

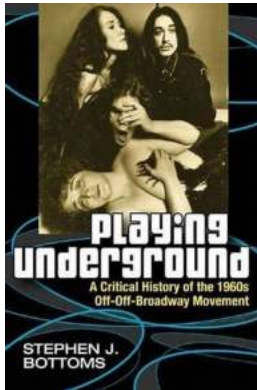
# Critical History Of The 1960s Off Off Broadway Movement Theater

The Off Off Broadway movement that emerged in the 1960s marked a significant turning point in American theater history. This countercultural movement, also referred to as the experimental or avant-garde theater movement, was characterized by its unconventionality, creative freedom, and rejection of commercial theater norms. Off Off Broadway productions were known for their innovative and daring approach, offering a platform for new voices and experimental works that were often overlooked by mainstream theater.

The birth of the Off Off Broadway movement can be traced back to the 1960s, a period of social and cultural upheaval in the United States. The Vietnam War, civil rights movement, and counterculture revolution sparked a wave of artistic experimentation and rebellion in various art forms, including theater. The movement was a direct response to the limitations and narrowness of mainstream commercial theater, which was dominated by large-scale productions and conservative narratives.

Off Off Broadway theaters were typically small, intimate venues located in rented spaces, lofts, community centers, or even in the performers' own homes. This grassroots approach allowed artists to bypass the commercial constraints of traditional theater and create works on their own terms. The movement was not driven by profit but by a desire to challenge norms, provoke thought, and push the boundaries of what was considered acceptable on stage.

**Playing Underground: A Critical History of the 1960s Off-Off-Broadway Movement (Theater:**



## Theory/Text/Performance)

by Kris Deva North (Kindle Edition)

★★★★★ 5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 885 KB
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Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
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One of the most iconic Off Off Broadway theaters was the famous La MaMa Experimental Theatre Club, founded by Ellen Stewart in 1961. La MaMa became a hub for experimental theater artists and provided a platform for marginalized voices, including women, people of color, and LGBTQ+ individuals. It became a breeding ground for artistic collaborations, with renowned artists such as Sam Shepard, Tom Egan, and Lanford Wilson testing their works in this vibrant theater community.

The Off Off Broadway movement paved the way for a renaissance of experimental theater, inspiring actors, directors, and playwrights to explore new forms of storytelling and challenge traditional notions of theater. The movement was fueled by a sense of rebellion against the establishment and a desire to create theater that reflected the realities of the time. It tackled social and political issues, shed light on marginalized communities, and broke down barriers of representation.

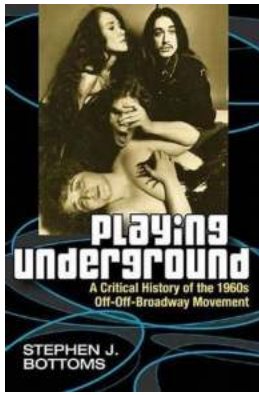
As with any artistic movement, Off Off Broadway had its critics. Some argued that the experimentation and lack of commercial viability led to self-indulgent and pretentious works that were inaccessible to mainstream audiences. Others believed that Off Off Broadway perpetuated an elitist culture that alienated working-class theatergoers.

Nevertheless, the impact of the Off Off Broadway movement cannot be understated. It served as a catalyst for change in the theater industry, giving rise to new voices and paving the way for the development of alternative theater scenes across the country. It challenged the idea of what theater should be, opening the door for unconventional narratives, diverse casting, and experimental staging.

The legacy of the Off Off Broadway movement can still be felt in contemporary theater. Many groundbreaking artists and productions from this era went on to shape the theater landscape and influence future generations. The movement's emphasis on creative freedom, inclusivity, and experimentation laid the foundation for the vibrant and diverse theater scene we enjoy today.

In , the 1960s Off Off Broadway movement theater was a pivotal moment in American theatrical history. It broke away from the commercial constraints of mainstream theater, providing an outlet for unconventional and experimental works. Despite its critics, the movement had a lasting impact on the industry, giving birth to new voices, challenging traditional narratives, and inspiring generations of theater artists.

Alt attribute long descriptive keyword: Off Off Broadway movement, 1960s theater, countercultural theater, experimental theater, avant-garde theater.



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"Scrupulously researched, critically acute, and written with care, Playing Underground will become a classic account of an era of hard-won free expression."

