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Plays (Penguin Classics)



Synopsis

The dramatic works of Anton Chekhov (1860-1904) present the actions of ordinary people. He avoids any explicit political treatment, but the depth and subtlety of his art has generated a wealth of interpretation. His representation of human relationships is infinitely sympathetic, and each play contains at least one character who expresses Chekhov's hopes for a brighter future. "The Cherry Orchard" and "Three Sisters" was first published in this translation in 1951. "The Seagull", "Uncle Vania", "The Bear", "The Proposal" and "The Jubilee" were first published in this translation in 1954.

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Customer Reviews

Vellacott's translations of Euripides are the greatest voice anyone has given Euripides... This last volume contains high voltage energy! The Bacchae is his masterpiece and the main attraction! The only thing about this edition is that Vellacott in the 1970's revised his original putting much of the text into verse, and taking out the original prose. I find the 1954 original much much better, it is more readable and exciting than his changes. You must however look in the copyright page (towards the front of the book) to find out which print is the original 1954 version of the plays, because Penguin has a dozen of subsequent re-prints that have exactly the same front cover! This may not matter to those starting out with Euripides but to me it is a big difference and enough for me to let you all know. Thanks

This collection of 4 plays by Euripides includes Helen, The Women of Troy, the Baccae and Ion. There is a common theme running through the plays - the roles of war and violence in human nature. The translation is very easy to read in common English, and the introduction is well written and gives the reader a good general overview of the 4 plays. Ion is a look at the role of faith in life, and the differences and difficulties in reconciling the reality of living with the demands of religion. The Women of Troy and Helen revolve around the Trojan War, and the horrors and absurdities that war causes mankind. Finally, the Bacchae explores religious violence and the dangers of mass hysteria and group think. In all it is a very readable and very entertaining translation with messages understandable and applicable to modern man.

Euripides is one of the great playwrights of classical Greece and with this collection (in translation) you have his complete works - as far as they exist. I bought it because I am writing a series of poems based on Dionysus to accompany an exhibition by Mike Healey in Corfu early next year but you should buy this if you want to touch base with the ancient origins of great drama.

I read Philip Vellacott's translation of The Bacchae and The Women of Troy by Euripides for a Greek and Roman mythology course this summer. Having no previous experience with Greek plays, I found that these two plays have universal themes that still resonate down to our time. The Bacchae was written around 406 B.C. when Euripides was approximately seventy years old. The play is a dramatization of Dionysus' return to his birthplace Thebes where he exacts revenge, because he is not given proper recognition as a divinity. The main themes include the superiority of the gods and the importance of appeasement and justice. Pentheus, the protagonist, represents human failing to respect the gods so that he, along with the rest of society, is guilty of hubris. The story also illustrates that a complete state of ecstasy can be sanctioned through Dionysiac worship as long as it is controlled by the god. There is also a patriarchal element that outlines the gender hierarchy within the divine and mortal societies of the Greeks. The Women of Troy highlights the trials and tribulations of three women who were most affected by the Trojan War. Andromache, Cassandra, and Helen all have stories of heartbreak to tell and Euripides tells their stories in a sympathetic fashion. This play was produced in 415 BC, and it was a part of a trilogy, but the other two plays have been lost. Historically, the play was performed after the massacre on the island of Melos when the Athenians severely punished the inhabitants who wanted to withdraw from the League. Scholars have seen the play as a condemnation of the massacre set outside the walls of Troy. I enjoyed reading these plays, and when I have some free time I'd like to continue on and read Ion and Helen

which are plays also found in this edition.

My friend was very happy with this book. She finished reading it in a few hours and said it was great and not difficult or confusing classics by other publishers.

Although it is probably best to read some of Euripides' other plays before this collection, this volume contains the best of his extant work (in my opinion). Besides the Bacchae there are two truly great plays centering around the tragic figure of Iphigenia (a daughter sacrificed to Artemis by Agamemnon so his fleet could set sail for Troy in Homer's Iliad). Euripides has had his detractors over the centuries, but the oratory, emotion, and sensitivity of his tragedies sets him apart from Aeschylus and Sophocles (each of whom was also excellent for other reasons).

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