

THE CAMBRIDGE COMPANION TO



AMERICAN WOMEN
PLAYWRIGHTS
美国女剧作家

BRENDA MURPHY 编



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CHRONOLOGY

STEPHANIE ROACH

This chronology lists general events in American theatre history as well as biographical information on American women playwrights and the production and/or publication information of plays by American women playwrights. Under each date, general events are listed first. Events involving particular playwrights are listed in alphabetical order according to the playwrights' last names.

- 1665 Record of the first production in English in the Colonies, *Ye Bare and Ye Cubb* (non-extant) produced in Accomac County, Virginia
- 1687 Increase Mather begins Puritan attack on the theatre
- 1698 Harvard College's President indicates an interest in student dramatics
- 1705 Pennsylvania Assembly passes legislation against theatrical events
- 1709 Governor's Council in New York prohibits plays
- 1715 New York Governor Robert Hunter's *Androboros*, the first play written and published by an American
- 1724 First North American acting company established in Philadelphia
- 1728 Mercy Otis Warren born (d. 1814); Warren will become the first American-born woman to be known as a dramatic comedy writer

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- 1730 Amateur New York production of *Romeo and Juliet* marks the debut of Shakespeare on the American stage
- 1750 General Court of Massachusetts passes legislation to prevent stage plays
- 1751 Judith Sargent Murray born (d. 1820); Murray will become the first American-born woman dramatist to have her plays produced professionally
- 1760 The *Maryland Gazette* prints the earliest known theatrical review
- 1762 Rhode Island passes legislation against stage plays
Susanna Haswell Rowson born (d. 1828); although born in England, Rowson grows up in Massachusetts; the Rowson family will be deported during the American Revolution, but Rowson and her husband William will eventually return to Massachusetts where they will have stage careers with the New American Company; Rowson will find playwriting success with her comedies and comic operas
- 1766 Major Robert Rogers' *Ponteach; or the Savages of America*, the first play about America published by an American
- 1767 New York's first permanent playhouse, the John Street Theatre, opens
- 1771-72 George Washington attends at least nineteen theatrical productions
- 1772 Mercy Otis Warren's first, though unproduced, play, *The Adulateur*
- 1774 The Continental Congress discourages stage shows, though no official resolutions are passed
- 1775 Mercy Otis Warren's *The Group*; published initially in installments in periodicals
- 1778 Several Congressional resolutions passed against plays and other diversions

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- 1779 All theatrical entertainment in Pennsylvania is prohibited

- 1787+ With the end of the American Revolution, prohibitions and resolutions against theatrical activity begin to lift: Pennsylvania officially repeals its antitheatre legislation in 1789, Massachusetts and Rhode Island repeal their legislation in 1793; theatres throughout the nation begin to reopen and/or expand; women dramatists of this period include Judith Sargent Murray and Susanna Haswell Rowson

- 1793 A Charleston production of *The Tempest* sparks interest in the better use and design of stage effects
Susanna Haswell Rowson begins her American stage career when she returns from her deportation to Britain

- 1794 Susanna Haswell Rowson's comic opera *Slaves in Algiers* performed at the Chestnut Street Theatre in Philadelphia

- 1795 Judith Sargent Murray's *Virtue Triumphant*; this and other Murray plays are produced by Boston's Federal Street Theatre, which Murray herself helped establish

- 1796 Judith Sargent Murray's *The Traveller Returned*

- 1797 Susanna Haswell Rowson's *Americans in England* staged at Boston's Federal Street Theatre; this same year Rowson quits the stage and opens a girls' school in Boston

- 179? Mary Carr Clarke born (d. 183?); Clarke is one of the first American women to earn her living as a writer

- 1800 The first play to be called a "melodrama" is produced in France; the melodramatic form, especially as rendered by women dramatists of the nineteenth century, has a great impact on the American theatre

- 1813 Louisa Medina born (d. 1838); Medina will specialize in spectacular melodramas, especially adaptations of her own novels; Medina will also achieve a feat rare for her era by becoming a successful playwright, the most professionally produced female dramatist of her day who was not also an actress or manager

