

THERE MUST BE HAPPY ENDINGS



ON A THEATER OF OPTIMISM & HONESTY
Megan Sandberg-Zakian

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by Megan Sandberg-Zakian

Is it possible—is it even ethical?—to make hopeful art in an unjust and chaotic world? In the tradition of artist-essayists such as James Baldwin, Anne Lamott, and Adrienne Rich, Sandberg-Zakian looks to her own socially-engaged theater-making practice alongside a diverse array of cultural influences (from slave narratives to popular musicals, Batman to "This American Life"), considering how we might reconcile our desire for hope and possibility, connection and transformation, with the necessity of navigating darkness, despair, hate and violence. The coming-of-artistic age journey of a contemporary theater artist in ten essays, *There Must Be Happy Endings* is a smart, engaging and gently humorous contribution to the discussion of how we face art-making—and living—with hope and optimism, and an elegant, accessible, and satisfying companion to practical work in the world.

COURSE ADOPTION KEY WORDS:
Theater Studies, Creative Equity

ADVANCE PRAISE FOR THERE MUST BE HAPPY ENDINGS

There Must Be Happy Endings is a personal odyssey through the American theater landscape. Megan Sandberg-Zakian eloquently and generously shares her experiences, her insights and associations, weaving together perspectives on artistic process with performance theory, history with aesthetics, philosophical and ethical conundrums with lived experience. — **Anne Bogart**

A deep and thrilling meditation on theater and the subtext of the roles we play both on and off stage. Sandberg-Zakian's thinking is uncompromisingly idealistic. I recommend this book to anyone who is writing, directing, acting or just plain living in our "chaotic and unjust world." — **Eric Bogosian**

Essential reading for anyone interested in the stage director's craft, anyone interrogating the relevance of this form, anyone wrestling with their place in a swiftly changing world. It makes the case that out of our complex lived experiences... comes that most vital, always shifting, sometimes confounding, tool of a great director: a point of view. — **Eric Ting, Artistic Director, California Shakespeare Theater**

A rare voice of embodied multiplicity, Megan Sandberg-Zakian transfigures happy endings to honest endings, even beginnings, that bring us into contact with the creative chaos of "live" life. — **Ruth King, author of *Mindful of Race: Transforming Racism From the Inside Out***

A gift: a gorgeously written, poetic, evocative account of what theatre is, what theatre has been, and what theatre might be. Each essay in the book is a gem... voicing an artist and a human who is deeply compassionate, deeply political, and unwavering in her belief that theatre matters. — **Stacy Wolf, author of *Beyond Broadway: The Pleasure and Promise of Musical Theatre Across America***

A poignant, intimate, stunningly honest book, both method and memoir... that reveals how a thoughtful, socially committed life arrives at thoughtful, socially committed art. — **Jill Dolan, author of *Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theatre, Princeton University***

Megan Sandberg-Zakian is a freelance theater director with a passion for the development of diverse new American plays & playwrights. She is a co-founder of Maia Directors, a consulting group for artists and organizations engaging with stories from the Middle East and beyond, a graduate of Brown University, and holds an MFA in Interdisciplinary Arts from Goddard College.



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