

Grand-Guignol

The French Theatre of Horror

The Théâtre du Grand-Guignol in Paris (1897 - 1962) achieved a legendary reputation as the 'Theatre of Horror' a venue displaying such explicit violence and blood-curdling terror that a resident doctor was employed to treat the numerous spectators who fainted each night. Indeed, the phrase 'grand guignol' has entered the language to describe any display of sensational horror. Since the theatre closed its doors forty years ago, the genre has been overlooked by critics and theatre historians. This book reconsiders the importance and influence of the Grand-Guignol within its social, cultural and historical contexts, and is the first attempt at a major evaluation of the genre as performance. It gives full consideration to practical applications and to the challenges presented to the actor and director. The book also includes outstanding new translations by the authors of ten Grand-Guignol plays, none of which have been previously available in English. The presentation of these plays in English for the first time is an implicit demand for a total reappraisal of the grand-guignol genre, not least for the unexpected inclusion of two very funny comedies.

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