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- 1815 The emergence of a professional theatre company in Frankfort, Kentucky marks the westward movement of American theatre
Mary Carr Clarke's only comedy *The Return from Camp* (later published as *The Fair Americans*)
- 1816 Gas lighting installed in the Chestnut Street Theatre
- 1818 Sarah Pogson's *The Young Carolinians*
- 1819 Anna Cora Ogden Mowatt born (d. 1870); although her upper-middle-class family has religious objections to the theatre, Mowatt will be an avid drama reader and will become a successful actress with a profitable playwriting career
- 1823 Mary Carr Clarke's *The Benevolent Lawyers; or Villainy Detected*
- 1826 Gas lighting installed in New York theatres
- 1827 James Kirke Paulding makes a plea for a definitively "American" drama, *American Quarterly Review* (June)
- 1830s-40s American women dramatists turn from comedy to melodrama and tragedy; however, in 1845 Anna Cora Mowatt's comedy *Fashion* breaks on the theatre scene and is a stunning success; *Fashion* continues today to receive critical attention and is often still produced
- 1835 Louisa Medina's *Last Days of Pompeii* has a twenty-nine-performance run, setting the record for the longest running production at the Bowery Theatre, New York
- 1838 Louisa Medina's *Nick of the Woods* and *Ernest Maltravers* produced at the Bowery Theatre; Medina is the Bowery Theatre's house playwright
- 1840 First use of the term "vaudeville" in the United States
- 1843 First recorded matinee performance in New York
- 1845 Anna Cora Mowatt's *Fashion*; is reviewed twice by Edgar

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- Allan Poe for the *Broadway Journal*; also in this year Mowatt debuts as an actress
- 1847 Anna Cora Mowatt's *Armand, the Child of the People*
- 1848 First California theatre opens
- 1849 Frances Hodgson Burnett born (d. 1924); Burnett is born in England, but her family moves to Knoxville in 1865; Burnett will become a highly successful novelist and deft melodramatic dramatist
- 1850 As many as fifty theatre companies are operating nationwide
- 1853 Catherine Sinclair opens the Metropolitan Theatre in San Francisco
- 1854 Actor John Wilkes Booth's debut
Anna Cora Mowatt's final performance (June 3)
- 1855 Actress-manager Laura Keane opens the Laura Keane Varieties Theatre, New York
- 1856 First American copyright law
Mrs. Sidney Bateman's satire *Self*
- 1863 Charles W. Witham, the century's most prominent scenic artist/designer, begins his career in Boston
- 1866 Extensive use of limelight
- 1870 Olive Logan's *Before the Footlights and Behind the Scenes*
Rachel Crothers born (birth date sometimes given as 1878, d. 1958); Crothers will become the most prolific and successful female playwright in the early part of the twentieth century; during her four-decade playwriting career, Crothers will bring twenty-four full-length productions to the New York stage
- 1874 The Lambs theatrical club established
Zona Gale born (d. 1938); Gale will become a successful writer of American domestic comedy and the first female winner of the Pulitzer Prize for Drama

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Gertrude Stein born (d. 1946); although her fame will not come from her playwriting, Stein will write more than seventy-seven theatrical works; Stein's plays, often considered the dramatic equivalent of modernist painting, typically have no plot and bear little resemblance to traditional plays, making them extremely difficult to stage

- 1875 The emergence of complex sets, stagecraft machinery, and the modern concept of the director

- 1876 Nearly 100 theatre companies go on tour for the 1876-77 season
 Susan Glaspell born (d. 1948); always on the cutting edge of American theatre, Glaspell will help found the Provincetown Players, a company that will produce her many and many-faceted plays

- 1878 Frances Hodgson Burnett's stage adaptation of her novel *That Lass o' Lowries*
 Mrs. B. E. Woolf copyrights her melodrama *Hobbies; or The Angel of the Household*

- 1879 *Forget Me Not*, presented by Genevieve Ward

- 1880 Pauline Elizabeth Hopkins, African American playwright, writes, produces and stars in her melodrama *Slaves' Escape; or the Underground Railroad*
 Georgia Douglas Johnson born (d. 1966); Johnson will become highly involved in the artistic community as a published poet, a skilled composer, and a socially aware dramatist honored for her work in several dramatic genres
 Angelina Grimké born (d. 1958); Grimké will become the foremother of African American women dramatists with her groundbreaking *Rachel* (1916)

- 1881 The 14th Street Theatre, credited birthplace of the true vaudeville, tries to attract women to its performances by giving away sewing kits and dress patterns
 Martha Johnson's *Carrots; or The Waif of the Woods*

- 1882 Aged and needy actors now assisted by the Actors Fund of America

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- 1885 Annie Oakley joins "Buffalo Bill" Cody's Wild West exhibition
Sophie Treadwell born (d. 1970); although she will also write realistically, Treadwell will become known as one of America's pioneers of expressionism
- 1889 Western theatres begin offering matinees for women and children
Frances Hodgson Burnett's melodrama *Phyllis*; *Nixie* follows in 1890
- 1890 With the star system in place, actors begin hiring agents
Minstrel shows are common
- 1891 Zora Neale Hurston born (d. 1960); prolific novelist, folklorist, playwright, Hurston becomes the most accomplished African American woman writer of the early twentieth century
- 1894 *Billboard* begins publication
Eulalie Spence born (d. 1981); unlike many of her contemporaries, Spence will not focus on protest drama but will earn her fame through dramas depicting everyday Harlem life
- 1896 Kliegl Brothers lighting company founded
- 1897 Strauss Signs creates gas-lit marquees
Frances Hodgson Burnett's *A Lady of Quality*
- 1899 May Miller born (d. 1995); Miller becomes the most widely published African American woman playwright to date
- 1900 Starting this year and continuing over the next eight years, more than eighty theatres will be built in the Broadway district (39th Street to 54th Street)
- 1901 Jane Addams and Laura Dainty Pelham found the Hull-House Players in Chicago for the purpose of community education and edification
- 1904 Frances Hodgson Burnett's stage adaptation *That Man and I*

