



Toward an Aesthetics of the Puppet: Puppetry as a Theatrical Art (Critical Responses in Arts and Letters)

Steve Tillis

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Societies around the world have their puppet traditions and puppetry remains a vital theatrical art; yet puppetry has received little attention in the theoretical study of theatre. The present study offers an aesthetic theory and vocabulary for practitioners, critics, and audiences to utilize in creating, evaluating, viewing, and describing the age-old, yet ever-new art of the puppet.

Asserting that no satisfactory theory or descriptive vocabulary has yet been advanced for the theatrical puppet, Steve Tillis seeks the underlying principles through observation and analysis of puppetry in all its manifestations. He considers the disparate range of puppet performance and puppet construction to determine what is constant and what is variable and explores such theoretical problems as how a puppet is to be defined; how its appeal is to be explained, and how its performance is to be described. Reviewing standard responses to these problems in a thorough survey of the literature on puppetry, he then offers new solutions. In an interesting coda, Tillis discusses the power of the puppet as a metaphor of humanity and a term applied to particular people. This is an essential text not only for college puppetry courses but also for all serious puppet artists, as well as scholars and researchers in performance theory and practice, and more general audiences.

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