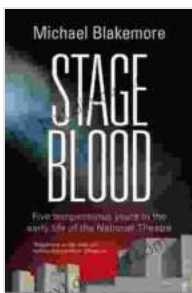


Five Tempestuous Years: Unveiling the Birth Pangs of the National Theatre



The National Theatre, a beacon of British theatre and a global cultural icon, has a rich and storied history. But its early years were far from serene, as vividly depicted in the captivating book "Five Tempestuous Years." This meticulously researched account delves into the tumultuous period from 1963 to 1968 when the National Theatre struggled to find its footing, battling financial woes, artistic disputes, and external pressures.



Stage Blood: Five tempestuous years in the early life of the National Theatre by Michael Blakemore

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 991 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Screen Reader : Supported
Enhanced typesetting: Enabled
Word Wise : Enabled
Print length : 368 pages



Author Michael Coveney, a renowned theatre critic and historian, masterfully weaves together archival research, interviews with key figures, and his own expert insights to create a vivid portrait of this pivotal chapter in the National Theatre's evolution. Coveney transports us to the heart of the maelstrom, introducing us to the larger-than-life personalities and passionate debates that shaped the institution's destiny.

A Clash of Visions: Artistic Directorship and the Search for Identity

At the helm of the National Theatre during these tumultuous years were three artistic directors: Laurence Olivier, William Gaskill, and Peter Hall. Each visionary brought their unique artistic sensibilities and ambitions, leading to both creative brilliance and intense clashes.

Olivier, the legendary actor-manager, sought to create a grand, classical theatre in the tradition of the Comédie-Française. Gaskill, a proponent of "new writing" and contemporary theatre, pushed for a more experimental and socially relevant approach. Hall, who succeeded Gaskill in 1968, navigated the middle ground, balancing tradition with innovation.



These artistic directorships were not merely creative endeavors; they were also fraught with financial and political challenges. The National Theatre's uncertain funding and external pressures from government and public opinion made it difficult to maintain artistic integrity while balancing the books.

The Birth of the "Young Vic": A Crucible of Creativity and Rebellion

Amidst the turmoil at the National Theatre, a beacon of hope emerged: the Young Vic. Founded in 1970 by a group of young actors and creatives, the Young Vic became a haven for emerging talent and groundbreaking theatre.

The Young Vic's productions, often bold and experimental, challenged conventions and pushed artistic boundaries. It provided a platform for future theatre luminaries such as playwright David Hare, director Trevor Nunn, and actor Ian McKellen.

