

North American Women's Drama

Whether in awards, production, or publication, plays by women have rarely received the attention they deserve. Of the seventy-eight Pulitzer prizes for drama awarded since the inception of the prize in 1901, only eight have gone to women. From 1958 to 1981, not one woman received this prize.

North American Women's Drama aims to bring these writings the attention they deserve, by publishing the full text of 1,500 plays written from Colonial times to the present by more than 100 women from the United States and Canada. Many of the works are rare, hard to find, or out of print. Almost a quarter of the collection consists of previously unpublished plays.

Now for the first time, these plays can be studied, analyzed, and read with ease. Each play is extensively and deeply indexed, allowing both keyword and multi-fielded searching. The plays are accompanied by reference materials, significant ancillary information, a rich performance database, and associated resources. The result is an exceptionally deep and unified collection – to give voices to women, to represent women's issues, to break stereotypes, to examine women's views, to present women in various roles, and simply to entertain.

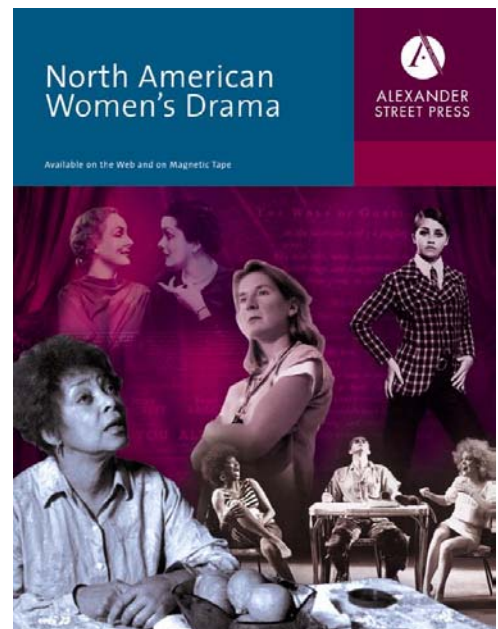
North American Women's Drama begins with the works of Mercy Otis Warren, Judith Sargent Murray, and Susanna Haswell Rowson in Colonial times. It includes a rich collection of nineteenth-century melodramas exploring topics from domestic entrapment to life on the frontier to the Underground Railroad. The database covers the campaign for voting rights, including propaganda plays, as well as the growing crusade for women's access to higher education and inclusion in various professions. The collection covers contemporary drama, including the works of performance artists.

The database will be of particular interest for the study of feminism and women's studies. Alexander Street's *Semantic Indexing*[™] makes it possible to find and analyze particular dialogue, characters, and events, providing answers to these questions from the preface to *Women in American Theatre*, by Helen Krich Chinoy and Linda Walsh Jenkins:

Where do women fit in? Where can they make a living, have a career, and create authentic theatre art from women's lives? Is there a feminine sensibility in theatre creation? Is it the result of nature (some essential female quality) or of nurture (the socialization that makes us feminine or masculine)? Do women directors approach their tasks in markedly different ways from the practices of male directors? Do women view the sacrifices and spoils of conventional success as men do? Can they or should they try to break the 'Broadway barrier?' Do women playwrights have something special to say as women, not just as individual artists? Do they create in a distinctive way, use unique forms, speak a long-silenced 'mother tongue?'

CONTENT SELECTION

The following authors are included: Susan Glaspell, Sophie Treadwell, Rachel Crothers, Gertrude Stein, Beth Henley, Carol Bolt, Cherríe Moraga, Dorothy Heyward, Zona Gale, Lillian Hellman, Susan Sontag, Irene Maria Fornes, Zora Neale Hurston, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Megan Terry, Rochelle Owens, Shirley Graham DuBois, Jeannie Barroga, and many others... more than a hundred in all.



BIBLIOGRAPHIES CONSULTED

- *American Women Playwrights, 1900-1930: A Checklist*, Frances Diodato Bzowski. Greenwood Press, 1992.
- *American Women Dramatists of the Twentieth Century: A Bibliography*, Brenda Coven. Scarecrow Press, 1982.
- *American Women Playwrights, 1964-1989: A Research Guide and Annotated Bibliography*, Christy Gavin. Garland, 1993.
- *The Cambridge Companion to American Women Playwrights*, Brenda Murphy ed. Cambridge University Press, 1999.
- *She Also Wrote Plays: A Women Playwright's Sourcebook*, Susan Croft. Methuen, 1998.

At least 20% of the plays are previously unpublished and not listed in any bibliography.

EDITORIAL BOARD

- Peggy Phelan, Ph.D., Stanford University. Author of *Acting Out: Feminist Performances and Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*
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- Julia Miles, Artistic Director, Women's Project & Productions (New York). Editor and compiler of several anthologies of women's drama, including *A Theatre for Women's Voices: Plays and History from the Women's Project at 25*
- Helene C. Williams, Bibliographer for the Humanities in English, Widener Library, Harvard University
- Mary Strow, Drama and Performing Arts Librarian, Indiana University

ALEXANDER STREET'S SEMANTIC INDEXING™

A thesaurus of terms, created specifically for this project, together with Alexander Street's *Semantic Indexing™*, will let researchers easily find answers that, until now, have been impossible to uncover:

- What woman-authored plays have been produced in Atlanta since 1960?
- Show me all scenes on the subject of divorce, in plays written before 1900.
- How have women's plays treated the subject of the Woman Suffrage Movement?
- Show me all scenes set in a factory in which women characters are laborers.
- Identify all plays written by women under the age of 20 who were born in the Midwest.
- Find a monologue by a female character who is a dancer.
- Locate all scenes representing sexual awakening or reflections on sexual identity.
- What plays written by women are set in World War II and contain female characters who are soldiers?

PUBLICATION DETAILS

North American Women's Drama is available on the Web, either through one-time purchase of perpetual rights or through annual subscription. At target, it will contain 1,500 plays, 1,200 of which appear in no other Alexander Street drama collection. A library that purchases perpetual rights will also receive an archival copy of the data.



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