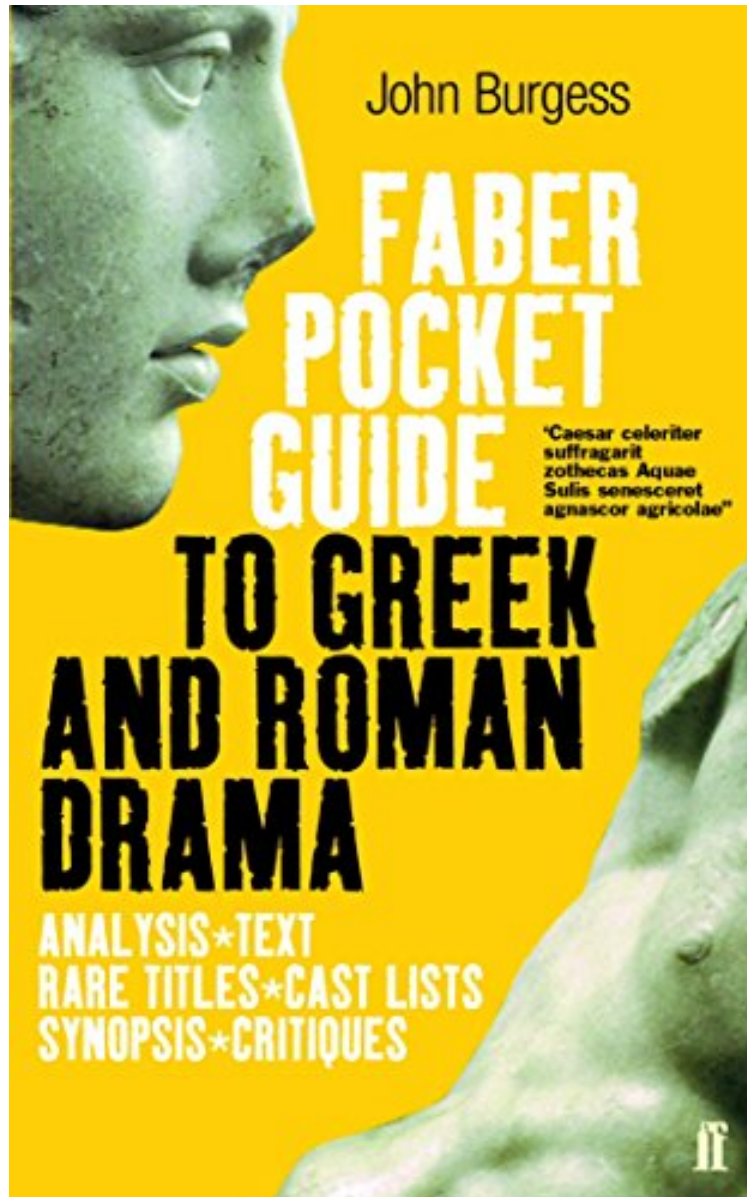


(Pdf free) The Faber Pocket Guide to Greek and Roman Drama (Faber's Pocket Guides)

## The Faber Pocket Guide to Greek and Roman Drama (Faber's Pocket Guides)

*John Burgess*

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**John Burgess : The Faber Pocket Guide to Greek and Roman Drama (Faber's Pocket Guides)** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Faber Pocket Guide to Greek and Roman Drama (Faber's Pocket Guides):

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Incomplete and inaccurateBy Melomane (aka A.B.)I dissent from

