

Shakespeare and the Dance (Revised edition)



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Reviews

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SHAKESPEARE AND THE DANCE (REVISED EDITION)

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Dance Books Ltd. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, Shakespeare and the Dance (Revised edition), Alan Brissenden, Dancing was an essential part of life in Shakespeare's England. Town and country folk danced at weddings, Maydays and other festivities. Queen Elizabeth prided herself on her skill (and danced galliards in the morning to keep fit), and dancing was the soul of the extravagant masques which so delighted King James. Puritans might furiously denounce it but it was part of the ceremonial of the Inns of Court and a necessary accomplishment for a gentleman. At the same time, as Alan Brissenden shows in this book, the dance was an accepted symbol of harmony, and it was in this way that Shakespeare used it to express one of his major themes: the attempt to achieve order in a discordant world. He included it in at least a dozen of his plays and referred to it in thirty. A valuable source for his imagery, it also illuminates character and action and in some plays helps to forward the plot. In the history plays allusions to country dance, (especially the morris, and court dances like the lavolta) support ideas of conflict and the presentation of characters, especially Henry V. While there is no dancing itself in the histories there is plenty to be found in the comedies and two chapters of the book closely examine the relation of dance to dialogue, character and plot, particularly in "Love's Labour's Lost", "A Midsummer Night's Dream" and "Much Ado About Nothing". In the tragedies dancing becomes a powerful ironic visual symbol, especially in Romeo and Juliet, Macbeth and Timon of Athens. After 1607 dance occurs in almost all of Shakespeare's plays, in such a way that it reflects and expresses the fusion of tragic and comic elements which...



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