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Stage Presence: The Actor as Mesmerist

Jane Goodall

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Focusing on examples of live performance in drama, dance, opera and light entertainment, Jane Goodall explores a characteristic as compelling and enigmatic as the performers who demonstrate it.

The mysterious quality of ‘presence’ in a performer has strong resonances with the uncanny. It is associated with primal, animal qualities in human individuals, but also has connotations of divinity and the supernatural, relating to figures of evil as well as heroism. *Stage Presence* traces these themes through theatrical history.

This fascinating study also explores the blend of science and spirituality that accompanies the appreciation of human power. Performers display a magnetism of their audiences; they electrify them, exhibit mesmeric command, and develop chemistry in their communication.

Case studies include: Josephine Baker, Sarah Bernhardt, Thomas Betterton, David Bowie, Maria Callas, Bob Dylan, David Garrick, Barry Humphries, Henry Irving, Vaslav Nijinsky and Paul Robeson.

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