



# Mis-directing the Play: An Argument Against Contemporary Theatre

*Terry McCabe*

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## **Mis-directing the Play: An Argument Against Contemporary Theatre** Terry McCabe

Terry McCabe, himself an accomplished stage director and teacher of theatre arts, here attacks what he calls the growing decadence that plagues contemporary stage directing. He argues for a radical reorganization of the director's view of his role. It has become an article of faith in the theatre, Mr. McCabe observes, that a play is about what the director chooses to have it be about. But what right does a director have to treat a play as a found object, to be reshaped to express the director's concerns? None whatsoever, Mr. McCabe replies. He examines anecdotally a range of work by different directors by way of offering a substantial critique of today's leading theory of stage directing, and he offers an alternate approach. He challenges the notion that a play is the director's vehicle for self-expression, arguing that the idea of the director as centerpiece of the theatre tends to distort plays and oppress actors. He explores what it means to direct a play when directing is properly understood as a process of self-effacement. *Mis-directing the Play* examines the role of the director as collaborator with actors, designers, dramaturges, and playwrights. Throughout, the book's focus is on shedding the counterproductive myth of the director as creative auteur and urging in its place a return to first principles: the idea of the director as the interpretive artist in charge of putting the playwright's play onstage.

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