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Joan Littlewood

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Joan Littlewood : Joan's Book: The Autobiography of Joan Littlewood (Theatre Makers) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Joan's Book: The Autobiography of Joan Littlewood (Theatre Makers):

'Once upon a time, the London theatre was a charming mirror held up to cosiness. Then came Joan Littlewood,

smashing the glass, blasting the walls, letting the wind of life blow in a rough, but ready, world. Today, we remember this irresistible force with love and gratitude.' (Peter Brook) Along with Peter Brook, Joan Littlewood, affectionately termed 'The Mother of Modern Theatre', has come to be known as the most galvanising director of mid-twentieth-century Britain, as well as a founder of so many of the practices of contemporary theatre. The best-known work of Littlewood's company, Theatre Workshop, included the development and premieres of Shelagh Delaney's *A Taste of Honey*, Brendan Behan's *The Hostage* and *The Quare Fellow*, and the seminal *Oh What A Lovely War*. This autobiography, originally published in 1994, offers an unparalleled first-hand account of Littlewood's extraordinary life and career, from illegitimate child in south-east London to one of the most influential directors and practitioners of our times. It is published along with an introduction by Philip Hedley CBE, previously Artistic Director of Theatre Royal Stratford East and Assistant Director to Joan Littlewood.

'The tumult of [this book] is testimony to one of the great creative forces of our time. Like the Shakespearean character with whom she has most in common, she has, in her way, once again voiced her own unanswerable demands, betraying neither 'faith, truth nor womanhood' in the process.' 'This is a book that anyone who works in the theatre, loves the theatre or hates the theatre, is under absolute obligation to buy. Joan Littlewood is the greatest theatre director of the present century, knocking possible rivals like Max Reinhardt and Jean-Louis Barrault into a cocked hat when it comes to intelligence, originality and the incalculable influence for good she has had on theatre all over the world.' 'You do not have to be even halfway interested in theatre to relish this welter of a book. It is compulsive, elusive and maddening. Read it.' [This book] is big: nearly eight hundred pages. But then so is her life. For Joan Littlewood's unorthodox autobiography is a noisy, rumbustious, compulsively readable account of her attempt to create, through Theatre Workshop, something unseen in Britain since Shakespeare's day: a high-quality popular theatre. What emerges is a graphic contradictory portrait of a brilliant, restless amateur: a romantic revolutionary with a strong streak of Cockney common sense. You put down this turbulent, often moving book reflecting that the greatest paradox of all is that, although this particular Pope Joan has no children, she has left her indelible imprint on British theatre and has bequeathed us countless heirs.' 'It's as if she's talking to you, the reader - and she could certainly talk. All her prejudices and insecurities are here. But so is her extraordinary life-giving energy. She could touch genius.' 'This exhilarating autobiography, abrasive, impudent, grossly opinionated, and like her best theatre work, a fine piece of popular entertainment.' 'This is not a tidy elegant memoir, but it is a rather wonderful one. [It's] funny, generous, warm-hearted, irreverent and bawdy . . . a memoir that ought to become a classic of the kind she admires - vital, energetic, full of hope and riotous laughter.' About the Author Joan Littlewood (1914 - 2002) was one of the foremost directors of our time and founder of the iconic theatre company Theatre Workshop, most famous for *Oh What A Lovely War*. Her left-wing politics and commitment to enabling theatre to reach the working classes meant that this was a keen preoccupation in all of her work and methods. She was famous for her anti-Establishment, radical theatre work that defied the censorship laws of the mid-twentieth century and gained the company a great deal of attention and acumen. Philip Hedley was Artistic Director of Theatre Royal Stratford East for twenty-five years from 1979 to 2004. Upon his departure, the Theatre Royal named him Director Emeritus. He was a founding student of E15 Acting School and later in his career taught and staged productions there and at LAMDA, RADA, Rose Bruford and Drama Centre in the UK, the Vancouver Playhouse Drama School and the National Institute for Drama in Sydney. He ran Lincoln Theatre Royal for three years from 1968 to 1971, during which time he directed and/or produced over fifty productions. He went on to be director of the Midlands Arts Theatre Company, followed by two years as Assistant Director to Joan Littlewood and Assistant Administrator to her partner, Gerry Raffles, at Theatre Royal Stratford East.