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The essays in this collection cover the whole range of Irish drama from the late nineteenth-century melodramas which anticipated the rise of the Abbey Theatre to the contemporary Dublin of theatre festivals. A team of international experts from Ireland, the UK, the USA and Europe provide individual studies of internationally known playwrights of the period of the Literary Revival - Yeats, Synge, Lady Gregory, Shaw, Wilde, O'Casey - and contemporary playwrights Brian Friel, Tom Murphy, Frank McGuinness and Sebastian Barry, in addition to emerging playwrights such as Martin McDonagh and Marina Carr. Further to studies of individual playwrights the collection also includes examination of the relationship between the theatre and its political context as this is inflected through its ideology, staging and programming. With a full chronology and bibliography, this collection is an indispensable introduction to one of the world's most vibrant theatre cultures.