



Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror

Richard J. Hand , Michael Wilson , Maurice Level (Contributor) , Pierre Chaine (Contributor) , Francis Neilson (Contributor) , Oscar Méténier (Contributor) , Étienne Rey (Contributor) , Jean Aragny (Contributor) , more... André de Lorde (Contributor) , Eugène Morel (Contributor) , Paul Autier (Contributor) , Paul Cloquemin (Contributor) , Eugène Héros (Contributor) , Léon Abric (Contributor) , René Berton (Contributor) ...less

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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.

Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror Details

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Melanie says

This is one of those books that is fascinating and repelling at the same time. People doing plays about people being tortured and killed in grisly ways? I guess all I can say is that the French are strange. But I read the book, so I can't judge.

Woolrich13 says

This is probably the best accessible survey of the Grand Guignol, the theatre of horror that thrived in the Pignalle neighborhood of Paris starting in the late 19th century. The authors survey seminal Guignol source authors like Maurice Level and Andre de Lorde as well as including full texts of translated plays. There are plenty of rare illustrations and photographs also. This is a highly recommended book, if you are interested in this theatre genre.

Kayleigh Marie Marie says

This is basically the definitive word from a real expert in this field. You can't go wrong with this book if you're looking for information on Grand Guignol, and it's a good read too.

Sophie says

Very detailed and informative, contains a large section on the historic background and technical aspects of the Grand Guignol and ten plays, each with a detailed introduction and background.

R.G. Evans says

The informational, expository section of Hand & Wilson's *Grand-Guignol: The French Theatre of Horror* is dry, dry, dry, reading as it does more like an academic thesis than a commercially published book of interest to genre aficionados . Tantalizing in its many notes and references to other sources, both print (notably Mel Gordon's 1997 book on the Grand-Guignol , which I highly recommend as a history of the theatre) and cinema, Hand & Wilson's book serves better as a guide for what else one should read or view if one wishes to acquaint oneself with the tradition of the Grand-Guignol. While the book does address the craft and practice of the Grand-Guignol—the authors are principal lecturers in drama at the University of Glamorgan—it is the presentation of ten actual plays produced at the Grand-Guignol (or adapted from those that did) that is the true revelation of this book. Hand & Wilson's introductions to the plays are spoiler-filled (after reading the first intro and play, I began reading the plays first and the intros after), if but they do dovetail nicely with the rest of the book, providing interesting interpretive “lessons” on each play as seen

through the lens of theatre craft presented earlier in the book. For those such as myself with an interest in the Grand-Guignol, I recommend beginning with Mel Gordon's book before picking up Hand & Wilson—but do pick up this book if only for the remarkable look into the Grand-Guignols's plays themselves.

Alexandre says

A maioria das peças é excelente, mas uma ou duas são um tanto bobas. Prefácio informativo mas ocasionalmente imbecil (fazendo alusões malucas a racismo, colonialismo, sexism etc).