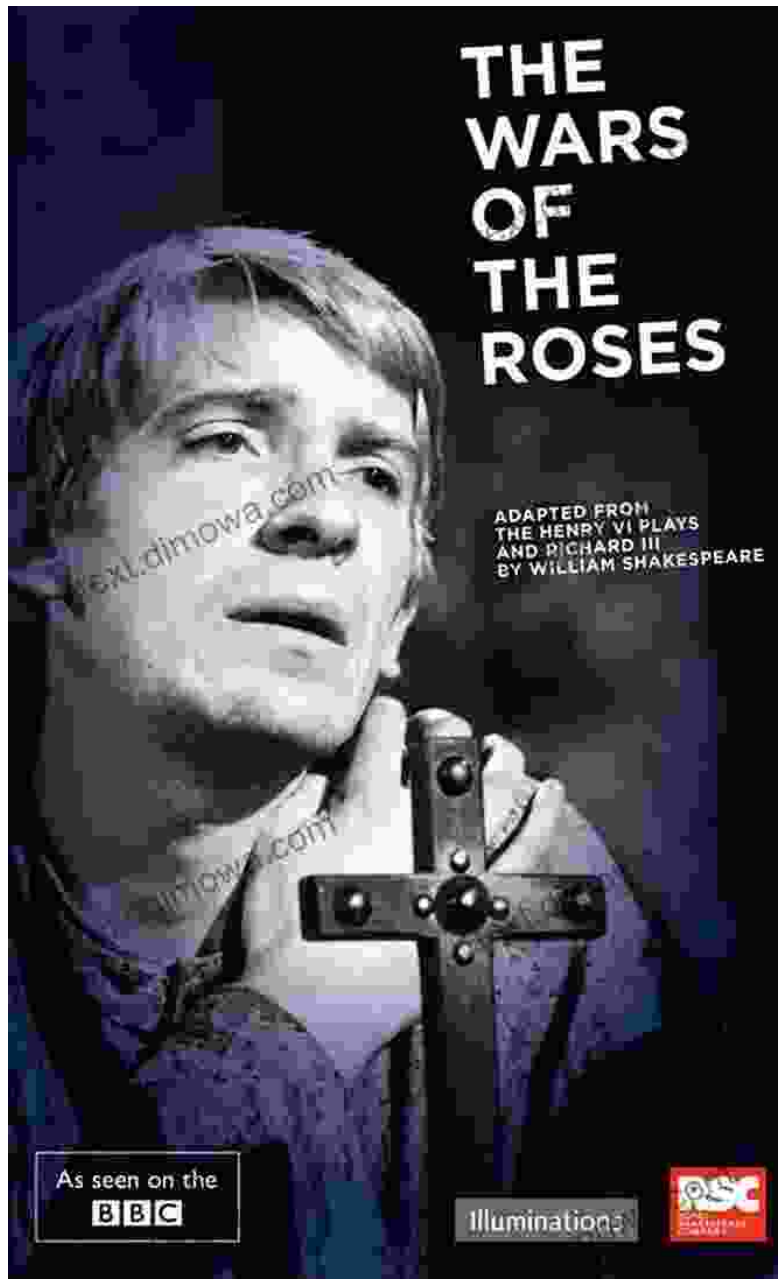


The relationship between the National Theatre and the Young Vic was complex and often strained. The National Theatre provided financial support to its younger sibling, but there was also a sense of competition and rivalry.

Triumphs and Tribulations: Iconic Productions and Financial Struggles

Despite the challenges, the National Theatre during its early years produced some of the most iconic and memorable productions in British

theatre history.



Peter Hall's "Wars of the Roses" (1963) was a sweeping historical epic that captivated audiences with its grand scale and powerful performances. William Gaskill's production of Arthur Miller's "The Crucible" (1965) was a searing indictment of McCarthyism and a timely reminder of the dangers of political persecution.

However, these triumphs were often overshadowed by financial struggles. The National Theatre's ambitious programming and expensive productions put a strain on its budget, leading to repeated government bailouts and public scrutiny.

Legacy and Impact: Shaping the Future of British Theatre

The "Five Tempestuous Years" described in Coveney's book were a crucible in which the National Theatre was forged. The institution emerged from this tumultuous period with a renewed sense of purpose and a reputation for artistic excellence.

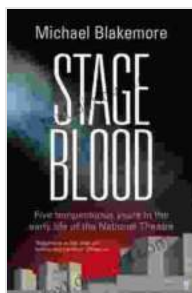
The National Theatre's early struggles and triumphs shaped its future trajectory. It became a beacon of innovation and creativity, while also maintaining a commitment to classical repertoire. The institution's impact on British theatre is immeasurable, having nurtured generations of actors, directors, and playwrights.

: A Riveting Tale of Passion, Ambition, and Resilience

"Five Tempestuous Years" is not merely a historical account; it is a gripping human drama that captures the passion, ambition, and resilience of those who shaped the National Theatre. Through vivid storytelling and meticulous research, Michael Coveney provides a fascinating glimpse into the birth pangs of a cultural institution that has become a global treasure.

This book is essential reading for anyone interested in British theatre, cultural history, or the challenges of navigating artistic and financial pressures. "Five Tempestuous Years" is a valuable addition to the canon of theatre literature, offering a fresh perspective on one of the most important chapters in the history of the National Theatre.

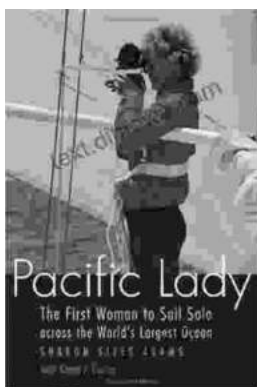
Whether you are a seasoned theatre aficionado or simply curious about the behind-the-scenes workings of a major cultural institution, "Five Tempestuous Years" is a captivating and illuminating read that will transport you to the heart of the National Theatre's turbulent early years.



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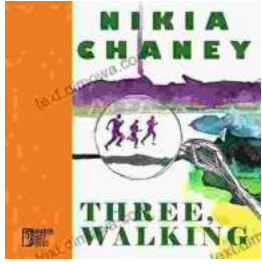
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