BROADWAY PLAYS SAFE

Musical comedies have fascinated New York ever since the supposed inception 100 years ago of ‘Broadway’, the theatres on and around the Great White Way. But the theatre district’s heyday in the Roaring Twenties, when it staged nearly 50 new musicals in a season, is a distant memory.

Far fewer shows open now. They cost a lot more to stage. Too many are revivals or old hits as producers seek to reduce the risk of backers suffering crippling losses.

As a result, interest centres around the finances of the musical theatre rather than the stars and the writer-composer teams. Variety, a show-business weekly, used to be the only source of financial information on the incoming, on-going and out-going musicals.

Today the money troubles of shows are reported in the tabloids, and readers of a gossipy weekly column in the New York Times can learn, for instance, that a prize-winning Gershwin pastiche Crazy for you, took 725 performances to repay its investors their $8.3 million; that Miss Saigon got back its $10 million in less than half that time; and that The Will Rogers Follies did not recoup its original cost during its long Broadway run.

Such daunting statistics strike fear into the hearts of producers and investors alike. Courageous impresarios still exist, even on a Broadway strewn with lavish theatre marquees announcing that shows have closed (or which never arrived) and shuttered glass doors that display ticket refund information.

But this season, more money seems to be being invested in revivals or in imports of proven material than in new, original shows.

(出自 Key Words in the Media 柯林氏新聞英語)