



Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre

By Philip Butterworth

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Staging Conventions in Medieval English Theatre By Philip Butterworth

How was medieval English theatre performed? Many of the modern theatrical concepts and terms used today to discuss the nature of medieval English theatre were never used in medieval times. Concepts and terms such as character, characterisation, truth and belief, costume, acting style, amateur, professional, stage directions, effects and special effects are all examples of post-medieval terms that have been applied to the English theatre. Little has been written about staging conventions in the performance of medieval English theatre and the identity and value of these conventions has often been overlooked. In this book, Philip Butterworth analyses dormant evidence of theatrical processes such as casting, doubling of parts, rehearsing, memorising, cueing, entering, exiting, playing, expounding, prompting, delivering effects, timing, hearing, seeing and responding. All these concerns point to a very different kind of theatre to the naturalistic theatre produced today.

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Review

'Butterworth's book will be of use to those seeking a scholarly discussion of problems and strategies in the performance of medieval drama, both as it was once written and played, and for contemporary revivals. His knowledge is extensive and his practical experience of the staging of many of these works clearly and helpfully informs his comments on their characteristic ways of working in space, time, and action.' Tom Bishop, *Speculum*

About the Author

Philip Butterworth is Visiting Research Fellow in the Institute for Medieval Studies at the University of Leeds. He was formerly Reader in Medieval Theatre and Dean for Research at the University of Leeds. In 2005 he took early retirement in order to concentrate on full-time research. His principal medieval publications are *Theatre of Fire: Special Effects in Early English and Scottish Theatre* (1998), *Magic on the Early English Stage* (Cambridge University Press, 2005 and 2010, and winner of the David Bevington Prize, 2006) and *The Narrator, the Expositor, and the Prompter in European Medieval Theatre* (ed.) 2007. He also co-authored *The Cambridge Introduction to Scenography* with Joslin McKinney (Cambridge University Press, 2009). He was a founder member of the renowned Octagon Theatre, Bolton and taught in the Drama Department at Bretton Hall for many years.

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