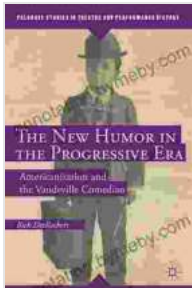


Americanization and the Vaudeville Comedian



The New Humor in the Progressive Era: Americanization and the Vaudeville Comedian (Palgrave Studies in Theatre and Performance History)

by Dominique Souder

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 899 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported

Enhanced typesetting: Enabled

Word Wise : Enabled

Print length : 213 pages

Item Weight : 9.2 ounces

Dimensions : 5.47 x 0.67 x 8.31 inches



The early 20th century witnessed a surge of immigration into the United States, bringing with it a vibrant array of cultures and languages. Nowhere was this more evident than in the world of vaudeville, a wildly popular form of entertainment that featured a diverse array of performers, including comedians. As these comedians navigated the unfamiliar landscape of their new home, they encountered a range of challenges that profoundly shaped their performances.

Cultural Assimilation

One of the most significant challenges faced by vaudeville comedians was cultural assimilation. Many came from countries with vastly different social

customs and norms, and they had to adapt their acts to appeal to American audiences. This often meant toning down their accents, adopting American slang, and incorporating topical references into their routines.

For example, the comedian Charlie Chaplin, who immigrated from England, initially struggled to find success in the United States due to his thick British accent. However, he eventually adapted his act, incorporating more physical comedy and slapstick routines that transcended language barriers.

Language Barriers

Language barriers posed another major obstacle for vaudeville comedians. Many immigrants spoke little or no English, making it difficult for them to connect with audiences. However, some comedians turned this challenge into an advantage, using their broken English and thick accents as sources of humor.

The comedian Sophie Tucker, a Russian immigrant, was known for her thick accent and her bawdy jokes. She embraced her immigrant status, using it as a way to connect with audiences and break down cultural barriers.

Social Commentary

As vaudeville comedians grappled with the challenges of Americanization, they also used their performances to comment on the social and political issues of the day. Many comedians used their routines to address topics such as immigration, racism, and poverty.

For example, the comedian Will Rogers was known for his witty and often satirical observations on American society. He often used his humor to

criticize the government and social inequalities.

Evolution of Vaudeville

The impact of Americanization on vaudeville comedians was profound. It led to a more diverse and inclusive form of entertainment, as well as a new generation of comedians who were able to connect with audiences on a deeper level.

The evolution of vaudeville also reflected the changing American landscape. As the country became more urban and industrialized, so too did vaudeville. Vaudeville theaters began to spring up in major cities, catering to a growing audience of working-class Americans.

The Americanization of vaudeville comedians was a complex and fascinating process that shaped the history of entertainment in the United States. These comedians faced numerous challenges as they navigated a new culture and language, but they also used their performances to reflect and comment on the changing American landscape. Their legacy continues to inspire and entertain audiences today.



Vaudeville comedians were a diverse bunch, coming from all walks of life.



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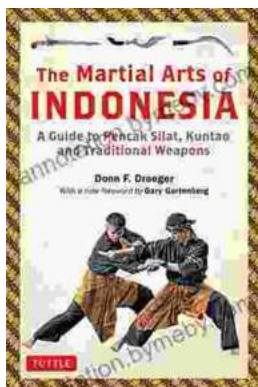
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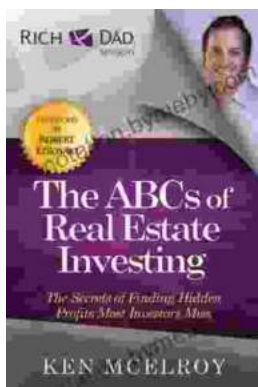
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