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Two Short Plays: The Wonder Hat and Back of the Yards

Kenneth Sawyer Goodman

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Two Short Plays by Kenneth Sawyer Goodman breathes new life into Chicago's historic Little Theater Movement. This illustrated edition of two of Goodman's best-known plays, The Wonder Hat and Back of the Yards, recalls that Goodman-still wellremembered as a key figure in Chicago's theater scene and the man for whom the Goodman Theatre was named-wrote and produced his own works before the influenza epidemic of 1918 cut short his life. Cowritten in 1916 with Ben Hecht, The Wonder Hat comically updates classic European commedia dell'arte. The Wonder Hat was Goodman's most widely performed play and is still his bestknown work. Whimsical illustrations accompany this vivid play, which features a hat that confers invisibility on the wearer, a pair of star-crossed lovers, and the assurance that love still conquers all. In contrast, Back of the Yards presents a gritty realist drama about Irish Americans in one of Chicago's toughest neighborhoods, in which a cop and a priest collaborate to save a young man at risk. Original artwork accompanies both plays, and Ioana Cornea and Benjamin Goluboff's critical introduction uses material from the Kenneth Sawyer Goodman archives at Chicago's Newberry Library to illustrate Goodman's life and career, the Little Theater Movement, and Goodman's collaboration with Hecht.

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