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Rediscovering Mordecai Gorelik: Scene Design and the American Theatre (Theater in the Americas)

Associate Professor Anne Fletcher

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Rediscovering Mordecai Gorelik explores the life and work of the pioneering scene designer whose career spanned decades in American theatre. Anne Fletcher's insightful volume draws intriguing parallels and contrasts between Gorelik's productions and the theatrical movements of the twentieth century, exposing the indelible mark he left on the stage. Through in-depth analysis of his letters, diaries, designs, and theoretical works, Fletcher examines the ways in which Gorelik's productions can be used as a mirror to reflect the shifting dramatic landscapes of his times.

Fletcher places Gorelik against the colorful historical backdrops that surrounded him—including the avant-garde movement of the 1920s, World War II, the Cold War, and absurdism—using the designer's career as a window into the theatre during these eras. Within these cultural contexts, Gorelik sought to blaze his own unconventional path through the realms of theatre and theory. Fletcher traces Gorelik's tenures with such companies as the Provincetown Players, the Theatre Guild, and the Theatre Union, as well as his relationships with icons such as Bertolt Brecht, revealing how his interactions with others influenced his progressive designs and thus set the stage for major dramatic innovations. In particular, Fletcher explores Gorelik's use of scenic metaphor: the employment of stage design techniques to subtly enhance the tone or mood of a production. Fletcher also details the designer's written contributions to criticism and theory, including the influential volume *New Theatres for Old*, as well as other articles and publications.

In addition to thorough examinations of several of Gorelik's most famous projects, *Rediscovering Mordecai Gorelik* contains explications of productions by such legends as John Howard Lawson, Clifford Odets, and Arthur Miller. Also included are numerous full-color and black-and-white illustrations of Gorelik's work, most of which have never been available to the public until now. More than simply a portrait of one man, this indispensable volume is a cultural history of American theatre as seen through the career of a visionary designer and theoretician.

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