the 5-star reviewers. For a start, combining Greek and Roman drama in a single work is rather odd: at least, it resulted in the omission of 5 plays by Euripides and 7 by Aristophanes (unless the author wasn't in the mood for the 12 plays). Burgess's major fault is that he approaches the scripts not as 'drama' but (contrary to the book's title) as 'literature': touching upon stagecraft in the introduction parsimoniously (only 4 pages), he fails to provide specific examples of the ways in which the theatre's sections are used in each work, as well as the delivery of the verse, gestures, props, costumes (including masks), the machinery involved, etc. Burgess is also to be faulted for misinforming the reader: he claims that Euripides' dialogues are longer (70+ lines) than those in Aeschylus and Sophocles (only 10-15 lines!), which is certainly not true (unless the translators of all my editions of the latter playwrights added lines of their own). Moreover, the book contains many inaccuracies: Wagner's 'Ring' cycle is called 'Ring of the Nibelungen' (an Anglo-German title?); Burgess mentions Strauss's 'Die aegyptische Helena' as if it were entirely based on 'Helen' (Hofmannsthal's heavy plot and characters have nothing to do with those of Euripides' hilarious play: 'Helen' isn't even an adaptation of 'Helen'); though he alludes to Orff's 'Antigonae', Burgess ignores the same composer's 'Oedipus der Tyrann'; Lully's 'Alceste' (1674) and Wellesz's 'Alkestis' (1924) are also disposed of; the writer fails to provide Henze's title 'The Bassarids', the opera inspired by 'Bacchae'; Handel's 'Hercules' is not (as he claims) an 'opera' but a 'musical drama'; the premiere of Gluck's 'Alceste' is not 1762 but 1767; that of his 'Iphigenie en Aulide' is 1774 not 1765; that of Cherubini's 'Aulide' is not 1782 but 1788 (the writer should have left out all premiere dates, since he inconsistently does just that with some other operas). For Burgess, all translations released by Faber (his book's publisher) are outstanding, or are referred to impartially, unlike his criticism of some of those by other publishers; he also tends to ignore or depreciate such successful translators as Paul Roche (why isn't he worth mentioning?) and Philip Vellacott (I can't see how his translations are 'dated', not least in comparison with those featuring outmoded archaisms; compare the first lines of his 'Helen' (Penguin) with those by Mitchie and Leach (Oxford), one of Burgess's recommendations: 'This is Egypt; here flows the virgin river, the lovely Nile, who brings down melted snow to slake the soil of the Egyptian plain with the moisture heaven denies'; 'Here live the lovely water-nymphs of Nile who brings the melted snow down to water the plains of Egypt starved of blessed rain'). The quotations from non-Greek sources (eg 'Hamlet') are irrelevant, the lengthy extracts from the plays are a bore, the retelling (over and over again in the section called 'The legend') of the background to a particular mythical story used by more than one playwright is tedious. Space should instead have been provided to explain why this or that translation is 'good', 'frankly pedestrian', or 'disappointing'; alternatively, this space - as well as that of Roman drama - could have been allocated to the 12 missing Greek plays. Another thing is that, on many occasions, the punctuation is unreliable: eg 'Benjamin Britten wrote a cantata "Phaedra" in 1975' (I hope that the author is aware that this is the composition date, that of the premiere being 1976). Do the publishers Aris and Phillips know that Burgess refers to them continuously as 'Aris and Philips'? This book should (true to its name) 'guide', not 'misguide'. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Lots of it By Don Bartolo What I liked about this was that there was so much of it. "Pocket Guide" might make you think of something glib and superficial but the book is 384 pages long - really generous measure - and there are lots of quotations which really help as well. The style is accessible and it deals with 40 plays in quite amazing detail, plus biographies of the playwrights and the social and political background too. The author seems to know his stuff but more importantly seem to enjoy knowing it and is able to make others enjoy it too. I imagine the book is really meant to be something to be dipped into but I found myself just reading on and on, anxious to find out what the next play would be like. Fascinating stuff. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A great resource By A reader I thought this was excellent - clear, engaging, up-to-the-minute and packed with information.. It made me think again about the plays I thought I knew and made me want to rush off and read those I didn't. Not speaking Greek, I found the guide to translations especially useful. The author quotes from the 2 or 3 best versions of each play so readers can make up their own minds about which they like best. Can you fit all you need to know about Greek and Roman drama into your pocket? You can now.

An essential, refreshingly accessible guide to Greek and Roman drama containing entries for forty plays by all the major dramatists in the classical world - Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, Aristophanes, Menander, Plautus, Terence and Seneca. Features include: Playwright biographies Synopses and detailed commentary Advice on the best translations available A survey of the ancient theatre and its social and political background. Written by John Burgess, freelance director and former Head of New Writing at the National Theatre, this book is an indispensable resource for the theatregoer, student and general reader.

About the Author John Burgess is a freelance director and lives in London. He worked for fourteen years at the National Theatre where he directed works from the classical, romantic and modern repertoires as well as many new plays. He helped found the NT Studio in 1984 and was the National Theatre's Head of New Writing 1989-94. He has directed abroad in Switzerland, Scandinavia and North America. He is the author of The Faber Pocket Guide to Greek and Roman Drama.