



Utopia in Performance: Finding Hope at the Theater

Jill Dolan

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"Jill Dolan is the theatre's most astute critic, and this new book is perhaps her most important. *Utopia in Performance* argues with eloquence and insight how theatre makes a difference, and in the process demonstrates that scholarship matters, too. It is a book that readers will cherish and hold close as a personal favorite, and that scholars will cite for years to come."

---David Román, University of Southern California

What is it about performance that draws people to sit and listen attentively in a theater, hoping to be moved and provoked, challenged and comforted? In *Utopia in Performance*, Jill Dolan traces the sense of visceral, emotional, and social connection that we experience at such times, connections that allow us to feel for a moment not what a better world might look like, but what it might feel like, and how that hopeful utopic sentiment might become motivation for social change.

She traces these "utopian performatives" in a range of performances, including the solo performances of feminist artists Holly Hughes, Deb Margolin, and Peggy Shaw; multicharacter solo performances by Lily Tomlin, Danny Hoch, and Anna Deavere Smith; the slam poetry event Def Poetry Jam; *The Laramie Project*; *Blanket*, a performance by postmodern choreographer Ann Carlson; *Metamorphoses* by Mary Zimmerman; and Deborah Warner's production of *Medea* starring Fiona Shaw. While the book richly captures moments of "feeling utopia" found within specific performances, it also celebrates the broad potential that performance has to provide a forum for being human together; for feeling love, hope, and commonality in particular and historical (rather than universal and transcendent) ways.

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