



The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage (Toronto Italian Studies)

Rosalind Kerr

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The Rise of the Diva on the Sixteenth-Century Commedia dell'Arte Stage examines the emergence of the professional actress from the 1560s onwards in Italy. Tracing the historical progress of actresses from their earliest appearances as sideshow attractions to revered divas, Rosalind Kerr explores the ways in which actresses commodified their sexual and cultural appeal.

Newly translated archival material, iconographic evidence, literary texts, and theatrical scripts provide a rich repertoire through which Kerr demonstrates how actresses skillfully improvised roles such as the maidservant, the prima donna, and the transvestite heroine. Following the careers of early stars such as Flaminia of Rome, Vincenza Armani, Vittoria Piissimi, and Isabella Andreini, Kerr shows how their fame arose from the combination of dazzling technical mastery and eloquent powers of persuasion. Seamlessly integrating the Italian and English scholarly literature on the subject, *The Rise of the Diva* is an insightful analysis of one of the modern world's first celebrity cultures.

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