



Clown Scenes

Tristan Remy

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The intimacy of the one-ring circus produced the classic clown routines that flourished until the mid-twentieth century and then disappeared with the rise of the grand circus. They have been lost until now. By seeking out the little band of surviving clowns who worked in the old tradition and setting down their scenes, Tristan Rémy, the eminent circus historian, has rescued a theatrical treasure. Thanks to Rémy's persistence, the forty-eight scenes presented here contain not only the spoken words but the manner of line delivery and the physical turns. So they remain superbly suitable for performance. Most of them are written for just three actors—the white-faced clown, August the stooge, and the supercilious ringmaster. Sets are unnecessary. And their combination of the verbal with the physical has timeless appeal. Bernard Sahlins's translation is masterfully attuned to present-day audiences. In his foreword, Mr. Sahlins notes that these scenes have been continually remounted in Europe, attesting to their fundamental vitality and universality. “Clearly there is a debt, witting and unwitting, owed to the clown of the ring by the great comedians of our century. With this book these scenes and the clowns who invented and played them now take their honored place in our theatrical legacy.”

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