

## Extraordinary Actors

### Essays on Popular Performers

edited by Martin Banham and Jane Milling and contributions by Colin Chambers, Christopher Dymkowski, Ger Fitzgibbon, Viv Gardner, Baz Kershaw, Alexander Leggatt, Christopher McCullough, Jan McDonald, Laurence Senelick, Maggie Steed, Martin White, Don B. Wilmeth, Richard Boon, Martin Banham, Joel Schechter and Jane Milling

#### DESCRIPTION:

Dangerous, outrageous, comic and committed, the extraordinary performers collected here have altered the history of popular entertainment in America and Europe. Some have rarely had their story told, others are familiar figures. The essays explore what made these performers extraordinary; how they were trained, how they practised their art, how they were received, celebrated, satirised and mythologised. From the explosive acting of Richard Burbage to the dislocating quirkiness of Peter Lorre, from the dangerous satire of commedia dell'arte troupes in Russia to the bittersweet collaboration of Morecombe and Wise, this volume explores what made these actors popular. Each contributor has taken care to set the performer and their work in cultural context, so that the collection as a whole charts the changing relationship between acting and popular culture over the last four hundred years.

Part One examines seventeenth and eighteenth century performers, as they built a sense of the excitement and possibility of theatre with audiences in Britain and Europe. The idea of acting, its art and popular practice was being formed during this period. Part Two explores nineteenth-century popular performers who became cultural icons and developed popular performance that contributed to the regeneration of national identity. Part Three looks at twentieth-century performers whose acting continued to reach popular audiences in remarkable ways, across national boundaries, as the acting industry underwent transformation in the face of technological change

This is a unique collection of essays on performers such as Richard Burbage, Sarah Siddons, Peter Lorre, George Formby, Laurel and Hardy, Morecombe and Wise. It provides an outstanding selection of contributors: Richard Boon, Colin Chambers, Chris Dymkowski, Ger Fitzgibbon, Viv Gardner, Baz Kershaw, Alexander Leggatt, Chris McCullough, Jan McDonald, Joel Schechter, Laurence Senelick, Martin White, Don Wilmeth

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