

courage to analyse comedy but Tony Staveacre has had a good stab at it in **SLAPSTICK** – The Illustrated Story of Knockabout Comedy. His brief is the comedy of action: visuals rather than verbals, although it is often the juxtaposition of images and words that produces the laughs. Most of his chapter categories of comedy are self-explanatory, eg Inspired Lunacy, Visual Vulgarity and Victimisation. The book calls itself a story but it is also something of a history, starting with a chapter on *Tumbling Through the Ages*.

The complex mechanisms often employed in laughter construction are discussed in *Props, Traps, Tricks and Flaps*: and the author offers his own personal selection (from which few would dissent) of sixty Top of the Bill laughtermakers.

Laughter rarely stems from cold logic, although being a clown is a solemn business indeed. While it is always interesting to consider acting technique, my particular joy in this book was a simple re-living of the old chestnuts and a stimulated recall of the comedians who have kept me sane over the years.

Benedict Nightingale sat **FIFTH ROW CENTER** for the whole of the 1983–84

seasons in New York, on and off Broadway, for the New York Sunday Times. His response to this critic's year has now taken book form and a very interesting read it makes. His alien status as a Brit doubtless assists his objectivity but, although this is a cool look at New York theatre, his writing is full of passion for the theatric experience. He is the kind of critic who wants the show to succeed. And although he writes from a personal viewpoint, as must every commentator who wishes to be readable, he is never destructive for the sake of maintaining the entertainment value of his own writing. Nightingale's book captures the flavour of Broadway and reveals London's future if British theatre reverts to the financing philosophies from which it was so triumphantly released in the sixties and seventies.

SPREAD A LITTLE HAPPINESS. The First Hundred Years of the British Musical. Sheridan Morley. Thames and Hudson. £12.95 (UK)

GEORGE GERSHWIN. A Biography. Alan Kendall. Harrap. £10.95 (UK)

BLUEBELL. The authorised biography of Margaret Kelly, founder of the legendary Bluebell girls. George Perry. Pavilion Michael Joseph. £7.95 (Paperback) UK.

THE EVERYMAN BOOK OF THEATRICAL ANECDOTES. Edited by Donald Sinden. J.M. Dent. £14.95 (UK)

SLAPSTICK. The Illustrated Story of Knockabout Comedy. Tony Staveacre. Angus and Robertson. £9.95 (UK).

FIFTH ROW CENTER. A Critic's Year On and Off Broadway. André Deutsch. £12.95 (UK).



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A Third Edition (reset and expanded) of Francis Reid's **The Stage Lighting Handbook** will be published in early autumn by A & C Black in London and by Methuen Inc in the United States.

Meanwhile a Spanish edition has just been published as **Manual de Iluminacion Escenica** by the Fundacion Diputacion de Sevilla. The translation is by Hector Morales who was a student of the author's at RADA.

A Swedish edition, **Teaterljus**, translated by Hans-Åke Sjöquist, was published by Entré of Stockholm in 1982.