

Cornish

Performing Unification: History and Nation in German Theater After 1989

Since the moment after the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the most important German theater artists have created plays and productions about unification. Some have challenged how German history is written, while others opposed the very act of storytelling. *Performing Unification* examines how German directors, playwrights, and theater groups including Heiner Müller, Frank Castorf, and Rimini Protokoll have represented and misrepresented the past, confronting their nation's history and collective identity. While scholars and critics have scrutinized unification in cinema and literature, this is the first book to focus on theater and performance. Author Matt Cornish surveys German-language history plays from the Baroque period through Friedrich Schiller, Heinrich von Kleist, Brecht, and up to the documentary theater movement of the 1960s to show how German identity has always been contested, even well before Germany became a nation. Then turning to performances of unification after 1989, Cornish argues that theater, in its structures and its live gestures, on pages, stages, and streets, helps us to understand the past and its effect on us, our relationships with others in our communities, and our futures. Engaging with theater theory from Aristotle through Bertolt Brecht and Hans-Thies Lehmann's "postdramatic" theater, and also with theories of history from Hegel to Walter Benjamin and Hayden White, *Performing Unification* demonstrates that historiography and dramaturgy are intertwined.

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29,00 €

27,10 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780472037568

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-472-03756-8

Verlag: UNIV OF MICHIGAN PR

Erscheinungstermin: 30.08.2019

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2019

Produktform: Kartoniert

Gewicht: 390 g

Seiten: 264

Format (B x H): 152 x 229 mm

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22.07.2024 | 19:15 Uhr

