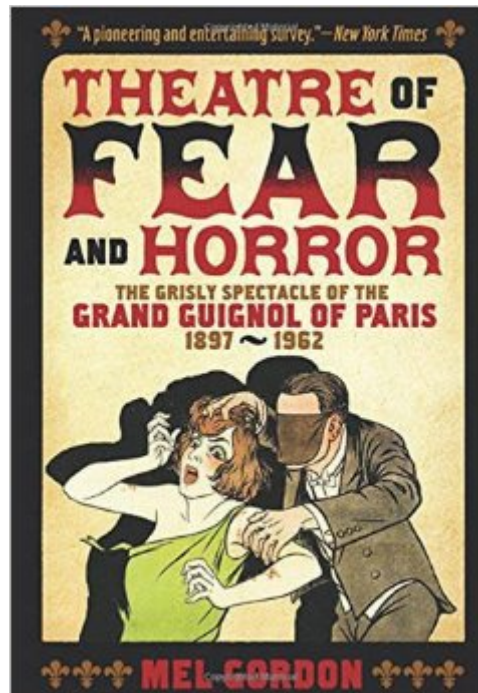


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Theatre Of Fear & Horror: Expanded Edition: The Grisly Spectacle Of The Grand Guignol Of Paris, 1897-1962



Synopsis

"Bloodcurdling shrieks, fiendish schemes, deeds of darkness, mayhem and mutilation" we all have a rough idea of what Grand Guignol stands for. But until now it has been hard to find out much more about it than that. According to the American theater historian Mel Gordon, no major history of the theater so much as mentions it, although it is a form of entertainment that held its own on the Paris stage for more than half a century. But Mr. Gordon has made a thorough job of filling the gap." — John Gross, *The New York Times* Here is the expanded edition of classic outrage book, *The Grand Guignol*, first published in 1988 and now long out of print. Like the original anthology, it includes an illustrated introduction to the theater of Paris and abroad, a breakdown of its stage tricks, a summary of one hundred plots, extensive photo documentation, Andr   de Lord's essay, "Fear in Literature," and two originally produced Grand Guignol scripts. The expanded edition also contains additional graphic and textual material including a color insert of Grand Guignol posters; the 1938 autobiographical account of Maxa, the company's leading female performer entitled "I Am the Maddest Woman in the World"; and the controversial playscript *Orgy in the Lighthouse*.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Mel Gordon's *The Theatre of Fear and Horror: The Grisly Spectacle of the Grand Guignol of Paris, 1897-1962*, updates the original version published in 1988. This new edition is replete with pages of color plates displaying old theater posters. A host of photos, sketches, and the cartoon as social commentary, add visual interest to a narrative that walks the reader through the history of the bizarre Parisian entertainment space. For novices who know little about the Grand Guignol,

Gordon's book is a superb primer. For stage and film historians, it is a must-have addition to their libraries. The author breaks the text into two major parts. The first is a brief chronological account of the theater beginning with its birth as an 18th century chapel. By 1897 the Grand Guignol found its place in the cultural landscape of Paris, albeit off the beaten track. As stage artist Maxa, who was known as the "High Priestess of the Temple of Horror," explains, the Grand Guignol was "situated in a dark, narrow street . . . No one would suspect a theater in such a sordid, dingy neighborhood." Taking much of its material from the police blotter, gore, terror, and sex were served up nightly in short plays combined with a sprinkling of comedies to ease audience tension. The psychologist Alfred Binet was among a handful of playwrights who found an audience at the Grand Guignol. Patrons ran the gamut of European royalty to a lesser sort whose fame was in progress. The pastry chef Ho Chi Minh and female erotic author Anaïs Nin were followers of the Guignol stage. The theater contributed to the early success of the horror films of German Expressionism, most notably *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*.

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