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- 1905 Harvard begins offering English 47, a playwriting course
- 1906 Lillian Hellman born (d. 1984); Hellman's plays of social consciousness win her the honor of election to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences (1960), the American Academy of Arts and Letters (1963), and the Theatre Hall of Fame (1974)
Sophie Treadwell begins a short-lived vaudeville career as a character artist
- 1907 Playwright Martha Morton organizes the Society of Dramatic Authors because the American Dramatists Club will not accept female members
- 1909 Rachel Crothers' *A Man's World* (published 1915)
- 1910 There are twenty-six showboat theatres in operation
Florenz Ziegfeld discovers Fanny Brice
- 1911 An estimated 16 percent of New Yorkers attend a vaudeville show each week
Mary Austin's *The Arrow Maker*
Rachel Crothers' *He and She*
- 1912 Organization of Authors' League of America (now the Dramatists Guild) offers legal protection to (male) playwrights
Burlesque performers begin to strip for better revenues
Marion Craig Wentworth's *The Flower Shop*
- 1913 The Actors' Equity Association is founded
Rachel Crothers' *Ourselves*
- 1914 Rachel Crothers' *Young Wisdom*
Playwright and theatre critic Florence Kiper writes reviews "from the feminist viewpoint" in the journal *Forum*
- 1915 Susan Glaspell founds the Provincetown Players with George Cram Cook and others
Angelina Grimké's *Rachel* (published 1916) is produced at the Myrtill Minor School in Washington; *Rachel* challenges the

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- stereotypical and racist visions of African Americans promoted by the film *Birth of a Nation* (1915)
- 1916 Susan Glaspell's *Trifles*
Clare Kummer's *Good Gracious, Annabelle*
- 1917 Susan Glaspell's *The Outside* and *The People*
- 1918 Alice Dunbar-Nelson's *Mine Eyes Have Seen*
Susan Glaspell's *Woman's Honor*
- 1919 Mary Burrill's *They That Sit in Darkness* appears in *The Birth Control Review*
Mary Burrill's *Aftermath*
Susan Glaspell's *Bernice*
- 1920s–30s Era of the Harlem Renaissance or the New Negro Movement, an explosion and celebration of African American letters and art; African American women playwrights such as Marita Bonner, Mary Burrill, Ottie Graham, Angelina Grimké, Dorothy C. Guinn, Frances Gunner, Maud Cuney Hare, Zora Neale Hurston, Georgia Douglas Johnson, May Miller, Myrtle Livingston Smith, and Eulalie Spence did not get all the recognition deserved or expected during this period, but they were a crucial part of the nationwide Little Theatre Movement occurring at the same time as the Harlem Renaissance; the Little Theatre Movement was intended to create amateur, community-based theatres that would be able to produce plays, especially one-acts, inexpensively
- 1920 A patent is granted for a counterweighted curtain opening mechanism
Alice Childress born (d. 1994); Childress will become a celebrated playwright, director, actress, screenplay writer, and novelist; her art will be known for its poignant depiction of the common man and especially for its constant, dignified attack on racism
Zona Gale's realistic drama *Miss Lulu Bett* wins the 1921 Pulitzer Prize
Edna St. Vincent Millay's *Aria da Capo*

