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HUMANITIES

Performing Arts

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University of Michigan Press
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The following review appeared in the May 2011 issue of CHOICE:

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Torr, Diane. **Sex, drag, and male roles: investigating gender as performance**, by Diane Torr and Stephen Bottoms. Michigan, 2010. 291p bibl index afp ISBN 9780472071029, \$70.00; ISBN 9780472051021 pbk, \$26.95

Another release in Michigan's excellent "Critical Performances" series, this study looks at Torr's performance career: she is best known for her performances in male drag. Expertly presented by Torr and Bottoms (drama and theater, Univ. of Leeds, UK), the volume serves as an invaluable evaluation and chronicle of recent performative engagement with gender blending, transition, and transformation. The series' practice of pairing artists and critics as co-authors works well here; the authors write with an appropriately multivalent voice on Torr's transgressive career (begun in the 1970s and ongoing). She focuses on "the idea of being 'king' over ... identity, sexuality, and desires rather than being 'subject' to social conventions." Torr's "personal artistic evolution ... shadows a cultural evolution in feminist, queer, and transgender activism," notes Bottoms, whose contextualizing contribution converts the book into a valuable general study of the period. Torr's self-analysis and first-hand recollections are engaging and informative. From dance studios to clubs, major stages, and public walkabouts with participants from her Drag King Workshop, Torr's career is fascinating and far reaching. A final section includes transcripts of many of Torr's performance routines and also includes her "Man for a Day: A Do-It-Yourself Guide." **Summing Up:** Highly recommended. All readers. -- *W. Demastes, Louisiana State University*