



Joe Papp: An American Life

By Helen Epstein

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Self-made impresario, controversial producer, contentious champion of human rights and the First Amendment, founder of the New York Shakespeare Festival, and unquestionably the most dynamic force in American theater in the last quarter century, Joseph Papp (1921–1991) changed forever America's cultural landscape. He was the first to demand and to provide—against enormous odds—free Shakespeare to the public, and the first to pioneer colorblind casting and minority-group theater. He discovered and showcased at the Public Theater playwrights like David Rabe, John Guare, and Vaclav Havel; directors like Michael Bennet and James Lapine; actors like Al Pacino, Meryl Streep, Kevin Kline, and Denzel Washington; and produced such classic American plays as *Hair*, *Sticks and Bones*, *Streamers*, *The Normal Heart*, and *A Chorus Line*, the longest running musical in Broadway history. *Joe Papp* offers readers a compassionate, unsparing portrait of a complex man who inspired both anger and admiration, but whose far-reaching impact on American theater remains unsurpassed.

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Joe Papp: An American Life By Helen Epstein Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

After writing an article in 1976 about Papp's New York Shakespeare Festival, Epstein became close to the impresario and was to become his authorized biographer, but he changed his mind. This book was researched after Papp's death in 1991 with the assistance of his widow, Gail Merrifield. Epstein (*Children of the Holocaust*) has used her personal access well to provide a thorough, candid portrait of the hard-driving director/producer who made free Shakespeare in Central Park an annual event and who built a theatrical empire at the Public Theater, where he presented such groundbreaking works as *Hair* , for colored girls who have considered suicide and *A Chorus Line* , as well as Shakespearean productions that proved his contention that the Bard could be played with a vigorous American accent. In chronicling Papp's impoverished childhood (he was born in Brooklyn in 1921, the son of Jewish immigrants), his early years with the Actors Lab in California, his membership in the Communist Party, his four marriages and his stormy relationships with his children and colleagues, Epstein vividly evokes his charm and strong social conscience. She does not scant, however, a core of coldness that led him to discard Shakespeare Festival associates in whom he had lost interest or by whom he felt threatened. Sympathetic but critical, her thoughtful biography is a fitting tribute to the man who fought to bring theater to more diverse audiences and to build it on "the bedrock of civic responsibility." Photos not seen by PW.

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From School Library Journal

This authorized biography is a portrait of a protean figure. Papp is among those rare Americans whose vision and personality wrought huge changes in the national landscape, ultimately bringing free theater to thousands, produced a stunning string of hits, and provided venues for the most exciting new talents in theater. His is also a story of marginalized poverty, assimilation, and success that defines the American Dream. Papp's legacy is a vibrant, politically aware, artistically sophisticated audience. Epstein's account, told with a journalist's eye for detail and accurate dialog, captures Papp's energy, willfulness, humor, and passion. Recommended for most popular collections.

--*Thomas E. Luddy, Salem State Coll., Mass.*

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From Library Journal

From lover and protege of Mick Jagger to homeless junkie to revitalized punk rocker, Faithfull has done it all in classic Sixties style. Her autobiography follows closely on the heels of a new album.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Katie Phillips:

Have you spare time for the day? What do you do when you have much more or little spare time? Yes, you can choose the suitable activity with regard to spend your time. Any person spent all their spare time to take a move, shopping, or went to the actual Mall. How about open as well as read a book called Joe Papp: An American Life? Maybe it is being best activity for you. You know beside you can spend your time with the favorite's book, you can better than before. Do you agree with it is opinion or you have some other opinion?

Antione Wilson:

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