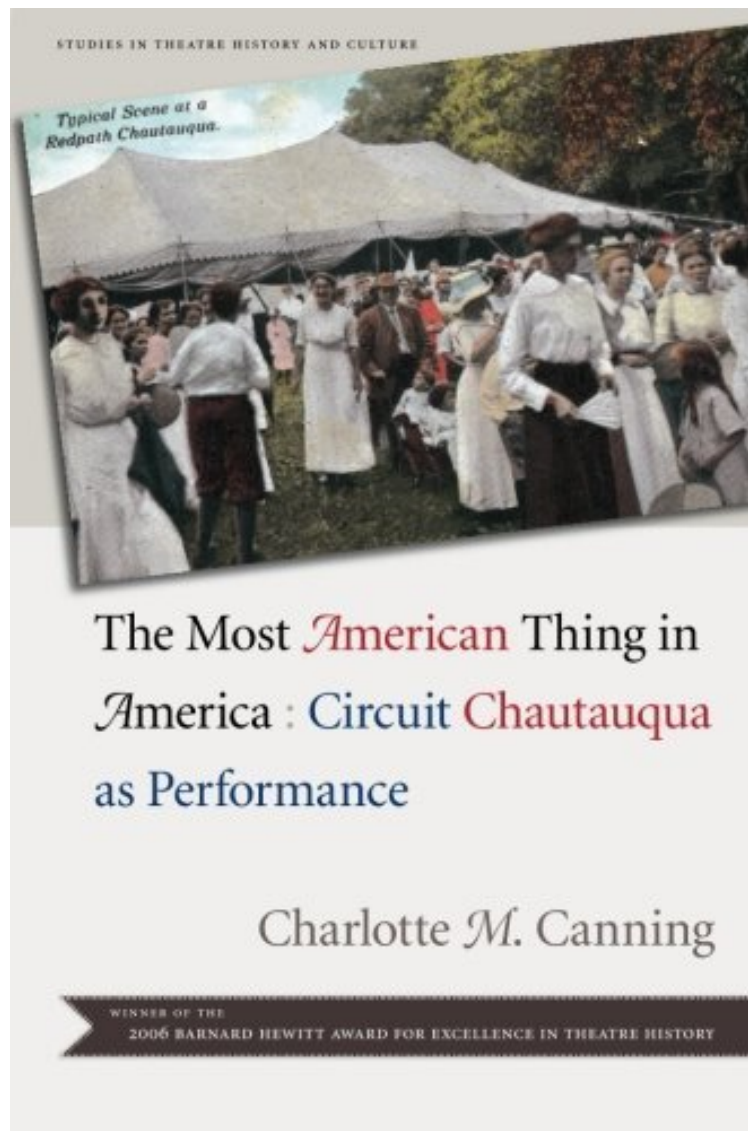


(Mobile pdf) The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance (Studies Theatre Hist Culture)

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Charlotte M. Canning

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Charlotte M. Canning : The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance (Studies Theatre Hist Culture) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance (Studies Theatre Hist Culture):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. well done!By Hank Lawlergreat account...very thorough4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. Part history, part evaluation of the Circuit Chautauquas, the iterant branch

of an adult education movement
By Midwest Book Review
Winner of the 2006 Barnard Hewitt Award for Excellence in Theatre History, *The Most American Thing in America: Circuit Chautauqua as Performance* by Charlotte M. Canning (professor in the Department of Theatre and Dance, University of Texas, Austin) is part history, part evaluation of the Circuit Chautauquas, the itinerant branch of an adult education movement created to spread culture and entertainment across America, particularly isolated rural areas. The Chautauquas flourished, despite some conflicts - their African-American members were in danger when they toured areas rife with KKK members and sympathizers - filling a much-needed role until the Great Depression, when the rise of radio and movies eclipsed them. Their performances included lectures, music, occasional political debate, and much more. Theatre historians have long neglected the Circuit Chautauquas because they didn't quite fit the mold of established theatre; Canning seeks to remedy this omission through an in-depth history examining not only the Circuit Chautauquas as performers, but also as facilitators of American community and democracy. Highly recommended.

Winner of the 2006 Barnard Hewitt Award for Excellence in Theatre History
Between 1904 and the Great Depression, Circuit Chautauquas toured the rural United States, reflecting and reinforcing its citizens' ideas, attitudes, and politics every summer through music (the Jubilee Singers, an African American group, were not always welcome in a time when millions of Americans belonged to the KKK), lectures (Civic Revivalist); Charles Zueblin speaking on Militancy and Morals;), elocutionary readers (Lucille Adams reading from *Little Lord Fauntleroy*), dramas (the Ben Greet Players' cleaned-up version of *She Stoops to Conquer*), orations (William Jennings Bryan speaking about the dangers of greed), and special programs for children (parades and mock weddings). Theatre historians have largely ignored Circuit Chautauquas since they did not meet the conventional conditions of theatrical performance: they were not urban; they produced no innovative performance techniques, stage material, design effects, or dramatic literature. In this beautifully written and illustrated book, Charlotte Canning establishes an analytical framework to reveal the Circuit Chautauquas as unique performances that both created and unified small-town America. One of the last strongholds of the American traditions of rhetoric and oratory, the Circuits created complex intersections of community, American democracy, and performance. Canning does not celebrate the Circuit Chautauquas wholeheartedly, nor does she describe them with the same cynicism offered by Sinclair Lewis. She acknowledges their goals of community support, informed public thinking, and popular education but also focuses on the reactionary and regressive ideals they sometimes embraced. In the true interdisciplinary spirit of Circuit Chautauquas, she reveals the Circuit platforms as places where Americans performed what it meant to be American.

"*The Most American Thing in America* is a smart, lively book that brings to life a slice of the past now mostly forgotten and the rest of the time fogged in myth. Canning reminds us of the significant meaning that Chautauquas had for middle-class Americans at the turn of the twentieth century. Everyone from the philosopher William James to the philosopher Elvis Presley had a take on this classic cultural institution, and they're all covered in this fine work."--
Kenneth Cmiel, professor of history, University of Iowa