



# Theater of the Mind: Imagination, Aesthetics, and American Radio Drama

*Neil Verma*

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For generations, fans and critics have characterized classic American radio drama as a “theater of the mind.” This book unpacks that characterization by recasting the radio play as an aesthetic object within its unique historical context. In *Theater of the Mind*, Neil Verma applies an array of critical methods to more than six thousand recordings to produce a vivid new account of radio drama from the Depression to the Cold War.

In this sweeping exploration of dramatic conventions, Verma investigates legendary dramas by the likes of Norman Corwin, Lucille Fletcher, and Wyllis Cooper on key programs ranging from *The Columbia Workshop*, *The Mercury Theater on the Air*, and *Cavalcade of America* to *Lights Out!*, *Suspense*, and *Dragnet* to reveal how these programs promoted and evolved a series of models of the imagination.

With close readings of individual sound effects and charts of broad trends among formats, Verma not only gives us a new account of the most flourishing form of genre fiction in the mid-twentieth century but also presents a powerful case for the central place of the aesthetics of sound in the history of modern experience.

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