



# Chain of Fools - Silent Comedy and Its Legacies from Nickelodeons to YouTube

*Trav S.D.*

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Chain of Fools traces the art of slapstick comedy from its pre-cinema origins in the ancient pantomime through its silent movie heyday in the teens and twenties, then on to talkies, television, and the Internet. As in his first book, the critically acclaimed *No Applause, Just Throw Money: The Book That Made Vaudeville Famous*, author Trav S.D. mixes a wicked wit, a scholar's curiosity, and a keen critical appreciation for laugh-makers through the ages, from classical clowns like Joseph Grimaldi to comedy kings like Mack Sennett, Charlie Chaplin, Harold Lloyd and Buster Keaton . . . to more recent figures, from Red Skelton, Sid Caesar and Ernie Kovacs to Adam Sandler, Jim Carrey and Steve Carell . . . all the way down to the teenagers on YouTube whose backyard antics bring us full circle to slapstick's beginnings. This valentine to the great clowns contains enough insights and surprises to open the eyes of even life-long comedy fans. Here's what critics had to say about Trav S.D.'s first book, *No Applause, Just Throw Money: The Book That Made Vaudeville Famous*: "A book that sharpens the mind and stirs the heart . . . The writing is as snappy as these troupers and headliners deserve. And the scholarship is high-class." - Margo Jefferson, *New York Times* "Almost a vaudeville show unto itself...Open a single chapter of *No Applause* and you'll get a great snapshot of the industry at that time. . . An ode to the tenacity, the freaks, the slapstick, and yes, the art form that was responsible for entertainment today as we know it." - Rachel Shindelman, *Time Out Chicago* "Much has been written about the American institution of vaudeville, but readers would be hard-pressed to find an account as humorous and sharp as writer and performer Trav S.D.'s tasty chronicle . . . A well-researched, riotous book." - *Publisher's Weekly* (starred review) "Thorough and thoroughly entertaining . . . One of the year's best historical performing arts texts; a wonderful story wonderfully told." - Barry X. Miller, *Library Journal* (starred review) "Both performer and theatre historian, [Trav S.D.] knows of what he speaks. His rich, well-researched history of American vaudeville from its roots in the 1880s onward is a rare enough feat made all the more startling by the wit, zest and fresh eyes [he] brings to the subject." - Jack Helbig, *Booklist* (starred review)

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