Acting on the Past
Historical Performance Across the Disciplines

Edited by Mark Franko and Annette Richards

Leading scholars redefine the scope and concerns of scholarship on historical performance.

Performance studies have been increasingly influential on recent developments in musicology, theater, art, and dance history, as these fields shift from primarily text-based disciplines to consider performativity, subjective experience, and particularized practice. At the same time, the editors argue, investigations into the pre- and early modern periods have been rare in performance studies. Acting on the Past assembles some of the foremost scholars to theorize particular historical performances in dance, opera, theater, and music as well as in festival, sculpture, rhetorics, arts of memory, moralized motions, musical notation, improvisations, and even photography, aerobic videos, and critical theory. Exploring relationships between archive and act, text and sounding, subject and practice, this collection expands and redefines our understanding of both past and performance.

"An extremely unusual collection, Acting on the Past establishes a dialogue between conventional and theoretical approaches to historical performance studies, on the one hand, and foregrounds the importance of early performance for an understanding of what has become known as the discipline of 'performance studies.' It reflects on the substantial play not only between performance practices and their carriers-the body, sound, movement, rhythm, time, etc.-but also between the many disciplines so crucial to our understanding of Western representation: rhetoric, drama, sculpture, photography, video, literature, as well as dance and music. The book will become an influential source text in performance studies, both old and new.

-Timothy Murray
Cornell University

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