



A World of Popular Entertainments: An Edited Volume of Critical Essays

Gillian Arrighi

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This groundbreaking volume of critical essays about popular entertainments brings together the work of eighteen established, emerging, and independent scholars from Archives, Theatre and Performance, Music, and Historical studies currently working across five continents. The first of its kind to examine popular entertainments from a global and multi-disciplinary perspective, this collection examines a broad cross-section of historical and contemporary popular entertainment forms from Australia, England, Japan, North America, and South Africa and considers their social, cultural and political significance. Despite the vibrant, complex, and ubiquitous nature of popular entertainments, the field has suffered from a lack of sustained academic attention. Nevertheless, popular entertainments have a global reach and a transnational significance at odds with the fact that the meaning and definition of both 'popular' and 'entertainment' remain widely contested. Since the late-nineteenth century class-based prejudices in Western culture have championed the superiority of art and literature over the dubious and fleeting pleasures of 'entertainment.' Similarly, the term 'popular' has carried pejorative connotations, indicating something common and outside the conventional and highbrow productions of the purpose-built theatre house or concert hall. Irrespective of whether 'popular' is code for a cultural product with a folk origin, or a term indicating the mass appeal of a cultural product, this volume's re-assessment of popular entertainments from a global perspective is timely. The performance research embodied in this volume was first discussed at A World of Popular Entertainments International Conference (University of Newcastle, Australia, 2009) in response to a multi-disciplinary call for scholars to explore a variety of topics relevant to the study of popular entertainments.

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