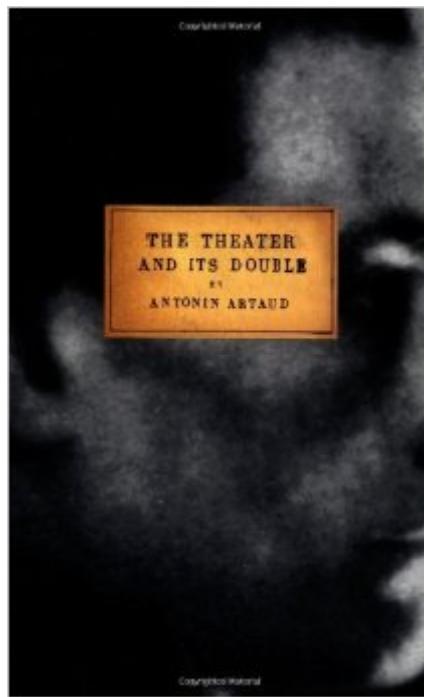


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The Theater And Its Double



Synopsis

A collection of manifestos originally published in 1938, The Theater and Its Double is the fullest statement of the ideas of Antonin Artaud. "We cannot go on prostituting the idea of the theater, the only value of which is in its excruciating, magical relation to reality and danger," he wrote. He fought vigorously against an encroaching conventionalism he found anathema to the very concept of theater. He sought to use theater to transcend writing, "to break through the language in order to touch life."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Antonin Artaud's obsession -- and I don't think that's too strong a word in this context -- lay in building a new philosophical framework for live theater, one that would give audiences unmediated access to powerful metaphysical truths. This book is keystone text that illuminates the rest of his life's work. Ultimately, it's not a satisfying one because of its repetitive and mystical nature and because, placed in historical context, Artaud's conception of what should constitute living theater seems somewhat constricted to later, media-saturated generations. Let there be no mistake, however. The theatre français of Artaud's day was hidebound by convention, a convention that surrealism took as somewhat of a challenge to overturn. Artaud's plea for a theater that would de-emphasize the spoken text and accord more emphasis on light, sound, movement and elaborate combinations of anything non-verbal that could be brought to bear on audiences is part and parcel of the surrealist rejection of theatrical convention. It is striking that Artaud, himself a marvelous film actor, dismissed out of hand the notion that motion pictures as an art form could do what live theater

could not. In this respect lies the most obvious example of his limited vision. Film would eventually provide the director with all the tools that Artaud dreamed of for his Theatre of Cruelty. Bergman, Fellini, Kurosawa and Tarkovsky would all draw heavily on the notion of subordinating conventional dialogue to image and sound. Artaud's notion of theater is further undercut by the rise of television, its ubiquity and, in the age of digital electronics and computers, its raw immediacy.

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