



Theatrical Anecdotes

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Theatrical anecdotes are almost as old as the theatre itself. For much of its 2,500-year history, the stage has teemed with real characters and real stories as fascinating as any created by a dramatist. Ranging from the age of Aristophanes to the time of Tennessee Williams, this book is a motherlode of tales about backstage rivalries, thespian eccentricity, the parsimony of producers, and indignities suffered on tour.

Here we encounter Judith Anderson's unique method of working herself into a frenzy for her first entrance in *Medea*: deliberately provoking her co-star and arch-enemy Florence Reed. We get Oscar Wilde's own assessment of the first performance of *Lady Windermere's Fan* ("The play was a great success, but the audience was a total failure"). And we learn of Shakespeare's wild oats and why Moliere's grave had to be dug an extra four feet deep. David Garrick, Sarah Bernhardt, Noel Coward, Donald Wolfit, Laurence Olivier, John Gielgud, Helen Hayes, and a cast of hundreds are present in these pages--along with directors, producers, critics, prompters, prop men, designers, and ghosts. Although the book brims with the glittering and the glamourous, Peter Hay does not neglect those legions of near-anonymous players and professionals without whom the stars would not be stars and the theatre could not exist.

The ideal gift book for anyone who has ever been stage-struck, *Theatrical Anecdotes* is both richly entertaining and wonderfully edifying. Organized by topic, it contains hundreds of tips for all theatrical professionals, directs scholars and students to a wealth of historical sources, and treats lovers of theatre to a feast of backstage secrets that will permanently enrich their appreciation of the art.

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