

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune

Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune: A Poignant Tale of Love and Longing

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune is a captivating title that immediately evokes a blend of romance, mystery, and emotional depth. This evocative phrase refers to a play by Terrence McNally, renowned for its intimate storytelling, profound character development, and the subtle beauty woven into its narrative. If you're intrigued by theatrical works that explore complex human emotions through simple, heartfelt storytelling, "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" offers an unforgettable experience.

Understanding "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune"

At its core, "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" is a two-character play that centers around the interaction between Frankie, a waitress, and Johnny, a short-order cook. Set in a small café, the entire play unfolds over a single evening, focusing on the tentative, fragile connection that forms between these two lonely souls. The title cleverly combines the names of the characters with Claude Debussy's famous piano piece "Clair de Lune," symbolizing the gentle, reflective mood that permeates the story.

The Origins and Impact of the Play

Terrence McNally wrote this play in 1987, and it quickly became a classic example of American drama that highlights the subtleties of human relationships. Unlike grandiose productions with elaborate sets and multiple characters, "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" thrives on minimalism and emotional honesty. The play's success is largely due to McNally's skillful writing—crafting dialogue that feels authentic and scenes that reveal the vulnerabilities of two ordinary people seeking connection.

Over the years, this play has been adapted into various formats, including a feature film starring Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer, which brought the story to a broader audience. The cinematic version retains the play's intimate atmosphere while expanding on the characters' backgrounds and emotions.

Themes Explored in Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune

One of the reasons "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" resonates with so many viewers is its exploration of universal themes wrapped in a tender narrative.

Loneliness and Human Connection

Both Frankie and Johnny are portrayed as individuals carrying emotional scars—Frankie from heartbreak and Johnny from past disappointments. The play delicately examines how loneliness impacts people in different ways, yet also highlights the innate human desire to connect and be understood. Through their interaction, audiences witness a slow-building trust and the hope that love can bloom even in the most unlikely places.

Vulnerability and Healing

The characters' tentative steps toward opening up to one another reveal the courage it takes to be vulnerable. McNally's writing emphasizes that healing often comes through genuine communication and empathy. The play reminds us that while pain may linger, moments of tenderness and understanding can foster emotional recovery.

The Power of Small Moments

"Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" is a testament to the significance of everyday moments. The entire narrative unfolds in the span of a shift at a diner, yet the conversations, silences, and shared music create a profound experience. This theme encourages audiences to appreciate the quiet, often overlooked instances that shape our relationships.

Why "Clair de Lune" Matters in the Play

The inclusion of Claude Debussy's "Clair de Lune" is more than a poetic flourish—it carries symbolic weight in the storytelling.

A Musical Metaphor for Emotion

"Clair de Lune," which translates to "light of the moon," is a piece known for its gentle, flowing melody that evokes tranquility and introspection. In the play, the music serves as a backdrop during key moments, reflecting the mood between Frankie and Johnny. It symbolizes the beauty and fragility of their budding connection, much like moonlight's soft illumination that reveals yet conceals.

Setting the Tone and Atmosphere

The music helps establish the intimate and contemplative tone of the play. When the characters share this moment, it creates a space where words become less necessary, and emotions are conveyed through the ambiance. For audiences and readers, the presence of "Clair de Lune" enriches the sensory experience, deepening the emotional resonance.

Performing and Experiencing Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune

Whether you're an actor, director, or theater enthusiast, engaging with this play offers unique opportunities and challenges.

Acting Challenges and Opportunities

With only two characters and a focus on dialogue, actors must deliver performances that are nuanced and authentic. The emotional complexity requires subtlety—conveying loneliness, hope, and vulnerability without overacting. The intimacy of the setting demands a strong connection between the performers, as the success of the play hinges on their chemistry and timing.

Staging and Direction

The minimalist setting—a diner—allows directors to focus on lighting, sound, and pacing to enhance the mood. Using "Clair de Lune" strategically can elevate scenes and underscore emotional beats. The confined space creates a sense of immediacy, inviting audiences to feel as though they are eavesdropping on a private moment.

Why Audiences Love It

Audiences find "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" compelling because it's relatable. It's a snapshot of real life—imperfect, tentative, and hopeful. The play's honest portrayal of human connection speaks across generations, making it a favorite in theaters worldwide.

Exploring Related Works and Adaptations

If "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" piques your interest, there are several related works and adaptations worth exploring.