-William Coco

"At last---a book documenting the beginnings of Off-Off Broadway theater. Playing Underground is an insightful, illuminating, and honest appraisal of this important period in American theater."

-Rosalyn Drexler, author of Art Does (Not!) Exist and Occupational Hazard

"An epic movie of an epic movement, Playing Underground is a book the world has waited for without knowing it. How precisely it captures the evolution of our revolution! I am amazed by the book's scope and scale, and I bless its author

especially for giving two greats, Paul Foster and H. M. Koutoukas, their proper, polar places, and for memorializing such unjustly forgotten masterpieces as Irene Fornes's *Molly's Dream* and Jeff Weiss's *A Funny Walk Home*. Stephen Bottoms's vivid evocation of the grand adventure of Off-Off Broadway has woken and broken my heart. It is difficult to believe that he was not there alongside me to breathe the caffeine-nicotine-alkaloid-steeped air."

-Robert Patrick, author of *Kennedy's Children* and *Temple Slave*

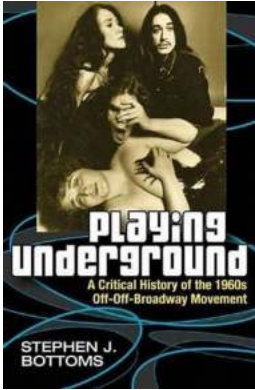
Few books address the legendary age of 1960s off-off Broadway theater. Fortunately, Stephen Bottoms fills that gap with *Playing Underground*---the first comprehensive history of the roots of off-off Broadway.

This is a theater whose legacy is still felt today: it was the launching pad for many leading contemporary theater artists, including Sam Shepard, Maria Irene Fornes, and others, and it was a pivotal influence on improv comedy and shows like *Saturday Night Live*.

Off-off Broadway groups such as the Living Theatre, La Mama, and Caffe Cino captured the spirit of nontraditional theater with their edgy, unscripted, boundary-crossing subjects. Yet, as Bottoms discovers, there is no one set of truths about off-off Broadway to uncover; the entire scene was always more a matter of competing perceptions than a singular, concrete reality.

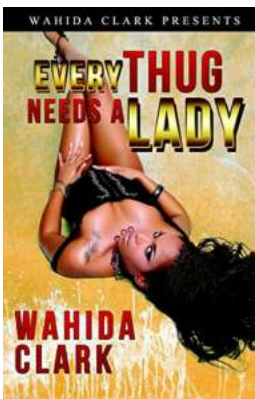
No other author has managed to illuminate this shifting tableau as Bottoms does. Through interviews with dozens of the era's leading playwrights, performers, directors, and critics, he unearths a countercultural theater movement that was both influential and transforming-yet ephemeral and quintessentially of its moment.

Playing Underground will be a definitive work on the subject, offering a complete picture of an important but little-studied period in American theater.



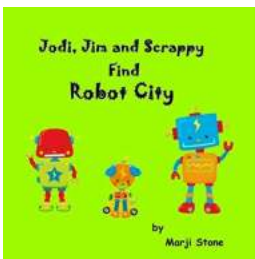
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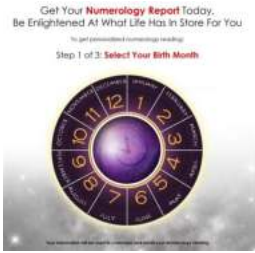
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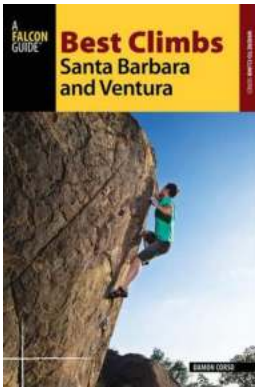
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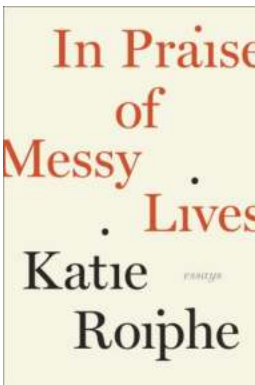
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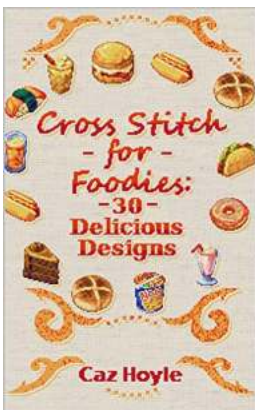
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