



The Compass: The Improvisational Theatre that Revolutionized American Comedy (Centennial Publications of The University of Chicago Press)

Janet Coleman

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Janet Coleman brilliantly recreates the time, the place, the personalities, and the neurotic magic whereby the Compass made theater history in America. The Compass began in a storefront theater near the University of Chicago campus in the summer of 1955 and lasted only a few years before its players—including David Shepherd, Paul Sills, Elaine May, Mike Nichols, Barbara Harris, and Shelley Berman—moved on. Out of this group was born a new form: improvisational theater and a radically new kind of comedian. "They did not plan to be funny or to change the course of comedy," writes Coleman. "But that is what happened."

"For anyone who is interested in theatre, underground theatre, improvisational theatre, and the sheer madness of trying something new with a repertory group, *The Compass* will prove a welcome history with fascinating details."—Norman Mailer

"Janet Coleman has done a spectacular job of capturing the history, the almost alarmingly diverse cultural influences, and the extraordinary people who made up the Compass."—Neal Weaver, *Los Angeles Village View*

"Engrossing. . . . An open window on a part of the theater that should be known."—Arthur Miller

"A valuable chronicle of an important chapter in the history of comedy and theater."—William Wolf, *New York Observer*

"The eruptive, disruptive talents who made the theater memorable are the same ones who make *The Compass* a good read."—Jay Cocks, *Time*

"A moving, inspirational, anecdote-studded feast."—*Publishers Weekly*

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