- **Frankie and Johnny (1991 Film):** Directed by Garry Marshall, this adaptation stars Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer. It expands on the play's story while maintaining its intimate essence.
- **The Classic American Folk Song:** The title also references the traditional folk song "Frankie and Johnny," which tells a tale of love and betrayal. This connection adds layers of meaning to the play.
- **Other Plays by Terrence McNally:** Exploring McNally's broader body of work can provide insight into his style and themes, which often focus on relationships and identity.

Tips for Appreciating "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune"

To fully enjoy and understand the depth of this play, keep these pointers in mind:

1. **Pay Attention to Dialogue:** The play's power lies in its words—listen closely to the subtext and emotions behind the lines.
2. **Notice the Silences:** Moments of quiet are as telling as spoken words. They reveal internal struggles and unspoken feelings.
3. **Reflect on the Setting:** The diner setting isn't just a backdrop; it represents everyday life where extraordinary emotional moments unfold.
4. **Consider the Music:** If you can, listen to Debussy's "Clair de Lune" while reflecting on the play. The music's mood parallels the characters' journey.

Experiencing "Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune" is like witnessing a delicate dance of hearts—sometimes hesitant, sometimes bold, but always deeply human. Whether on stage or screen, its tender exploration of love and connection continues to touch hearts and inspire conversations about what it means to truly see and be seen by another person.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is 'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune' about?

'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune' is a play by Terrence McNally that explores the complex relationship between two lovers, Frankie and Johnny, as they navigate issues of trust, love, and emotional intimacy in a small-town setting.

Who wrote 'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune'?

The play was written by acclaimed American playwright Terrence McNally.

When was 'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune' first performed?

'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune' premiered in 1987 Off-Broadway before gaining wider recognition.

What themes are explored in 'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune'?

The play delves into themes such as love, loneliness, vulnerability, trust,

and the complexities of human relationships.

Has 'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune' been adapted into a film?

Yes, the play was adapted into a 1991 film titled 'Frankie and Johnny,' starring Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer.

What is the significance of 'Clair de Lune' in the title?

'Clair de Lune,' meaning 'light of the moon,' refers to the famous piano piece by Debussy, symbolizing the romantic and intimate atmosphere of the play's setting.

How many characters are in 'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune'?

The play primarily features two characters, Frankie and Johnny, focusing intensely on their interactions and emotional journey.

Where is the play 'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune' set?

The story is set in a modest apartment in a small American city, emphasizing the intimacy and personal nature of the narrative.

Why is 'Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune' considered significant in American theatre?

The play is praised for its deep character study, realistic dialogue, and exploration of love and human connection, marking it as a poignant and enduring work in contemporary American drama.

Additional Resources

Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune: A Cinematic Exploration of Love and Complexity

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune stands as a distinctive work in American cinema, weaving a subtle and intimate narrative that delves into the complexities of love, trust, and vulnerability. This 1991 romantic drama, directed by Garry Marshall and featuring powerhouse performances by Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer, invites viewers into the delicate emotional landscape of two people navigating the uncertainties of a new relationship. With its nuanced storytelling and restrained yet compelling performances, the film remains a subject of interest for critics and cinephiles who appreciate character-driven dramas.

In-depth Analysis of Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune

At its core, *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune* is an adaptation of Terrence McNally's play of the same name. The screenplay stays true to McNally's original tone, focusing on the intimate, dialogue-heavy exchanges that reveal the characters' inner lives. The film's title itself carries symbolic weight: "Clair de Lune," referring to Debussy's evocative piano piece, suggests a mood of reflection and emotional nuance that permeates the movie.

The story unfolds in a modest New York City diner where Frankie, a waitress with a guarded heart, and Johnny, a recently released ex-convict, begin to explore the possibility of companionship. The narrative resists conventional romantic tropes by emphasizing the hesitations, misunderstandings, and tentative steps that characterize real-life relationships rather than idealized versions.

Character Dynamics and Performances

One of the film's most compelling features is its focus on character psychology. Michelle Pfeiffer's portrayal of Frankie captures a woman scarred by past betrayals, wary of intimacy but yearning for connection. Her performance balances strength and vulnerability, avoiding melodrama while eliciting empathy.

Al Pacino's Johnny is equally well-drawn, embodying a man attempting to rebuild his life and identity after incarceration. Pacino's nuanced acting brings layers to Johnny's personality, showing both his rough exterior and his deep-seated desire for acceptance and love. The chemistry between Pfeiffer and Pacino is subtle yet powerful, conveying the tentative trust-building process between two damaged individuals.

