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The Infernal Machine: & Other Plays (New Directions Paperbook)



Synopsis

Four full-length plays by one of the greatest dramatists Europe has produced. Among the great figures who pioneered the modern movement in world literature, none showed himself more versatile than France's Jean Cocteau. Poet, novelist, critic, artist, actor, film-maker, Cocteau was also one of the greatest dramatists Europe has produced, with over a dozen plays which are frequently revived, not only in France, but in translation in many other countries. For this collection, fine translations of four full-length plays, one short play, and the "Speaker's Text" for the Cocteau-Stravinsky opera Oedipus Rex have been selected. The longer plays (The Infernal Machine, Orpheus, Bacchus, Knights of the Round Table) are re-creations of classic myth and legend "poetic and highly original interpretations of certain timeless themes which have inspired great drama through the ages. The Eiffel Tower Wedding Party is, by contrast, merely a "curtain-raiser," but remarkable as un jeu d'esprit, revealing the wit and psychological penetration for which Cocteau is famous.

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Customer Reviews

A magnificent collection of plays by Cocteau, this set includes Orpheus, Oedipus Rex, and a

preposterous execution of *Knights Of The Round Table*. Most outstanding is the surreal *Eiffel Tower*, in which inanimate objects possess mortal properties, and subsequently performing a play within a play. More comprehensive than what he put to film, nevertheless Cocteau writes in a minimalist mark that makes this book a fast yet enjoyable read. Also check out the novels *Les Enfants Terribles* and *Opium*.

These translators may be fluent in French, but they are clearly not conversant with Jean Cocteau, the man, the artist, and his personal mythology. Autobiographical and poetic touchstones are heavily alluded to throughout these plays, but the translators mostly miss their significance in clumsy renderings that betray their ignorance of the things that were most important to the playwright. "Bacchus," in particular, a magnificent play, Cocteau's final testament for the stage, suffers egregiously in this regard.

Looking forward to reading.

very old. i wasn't expecting a book with yellow pages, and in the entire class i had the oldest edition. but that did not mean anything, because everything except the yellowishness was same.

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