



# **Michel Saint-Denis and the Shaping of the Modern Actor (Contributions in Drama and Theatre Studies)**

*Jane Baldwin*

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In a career that spanned more than four decades and four countries, Michel Saint-Denis-actor, director, teacher, and theorist-was a major force in twentieth-century theatre. Baldwin chronicles his life and career, which was characterized by frequent beginnings, triumphs, and disasters. Although the times, the artistic currents, and the places changed, Saint-Denis's ambition remained consistent: to create a permanent company dedicated to theatrical experiment coupled with school. While this aspiration was never fully realized, the result of his failure was to have a more lasting effect on the theatre. Always on the move, he implanted his theatre practice internationally through the creation of innovative drama schools and his own teaching. In this long-overdue assessment, Saint-Denis's contribution to the stage is brought to light in vivid detail.

Making the case that the Saint-Denis's innovations, ideas, and vision are present in current theatrical practice, Baldwin resurrects this important figure and examines a life and career that had almost been forgotten. Thirty-five years after his death, the author contends his influence can still be seen in the drama schools he created-the London Theatre Studio, the Old Vic School, the Ecole Superieure d'Art Dramatique, the National Theatre School of Canada, the Juilliard Drama Division-and in the spirit behind much that was accomplished at England's National Theatre, Royal Shakespeare Company, and Royal Court. This consideration casts new light on this important figure and reveals the extent of his role in the shaping of modern theatre and dramatic arts.

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