Setting and Cinematography

The film's visual style complements its narrative focus. Rather than grandiose sets or sweeping cinematography, the film opts for an intimate, almost theatrical atmosphere that mirrors its source material. The diner setting acts as a microcosm of everyday life, grounding the story in a realistic environment that enhances the authenticity of the characters' interactions.

The use of lighting and camera angles often emphasize the emotional states of Frankie and Johnny. Soft, dim lighting reflects moments of tenderness and uncertainty, while more stark visuals underscore conflicts or moments of tension. The choice to incorporate Debussy's "Clair de Lune" as a recurring musical motif further enriches the film's mood, lending a lyrical quality that contrasts with the gritty realism of the storyline.

Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune: Themes and Symbolism

Exploring the thematic core of *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune* reveals its preoccupation with trust, redemption, and the human need for connection. The film does not shy away from the imperfections and vulnerabilities that characterize its protagonists, making their journey all the more relatable.

The Complexity of Trust

Trust emerges as a central theme, particularly given Johnny's criminal past and Frankie's history of emotional wounds. The film carefully examines how trust must be earned and how past experiences influence present relationships. Scenes that depict misunderstandings or moments of hesitation underscore how fragile trust can be, especially between two people who have been hurt before.

Redemption and Second Chances

Johnny's status as an ex-convict seeking redemption is a significant narrative driver. The film portrays his attempts to re-enter society and form meaningful connections without being defined by his past. This theme resonates with broader societal issues surrounding reintegration and forgiveness, making the character's journey both personal and socially relevant.

Symbolism of Music and Setting

Debussy's "Clair de Lune" operates as more than mere soundtrack; it symbolizes the emotional undercurrents of the story. The piece's gentle, flowing melody parallels the tentative unfolding of Frankie and Johnny's relationship, evoking a sense of hope and melancholy that permeates the film.

Similarly, the diner setting serves as a symbolic space – a place of routine and familiarity that contrasts with the emotional risks the characters take. This juxtaposition enhances the narrative tension and highlights the extraordinary nature of their connection within an ordinary environment.

Comparative Perspectives and Cultural Impact

When placed alongside other romantic dramas of its era, *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune* distinguishes itself through its restrained storytelling and focus on dialogue-driven character development. Unlike the sweeping romantic epics popular in the early 1990s, this film opts for subtlety and emotional realism.

Its impact is particularly notable in the way it portrays middle-aged romance, a demographic often underrepresented in cinema. By focusing on

characters who are not young idealists but rather individuals shaped by life's challenges, the film offers a refreshing perspective on love and companionship.

Moreover, the movie's roots in theater contribute to its unique feel. Its dialogue-heavy scenes and confined settings reflect stage play conventions, bridging the gap between theatrical and cinematic storytelling. This cross-medium influence enriches the film's texture and appeals to audiences appreciative of literary adaptations.

Pros and Cons of Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune

- **Pros:** Strong lead performances by Pacino and Pfeiffer; authentic portrayal of complex emotional themes; effective integration of music and setting; unique focus on mature romance.
- **Cons:** Pacing may feel slow for viewers seeking more action-driven plots; limited secondary character development; some may find the theatrical style less dynamic than typical cinematic storytelling.

Legacy and Continued Relevance

More than three decades since its release, Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune continues to be appreciated for its heartfelt exploration of human connection. Its themes of vulnerability, trust, and the quest for intimacy remain universally resonant, ensuring its place in discussions about nuanced romantic narratives.

The film's influence can be seen in later works that explore similar themes of mature love and emotional complexity. It also remains a significant entry in the filmographies of both Al Pacino and Michelle Pfeiffer, showcasing their range beyond more traditional roles.

In an era where cinema often prioritizes spectacle, Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune offers a quiet but profound reminder of the power of storytelling rooted in character and emotion. Its enduring appeal lies in its honest portrayal of two individuals striving to find light in the quiet moments – much like the gentle illumination suggested by its evocative title.

