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Mary Martin, Broadway Legend

Ronald L. Davis

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The first book-length biography of a theater icon

South Pacific. *The Sound of Music*. *Peter Pan*. As the star of these classic Broadway musicals, Mary Martin captivated theater audiences with her impish persona and magnificent voice. Now Ronald L. Davis fills a major gap in theater history, moving beyond Martin's own 1976 memoir to provide a complete picture of her life and career.

Lively and engaging, Davis's biography is the first book-length portrait of the theater icon, spanning her lifetime to reveal facts about her childhood, marriages, and friendships—as well as artistic collaborations that included the likes of Rodgers and Hammerstein, Cole Porter, and Elia Kazan.

Born in Weatherford, Texas, and mother to the future actor Larry Hagman, Martin went to California after the failure of her first marriage. There, she auditioned for every studio without success. "Audition Mary" finally had her big break when she won a talent contest, leading to her breakthrough 1938 performance in *Leave It to Me*—in which she wowed audiences singing "My Heart Belongs to Daddy." Davis traces Martin's numerous appearances on Broadway, in touring productions, and on television, showing how—through hard work and persistent optimism—she built a career that lasted nearly fifty years and earned her the adoration and respect of fans and colleagues alike.

Because Martin's life was entwined with many luminaries of the stage, this biography offers rich insights into theater history, including accounts of how various productions were developed. No other book tells her story in such detail—it is must reading for fans and an essential resource for theater aficionados everywhere.

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