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Jessica Milner Davis

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FARCE

Jessica Milner Davis

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Jessica Milner Davis : Farce (Classics in Communication and Mass Culture Series) before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Farce (Classics in Communication and Mass Culture Series):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. A welcome and uniquely recommended contribution By Midwest Book Review Farce by Jessica Milner Davies (Visiting Fellow, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences and Co-coordinator of the Australasian Humour Scholars Network, University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia) is a college-level

work of scholarship and criticism specifically examining the literary genre of the farce. Jessica Davis classifies traditional farce-plots, studies the role of characterization and timing, as well as presenting the history and accepted rules of the farce. General themes incorporated into many a farce include such issues as revenge, coincidence, and rebellion. All these and more are studied from all sides in this intriguing analysis. Farce is a welcome and uniquely recommended contribution to both Literary Criticism and Cultural Studies reference collections and supplementary reading lists.

Farce has always been relegated to the lowest rung of the ladder of dramatic genres. Distinctions between farce and more literary comic forms remain clouded, even in the light of contemporary efforts to rehabilitate this type of comedy. Is farce really nothing more than slapstick—the "putting out of candles, kicking down of tables, falling over joynt-stools," as Thomas Shadwell characterized it in the seventeenth century? Or was his contemporary, Nahum Tate correct when he declared triumphantly that "there are no rules to be prescribed for that sort of wit, no patterns to copy; and 'tis altogether the creature of imagination"? Davis shows farce to be an essential component in both the comedic and tragic traditions. Farce sets out to explore the territory of what makes farce distinct as a comic genre. Its lowly origins date back to the classic Graeco-Roman theatre; but when formal drama was reborn by the process of elaboration of ritual within the mediaeval Church, the French term "farce" became synonymous with a recognizable style of comic performance. Taking a wide range of farces from the briefest and most basic of fair-ground mountebank performances to fully-fledged five-act structures from the late nineteenth century, the book reveals the patterns of comic plot and counter-plot that are common to all. The result is a novel classification of farce-plots, which serves to clarify the differences between farce and more literary comic forms and to show how quickly farce can shade into other styles of humor. The key is a careful balance between a revolt against order and propriety, and a kind of Realpolitik which ultimately restores the social conventions under attack. A complex array of devices in such things as framing, plot, characterization, timing and acting style maintain the delicate balance. Contemporary examples from the London stage bring the discussion up-to-date and reveal farce as a complex and potent comic form, with its own history, rules and traditions. Farce sheds light on the genre, its history, and usage in terms of dramatic critics. Davis examines the recurring themes in farcical comedies including rebellion, revenge, and coincidence. This classic work, updated with a new introduction and 50% new material, has been a staple of literary and humor studies libraries for years. It is part of the Transaction Series in Humor edited by Arthur Asa Berger.

Farce is a welcome and uniquely recommended contribution to both Literary Criticism and Culture Studies reference collections and supplementary reading lists." —Library Bookwatch About the Author Jessica Milner Davis co-ordinates the Australasian Humour Scholars Network from the University of New South Wales in Sydney as a Visiting Fellow in its Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Since her first book she has published a wide variety of papers on comedy and humor, edited two specialist volumes of *The Australian Journal of Comedy* (in 1997 and 2001) and serves on the boards of two international humor research journals and book-series. Jessica Milner Davis co-ordinates the Australasian Humour Scholars Network from the University of New South Wales in Sydney as a Visiting Fellow in its Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences. Since her first book she has published a wide variety of papers on comedy and humor, edited two specialist volumes of *The Australian Journal of Comedy* (in 1997 and 2001) and serves on the boards of two international humor research journals and book-series.