Frankie And Johnny In The Clair De Lune

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frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Duo! John Horvath, Lavonne Mueller, Jack Temchin, 1995 Offers a wide range of age, genre, and character choices for each duo scene.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Frankie & Johnny in the Clair de Lune Comedy Theatre, 1989

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune Terrence McNally, 1998 The setting is a walk-up apartment on Manhattan's West Side where, as the curtain rises, Frankie (a waitress) and Johnny (a short-order cook who works in the same restaurant) are discovered in bed. It is their first encounter, after having met several weeks ago on the job, and Frankie is hopeful that Johnny will now put on his clothes and depart, so she can return to her usual routine of watching TV and eating ice cream. But Johnny, a compulsive talker (and romantic), has other ideas. He is convinced that he loves Frankie, a notion that she, at first, considers to be ridiculous. She has had more disappointments than delights in life, and he is the veteran of one broken marriage already. And neither of them is in the bloom of youth. Yet out of their sometimes touching, sometimes hilarious interplay the promise of a relationship beyond a one-night stand does begin to emerge and, as the lights dim, the two are back in bed again, but this time side-by-side, holding hands before the glowing television screen.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune - Signature Acting Edition Terrence McNally, 2024-09-20

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the right piece for every audition. The unique format of the book is ideal for acting teachers who want their students to understand each monologue in context. This remarkable book describes the characters, action, and mood for more than 1,000 scenes in over 300 plays. Using these guidelines, the actor can quickly pinpoint the perfect monologue, then find the text in the Samuel French or Dramatist Play Service edition of the play. Newly revised and expanded, the book includes the author's own assessment of each monologue.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: A Study Guide for Terrence McNally's "Andre's Mother" Gale, Cengage Learning, A Study Guide for Terrence McNally's Andre's Mother, excerpted from Gale's acclaimed Drama for Students. This concise study guide includes plot summary; character analysis; author biography; study questions; historical context; suggestions for further reading; and much more. For any literature project, trust Drama for Students for all of your research needs.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Modern American Drama: Playwriting in the 1990s Sharon Friedman, Cheryl Black, 2019-11-14 The Decades of Modern American Playwriting series provides a comprehensive survey and study of the theatre produced in each decade from the 1930s to 2009 in eight volumes. Each volume equips readers with a detailed understanding of the context from which work emerged: an introduction considers life in the decade with a focus on domestic life and conditions, social changes, culture, media, technology, industry and political events; while a chapter on the theatre of the decade offers a wide-ranging and thorough survey of theatres, companies, dramatists, new movements and developments in response to the economic and political conditions of the day. The work of the four most prominent playwrights from the decade receives in-depth analysis and re-evaluation by a team of experts, together with commentary on their subsequent work and legacy. A final section brings together original documents such as interviews with the playwrights and with directors, drafts of play scenes, and other previously unpublished material. The major playwrights and their plays to receive in-depth coverage in this volume include: * Tony Kushner: Angels in America: A Gay Fantasia on National Themes, Part One and Part Two (1991), Slavs! Thinking About the Longstanding Problems of Virtue and Happiness (1995) and A Dybbuk, or Between Two Worlds (1997); * Paula Vogel: Baltimore Waltz (1992), The Mineola Twins (1996) and How I Learned to Drive (1997); * Suzan-Lori Parks: The Death of the Last Black Man in the Whole Entire World (1990), The America Play (1994) and Venus (1996); * Terrence McNally: Lips Together, Teeth Apart (1991), Love! Valour! Compassion! (1997) and Corpus Christi (1998).

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Contemporary Gay American Poets and Playwrights Emmanuel S. Nelson, 2003-06-30 Gay presence is nothing new to American verse and theater. Homoerotic themes are discernible in American poetry as early as the 19th century, and identifiably gay characters appeared on the American stage more than 70 years ago. But aside from a few notable exceptions, gay artists of earlier generations felt compelled to avoid sexual candor in their writings. Conversely, most contemporary gay poets and playwrights are free from such constraints and have created a remarkable body of work. This reference is a guide to their creative achievements. Alphabetically arranged entries present 62 contemporary gay American poets and dramatists. While the majority of included writers are younger artists who came of age in the post-Stonewall U.S., some are older authors whose work has continued or persisted into recent decades. A number of these writers are well known, including Edward Albee, Harvey Fierstein, and Allen Ginsberg. Others, such as Alan Bowne, Timothy Liu, and Robert O'Hara, merit wider recognition. Each entry is written by an expert contributor and includes a biography, a discussion of major works and themes, an overview of the author's critical reception, and primary and secondary bibliographies.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Terrence McNally Toby Silverman Zinman, 2014-04-08 This collection of essays and interviews is the first book about the drama of American playwright Terrence McNally; it examines his career to date (30-plus years), focusing particularly on the two plays for which McNally won Tony Awards for Best Play of 1995, Love! Valour! Compassion!, and Best Play of 1996, Master Class. Toby Zinman, a distinguished scholar and critic,

