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Theatre Of The Unimpressed: In Search Of Vital Drama (Exploded Views)



Synopsis

Had I become disenchanted with the form I had once fallen so madly in love with as a pubescent, pimple-faced suburban homo with braces? Maybe theatre was like an all-consuming high school infatuation that now, ten years later, I saw as the closeted balding guy with a beer-gut heâ™d become. There were of course those rare moments of transcendence that kept me coming back. But why did they come so few and far between? A lot of plays are dull. And one dull play, it seems, can turn us off theatre for good. Playwright and theatre director Jordan Tannahill takes in the spectrum of English-language drama – from the flashiest of Broadway spectacles to productions mounted in scrappy storefront theatres – to consider where lifeless plays come from and why they persist. Having travelled the globe talking to theatre artists, critics, passionate patrons and the theatrically disillusioned, Tannahill addresses what he considers the culture of ‘risk aversionâ™ paralyzing the form. Theatre of the Unimpressed is Tannahillâ™s wry and revelatory personal reckoning with the discipline heâ™s dedicated his life to, and a roadmap for a vital twenty-first-century theatre – one that apprehends the value of ‘livenessâ™ in our mediated age and the necessity for artistic risk and its attendant failures. In considering dramaturgy, programming and alternative models for producing, Tannahill aims to turn theatre from an obligation to a destination. ‘[Tannahill is] the poster child of a new generation of (theatre? film? dance?) artists for whom “interdisciplinaryâ• is not a buzzword, but a way of life.â™– J. Kelly Nestruck, The Globe and Mail‘ Jordan is one of the most talented and exciting playwrights in the country, and he will be a force to be reckoned with for years to come.â™– Nicolas Billon, Governor General's Award–winning playwright (Fault Lines) Jordan Tannahill is a playwright, theatre director, and filmmaker. His plays and short films have been presented in theatres, festivals, and galleries across Canada and internationally. He received the 2014 Governor Generalâ™s Literary Award for Drama for his book *Age of Minority: Three Solo Plays*. In collaboration with William Ellis, Jordan runs the alternative art-space Videofag, out of a defunct barbershop in Toronto's Kensington Market.

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Customer Reviews

I'm the perfect audience for Jordan Tannahill's book "Theatre of the Unimpressed." I go to a play or live performance every couple of months as a special treat. Lately I've been leaving the theatre thinking, "I guess I'm glad I saw that award winner so that I know what people are taking about" or "I'm not sure what all the buzz is about." Few shows stick with me for a long time. Tannahill is an award-winning playwright and theatre director from Toronto. He helps run a miniscule alternative art space in Toronto. He practices what he preaches, so he's the perfect person to criticize the movie-star-filled blockbusters and hollow Broadway spectacles that make up so much of today's popular theatre-going experience. This slim volume is overflowing with ideas and "angry young gay man" criticism of current theatre practice. Tannahill begins by criticizing the popular play "Driving Miss Daisy." Every regional theatre has performed it, but Tannahill compares it to a bland orgy that he once organized. All the right components are in place but it winds up being a boring slough that never takes off. One of Tannahill's central critiques revolves around the well-made play. Adopted in the early nineteenth century, this concept describes a play in which the crucial part of the story has taken place before the onstage action and the climax comes late in the play to explain the drama that just appeared on the stage. (Oscar Wilde's "The Importance of Being Earnest," Tennessee Williams's "Suddenly Last Summer," and Tracy Letts's "August: Osage Country" present textbook examples of this formula, offering speeches that disclose crucial information only at the very end of the play.

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