show introduced such classic songs as "Almost Like Being in Love," "Come to Me, Bend to Me," and "There But for You Go I."

Although the town of Brigadoon is fictional, the name is reportedly based on a late medieval bridge in Scotland that was referred to as Brig o' Doon, Auld Brig, or Old Bridge of Doon.

Directed by Robert Lewis with choreography by Agnes de Mille, the original Broadway cast included David Brooks as Tommy Albright, Marion Bell as Fiona MacLaren, Pamela Britton as Meg Brockie, Lee Sullivan as Charlie Dalrymple, George Keane as Jeff Douglas, and Frances Charles as Jane Ashton.

De Mille subsequently won the 1947 Tony Award for Best Choreography, her first (though she had previously choreographed the famed dream ballet sequences in *Oklahoma!* and *Carousel*).

In his New York Times review, critic Brooks Atkinson wrote, "To the growing list of major achievements on the musical stage add one more—*Brigadoon*, put on at the Ziegfeld last evening. For once the modest label 'musical play' has a precise meaning. For it is impossible to say where the music and dancing leave off and the story begins in this beautifully orchestrated Scotch idyll."

Atkinson also praised de Mille's choreography: "Miss de Mille has dipped again into the Pandora's box where she keeps her dance designs... some of them, like the desperate chase in the forest, are fiercely dramatic. The funeral dance to the dour tune of bag-pipes brings the footstep of doom into the forest. And the sword dance, done magnificently by James Mitchell, is tremendously exciting with its stylization of primitive ideas." De Mille's was so iconic, it was recreated for every subsequent Broadway revival of *Brigadoon*.

Vincente Minnelli directed a 1954 film version, featuring a screenplay by Lerner and a cast that included Gene Kelly as Tommy, Cyd Charisse as Fiona, Van Johnson as Jeff, and Elaine Stewart as Jane. The movie musical was nominated for three 1955 Academy Awards: Best Art Direction-Set Decoration, Best Costume Design, and Best Sound.

New York revivals include two stagings at City Center, in 1950 and 1963; an April-May 1957 production at the Adelphi; and a 1980 production at the Majestic directed by Vivian Matalon with de Mille's choreography re-staged by James Jamieson. The production was nominated for three 1981 Tony Awards: Reproduction (Play or Musical) as well as the performances of Martin Vidnovic and Meg Bussert.

The most recent New York production was seen in 2017, part of New York City Center's Encores! series. Directed and choreographed by Christopher Wheeldon, the company featured Kelli O'Hara, Patrick Wilson, Stephanie J. Block, and Robert Fairchild. A cast recording of that limited engagement was subsequently released by Ghostlight Records.

Brigadoon also inspired a musical television series called *Schmigadoon!* on Apple TV+, which was a loving homage to Golden Age musicals.

Learn what other theatre milestones happened on March 13 by visiting [the Playbill Vault](#).

Below, look back on the original production of *Brigadoon*.

Look Back at the 1947 Production of *Brigadoon*



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