has invited none respected authorities to write about McNally's work, and has included records of the long conversations she had with the playwright about his work, his love of opera, his ideas about acting and education, and life in general. Also included are two interviews she conducted with two of his leading actors: one with the legendary Zoe Caldwell, who played the even more legendary Maria Callas in *Master Class*, a performance that earned her the Tony Award for Best Actress in 1996, a role McNally wrote for her, and another with the great American comic actor, Nathan Lane, whom McNally considers his foremost interpreter. The collection moves chronologically, beginning with Howard Stein's essay on the promise of the plays of the first decade, through to Cary Mazer's essay on the diva in *Master Class*, a play about Maria Callas' master classes at Juilliard; that essay is preceded by an essay on those famous master classes by John Ardoin, the world's foremost authority on Maria Callas. In between there are two essays debating McNally's position as a gay playwright, one by John Clum and one by Steven Drukman, both centering on the firestorm of controversy generated by *Love! Valour! Compassion!* In addition, there is an essay on *The Lisbon Traviata* by Sam Abel which discusses the play's much-revised conclusion (to murder or not to murder) and another on McNally's screenplays of *Frankie and Johnny in the Clair de Lune*, and *The Ritz*, by Helen Buttel, a film critic. This is followed by Stephen Watt's examination of McNally as a postmodernist, using *Lips Together, Teeth Apart* as his focus, and Benilde Montgomery's essay on Indian myth as it informs McNally's play (soon to be a film) *A Perfect Ganesh*. The volume also includes in its introduction the latest information on McNally's newest projects, an extensive bibliography, and a chronology of the playwright's career.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Muse of Fire Terrence McNally, 2020-11-25
 Acclaimed playwright Terrence McNally's works are characterized by such diversity that critics have sometimes had difficulty identifying the pattern in his carpet. To redress this problem, in *Muse of Fire*, Raymond-Jean Frontain has collected McNally's most illuminating meditations on the need of the playwright to first change hearts in order to change minds and thereby foster a more compassionate community. When read together, these various meditations demonstrate the profound ways in which McNally himself functioned as a member of the theater community—as a strikingly original dramatic voice, as a generous collaborator, and even as the author of eloquent memorials. These pieces were originally written to be delivered on both highly formal occasions (academic commencement exercises, award ceremonies, memorial services) and as off-the-cuff comments at highly informal gatherings, like a playwriting workshop at the New School. They reveal a man who saw theater not as the vehicle for abstract ideas or the platform for political statements, but as the exercise of our shared humanity. "Theatre is collaborative, but life is collaborative," McNally says. "Art is important to remind us that we're not alone, and this is a wonderful world and we can make it more wonderful by fully embracing each other. [. . .] I don't know why it's so hard to remind ourselves sometimes, but thank God we've had great artists who don't let us forget. And thank the audiences who support them because I think that those artists' true mission has been to bring the barriers down, break them down; not build walls, but tear them down."

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Broadway Thomas A. Greenfield, 2009-12-23 This is the most comprehensive and insightful reference available on Broadway theater as an American cultural phenomenon and an illuminator of American life. *Broadway: An Encyclopedia of Theater and American Culture* is the first major reference work to explore just how much the Great White Way illuminates our national character. In two volumes spanning the era from the mid-19th century to the present, it offers nearly 200 entries on a variety of topics, including spotlights on 30 landmark productions—from *Shuffle Along* to *Oklahoma!* to *Oh Calcutta!* to *The Producers*—that not only changed American theater but American culture as well. In addition, *Broadway* offers thirty extended thematic essays gauging the powerful impact of theater on American life, with entries on race relations, women in society, sexuality, film, media, technology, tourism, and off-Broadway and noncommercial theater. There are also 110 profile entries on key persons and institutions—from the famous to the infamous to the all but forgotten—whose unique careers and contributions impacted Broadway and its place in the American landscape.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: The Stendhal Syndrome Terrence McNally, 2004 The Stendhal Syndrome is named for the French novelist, who on a visit to Florence had such a visceral and physical reaction to its beauty that he wrote, I felt a pulsating in my heart. Life was draining out of me, while I walked fearing a fall. Now Terrence McNally, one of our most beloved playwrights, has crafted two stunning and witty plays about art and how it transforms us. Full Frontal Nudity explores the reaction of three American tourists to the perfection and beauty of Michelangelo's David. In Prelude and Liebstod, a renowned conductor watches his life unravel while conducting Wagner's musical masterpiece. With its world premiere in the winter of 2004 starring Frank Langella and Isabella Rossellini, The Stendhal Syndrome will join the ranks of important plays by this American master.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Dedication, Or, The Stuff of Dreams Terrence McNally, 2006 Four-time Tony Award-winning author Terrence McNally returns with a powerful new play about how far one will go for one's love of the theater. In a small upstate New York town, Lou, a speech and drama teacher, and Jessie, a dog groomer at The Dapper Dog, bring joy to their community through running an amateur theater company. They become obsessed with buying a derelict movie theater and turning it into Captain Lou and Miss Jessie's Magic Theater for Children of All Ages. The only obstacle in reaching their dream is Annabelle Willard -- a terminally ill and manipulative widow who owns half the town. Will these naive dreamers be able to grasp the brass ring, and at what cost?

