

Ridiculous Theatre



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Synopsis:

What is Ridiculous? Here's one way to describe it: an anarchic undermining of political, sexual, psychological, and cultural categories, frequently in dramatic structures that parody classical literary forms or re-function American popular entertainments, and always allude to themselves as 'performances.'... It is comedy beyond the absurd because it is less intellectual, more earthy, primal, liberated. Not tragi-comedy but metaphysical burlesque, the Ridiculous offers a new version of the 'clown.' Its dependency on the icons, artifacts, and entertainments of mass culture in America -- the 'stars,' old movies, popular songs, television, and advertising -- make the Ridiculous a truly indigenous American approach to making theatre. -- Bonnie Marranca, from Theatre of the Ridiculous

As a theatrical form, the ridiculous thrived in the 1970s and early 1980s, playfully subverting dramatic and social convention in its mix of camp, role-playing, literary and filmic allusions -- and anticipating the current interest in gender, cross-dressing, and popular culture. Originally published in 1979, Theatre of the Ridiculous was the first book to document this innovative and challenging work -- and the first of PAJ

Publications' acclaimed books on avant garde drama. This revised and expanded edition retains seminal works by Ronald Tavel, Charles Ludlam, and Kenneth Bernard and adds essays and interview material on each of these playwrights. Also new to the edition is Rehearsal for the Destruction of Atlantis by Jack Smith, one of the major figures in the American avant garde, and an essay by J. Hoberman on Smith's work.

Review:

In her 1964 Notes on Camp, Susan Sontag claims that homosexual aesthetic irony is one of the foundations of contemporary culture. Indeed, contemporary theater would not exist as we know it without the openly gay innovators--mixing camp with Samuel Beckett and sexual politics More...

with Artaud--who wrote and performed off-off-Broadway in the 1960s. Theatre of the Ridiculous discusses (in essays and interviews) the works of Jack Smith, Ronald Tavel, Charles Ludlam, and Kenneth Bernard, and reprints a full-length play by each of them. The critical commentary is intelligent and illuminating, and the plays themselves, now mostly out of print, give a real feeling for these playwrights, their work, and their contributions to art. Tavel's The Life of Lady Godiva is an exquisite parody of celebrity culture and the Hollywood musical, and Bernard's The Magic Show of Dr. Ma-Gico shows the influence of commedia dell'arte and carnival side show on both gay culture and popular theater. Theatre of the Ridiculous is a perfect book for anyone interested in exploring the connections between gay sensibility, art, and contemporary politics.

作者介绍:

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