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978-0-521-79463-3 - New Readings in Theatre History

Jacky Bratton

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Over the last two hundred years some important ways of understanding theatre history have been undervalued or ignored by scholars. Leading theatre historian Jacky Bratton employs new approaches to examine and challenge this development, and to discover how theatre history has been chronicled and how it is interpreted. Using a series of case studies from nineteenth-century British theatre, Bratton examines the difference between the existence of ‘the drama’ (plays and play literature) and ‘the stage’ (performance, theatre building and attendance). By rejecting literary history, Bratton experiments with other ways of analysing the past, and the ways that have actually seemed relevant to the people on stage. This book suggests new histories: of theatrical story-telling, of performing families and of the disregarded dramatic energy of Victorian entertainment. As a result, we gain a new perspective on theatre history, not only for the Romantic and Victorian periods, but for the discipline overall.

JACKY BRATTON is Professor of Theatre and Cultural History in the Department of Drama and Theatre at Royal Holloway, University of London. Professor Bratton has written widely on Victorian theatre and literature as well as on performance history, including melodrama, music hall, and on the contribution of women in the theatre.

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Facts, like stones, are nothing in themselves; their value consists in the manner they are put together, and the purpose to which they are applied.

(Bulwer Lytton, *England and the English*, 1833, p. 78)

Euripides in his *Helena* says – ‘Nothing is more useful to mankind than a prudent mistrust’ – a maxim particularly applicable to the history of the stage.

(John Genest, *The English Stage*, 1832, vol. 3, p. 307)

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Acknowledgements

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This book is dedicated, however, to Jane Traies; without whom . . .