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: The Theater of Terrence McNally Peter Wolfe, 2013-10-23 This first book-length work on Terrence McNally shows how his decades in the theater have refined his thoughts on subjects like growing up gay in mannish, homophobic Texas, Shakespeare's legacy in contemporary drama, and the life-giving power of forgiveness. McNally believes that the ability to forgive--a challenge to even the most high-minded--confirms our humanity because the wrongs done to us usually don't deserve to be forgiven. The author shows how McNally's impeccable timing, his instinct for a good laugh line, and his preference for physical sensation and character over plot helps him reveal both what's important to his people and why his people are important. These revelations can shake up audiences while providing a great evening at the theater.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: The Theater of Terrence McNally Raymond-Jean Frontain, 2019-10-04 Terrence McNally's canon of plays, books for musicals and opera libretti possesses such a breadth of subject matter and diversity of dramatic modes that critics have had difficulty assessing his accomplishment. This book is the first critical study to identify the four major stages of McNally's development in terms of his understanding of how theater helps the modern person trapped in a seemingly profane existence to find a gateway to the transcendent. Drawing upon such diverse religious thinkers as Martin Buber, Mircea Eliade, Ilia Delio and Carter Heyward, Frontain analyzes the evolution of McNally's understanding of grace, not as a gift bestowed by an all-powerful deity upon a desperate soul, but as the unwarranted—and, thus, all the more unusual—"act of devotion" (McNally's phrase) that one person performs for another. By seeking to foment community, most importantly at the height of the AIDS pandemic, McNally's theater itself proves to be a channel of grace. McNally's greatest success is shown to be the creation of a theater of empathy and compassion in contradistinction to Artaud's "theater of cruelty" and Albee's Americanization of the theater of the absurd.

frankie and johnny in the clair de lune: Conversations with Terrence McNally Raymond-Jean Frontain, 2023-01-27 Arriving in New York at the tail end of what has been termed the "Golden Age" of Broadway and the start of the Off-Broadway theater movement, Terrence McNally (1938–2020) first established himself as a dramatist of the absurd and a biting social critic. He quickly recognized, however, that one is more likely to change people's minds by first changing their hearts, and—in outrageous farces like *The Ritz* and *It's Only a Play*—began using humor more broadly to challenge social biases. By the mid-1980s, as the emerging AIDS pandemic called into question America's treatment of persons isolated by suffering and sickness, he became the theater's

great poet of compassion, dramatizing the urgent need of human connection and the consequences when such connections do not take place. *Conversations with Terrence McNally* collects nineteen interviews with the celebrated playwright. In these interviews, one hears McNally reflect on theater as the most collaborative of the arts, the economic pressures that drive the theater industry, the unique values of music and dance, and the changes in American theater over McNally's fifty-plus year career. The winner of four competitive Tony Awards as the author of the Best Play (*Love! Valour! Compassion!* and *Master Class*) and author of the book for the Best Musical (*Kiss of the Spider Woman* and *Ragtime*), McNally holds the distinction of being one of the few writers for the American theater who excelled in straight drama as well as musical comedy. In addition, his canon extends to opera; his collaboration with composer Jake Heggie, *Dead Man Walking*, has proven the most successful new American opera of the last twenty-five years.

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