



The Oxford Companion to American Theatre

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First published in 1984, Gerald Bordman's *Oxford Companion to American Theatre* has established itself as the standard one-volume source on our national theatre. It has been hailed for its "wealth of authoritative information" (*Back Stage*), for its "fascinating picture of the volative American stage" (*The Guardian*), for its "well-chosen, illuminating facts" (*Newsday*). The distinguished actor Jose Ferrer wrote "I'm in awe of the scholarship and research that have gone into the making of this book." And *The Los Angeles Times* called it "the almost perfect gift book for both the student and the theatre lover."

Now Bordman has thoroughly revised this redoubtable volume, once again providing a completely up-to-date guide to the American stage from its beginnings to the present. Here are over 3,000 entries on playwrights, plays, actors, directors, producers, songwriters, famous playhouses, dramatic movements, and much more. Readers will find summaries of plays as varied as *The Contrast*, *Francesca da Rimini*, *Arsenic and Old Lace*, *Our Town*, and *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*; biographical sketches of Edwin Forrest and Bartley Campbell, Lillian Hellman and David Rabe, John Barrymore and Jessica Tandy, George Gershwin and Cole Porter; and entries on groups such as The Actors Studio, Christy's Minstrels, and the Provincetown Players. For the new edition, Bordman has added entries on such recent plays as *Fences*, *M. Butterfly*, *The Heidi Chronicles*, and *The Piano Lesson*, as well as biographies of Len Cariou, Dustin Hoffman, Raul Julia, Tommy Tune, and August Wilson, to name a few. And as in the previous edition, Bordman gives readers as broad a picture of American popular theatre as possible, offering extensive coverage not only of classic works (such as *Death of a Salesman*) but also many commercially successful plays (such as *Brother Rat* or *Getting Gertie's Garter*), plus entries on foreign figures and productions that have influenced our dramatic development (from Shakespeare to Samuel Beckett and Harold Pinter).

Accessibly and attractively arranged in the two-column, A-Z format for which the Companion series is famous, this is a volume of enormous erudition, an essential reference for everyone who has a passion for the stage.

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The Oxford Companion to American Theatre From Oxford University Press Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #11939808 in Books
- Published on: 1992-04-02
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 2.33" w x 9.56" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 752 pages

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up—In this new edition of the well-known A-to-Z reference work, Hischak extensively updates and revises Bordman's previous works (Oxford, 1984, 1992; o.p.). Besides the necessary additions and deletions of plays and people, this volume provides several articles on relevant topics, such as "Performance Art" and "AIDS and the American Theatre." The preface states that all "Tony Award, Pulitzer Prize, and New York Drama Critics Circle Award-winning American plays are now included"; however, there are a few omissions. In order to make room for this additional material and yet keep the companion to one volume, Hischak condensed and edited the previous edition, and, as a result, the information projects a more balanced and neutral tone. Unfortunately, the editing has also eliminated much of Bordman's ascerbic wit. Nonetheless, despite some quibbling with entries left intact and exclusion of some modern theatre personalities (e.g., Ann Reinking, Romulus Linney), this is a good choice for libraries needing to update their collections.—*Betty S. Evans, Southwest Missouri State University, Springfield*

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From [Booklist](#)

Like a well-crafted revival of a beloved play, this new edition of a favorite reference book retains the flavor of the original production while significantly updating its content. The cast here is large and includes actors, choreographers, composers, dancers, designers, directors, lyricists, plays, playwrights, producers, theaters, and theater companies.

The text covers the American stage from its inception to the present, and the alphabetically arranged entries range in length from a few lines to a quarter of a double-columned page. Among the articles new to this edition are *AIDS and the American theatre*, *Asian-American theatre and drama*, *Feminist theatre*, *42nd Street redevelopment*, *Performance art*, and *Road tours*. The authors note that to retain all the historical information of previous editions, individual articles have been condensed rather than eliminated. There is more variety here than on a vaudeville bill: *hair* and *hairspray*; *urinetown* and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*; and *Tony 'n Tina's Wedding* and *The Tale of the Allergist's Wife* are among the plays represented. Articles on individual theater artists often mention a biography or autobiography, a welcome enhancement to a ready-reference source such as this. To present as complete a picture of American theater as possible, entries on theaters beyond the Great White Way, such as the Arena Stage, the Goodman Theatre, La Jolla Playhouse, American Conservatory Theatre, and the Steppenwolf Theatre Company, are included. Capsule histories of every Broadway theater as well as several Off-Broadway houses are another new and notable feature. The volume is recommended for all public and academic libraries and would be useful in high-school libraries with theater and drama collections. *Carolyn Mulac*

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Review

"This hefty updating of the 1984 Baedeker to the world of Broadway and regional theater contains more than 3,000 entries on plays, musicals, directors, actors, playwrights, producers and even such production companies as...Mark Taper Forum.... A wealth of material."--Los Angeles Magazine

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