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- 1921 Susan Glaspell's *Inheritors* and *The Verge*
Rachel Crothers' *Nice People*
- 1922 Sophie Treadwell's first Broadway production, *Gringo*
- 1923 Rachel Crothers' *Mary the Third*
Ottie Graham's *Holiday*
- 1924 Rachel Crothers' *Expressing Willie*
Dorothy C. Guinn's pageant "Out of the Dark"
- 1925 Frances Gunner's pageant "Light of the Women"
Zora Neale Hurston's *Color-Struck*
Georgia Douglas Johnson's *A Sunday Morning in the South*
May Miller's *Riding the Goat*
Sophie Treadwell's *O Nightingale*; becoming very dissatisfied with commercial theatre, Treadwell begins producing and directing her own work, especially as she moves into more non-realistic drama; also in this year Treadwell gives three lectures to the American Laboratory Theatre in New York; Treadwell's notes from these lectures have been invaluable in the study of her work and the American drama scene of her day
- 1926 Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Blue Blood*
May Miller's *The Cuss'd Thing*
Myrtle Livingston Smith's *For Unborn Children*
Eulalie Spence's *Foreign Mail*
- 1927 Marita Bonner's *The Pot Maker*
Zora Neale Hurston's *The First One*
Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Plumes*
Anne Nichols' *Abie's Irish Rose*, which eventually runs for 2,327 performances
Eulalie Spence's *The Starter, Her, Hot Stuff, and Fool's Errand*
- 1928 Marita Bonner's expressionistic *The Purple Flower* appears in the magazine *The Crisis*
Johnson's *Plumes* wins first prize in *Opportunity's* 1927 playwriting contest
Eulalie Spence's *Episode*
Sophie Treadwell's expressionistic *Machinal* runs for ninety-

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one performances at the Plymouth Theatre in New York, reviving the popularity of expressionism on the commercial stage

- 1929 Marita Bonner's *Exit: An Illusion*
Rachel Crothers' *Let Us Be Gay*
Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Safe* pioneers innovative uses of various dramatic techniques in its depiction of the horrors of lynching
May Miller's *Graven Images*
May Miller publishes *Scratches* in University of North Carolina's *Carolina Magazine*
Eulalie Spence's *Undertow*
Spence's only full-length play, *The Whipping*, does not open as scheduled in Bridgeport, Connecticut; a subsequent movie deal with Paramount Studios also does not come to fruition
- 1930 After Broadway's commercial theatres experience their period of greatest success in the late twenties, the National Theatre Conference is established to assist and encourage non-commercial theatre
Just fourteen years after Grimké's *Rachel*, an estimated forty-nine African American women playwrights are at work
Avant-garde theatre artist Maria Irene Fornes born; Fornes' acclaimed work will earn her several Obies including one for Sustained Achievement
Susan Glaspell's final play, the Pulitzer Prize-winning *Alison's House*
Lorraine Hansberry born (d. 1965); Hansberry will achieve commercial and popular success and along with playwrights such as Alice Childress, earn critical, national acclaim for African American women playwrights
Georgia Douglas Johnson's *Blue-Eyed Black Boy*
May Miller's *Stragglers in the Dust* and *Plays and Pageants From the Life of the Negro*; *Plays and Pageants* earns Miller acclaim as one of the most promising contemporary playwrights
- 1931 Rachel Crothers' *As Husbands Go*
Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes collaborate on *Mule Bone*, an authentic, yet unfinished, black folk comedy;

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Mule Bone is eventually staged on Broadway in 1991
 Adrienne Kennedy born; this future Obie-winning playwright will share her theatre knowledge with young dramatists as a lecturer in playwriting at Yale, Princeton, and Brown Universities

- 1932 Rachel Crothers' *When Ladies Meet*
 Shirley Graham's three-act opera *Tom Tom* produced at the Cleveland Stadium marks the first professional production of a black opera
 Zora Neale Hurston creates and performs *The Great Day*, the first of three musical programs of Negro folklore; *From Sun to Sun* and *Singing Steel* follow in 1933 and 1934 respectively
 Megan Terry (Marguerite Duffy) born; future writer in residence for the Yale University School of Drama (1966-67), founding member of the Women's Theatre Council (1972), and Obie award winner, Terry will earn an international reputation as the "mother" of American feminist drama
- 1933 May Miller's lynching drama *Nails and Thorns*
 Sophie Treadwell's most experimental work, *For Saxophone*, and her most realistic, psychological drama, *Lone Valley*
- 1934 Lillian Hellman's *The Children's Hour*; this play introduces Hellman to the American theatre scene and enjoys the longest run (691 performances) of any production in Hellman's thirty-year playwriting career; Hellman will revive *The Children's Hour* on Broadway under her own direction in 1952
 Gertrude Stein's *Four Saints in Three Acts: An Opera to Be Sung*, directed by John Houseman
- 1935 The Federal Theatre Project is organized and directed by Hallie Flanagan
 Zoë Akins wins the Pulitzer Prize for *The Old Maid*, adapted from Edith Wharton's novel
 Georgia Douglas Johnson's historical plays *Frederick Douglass* and *William and Ellen Craft*
 May Miller helps edit *Negro History in Thirteen Plays*, a volume which contains Miller's own four history plays: *Harriet Tubman*, *Sojourner Truth*, *Christophe's Daughters*, and *Samory*

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- 1936 Lillian Hellman's *Days to Come*
- 1937 Rachel Crothers' last play, *Susan and God*, runs for 288 performances
Tina Howe born; Howe will be known for her perceptive view of contemporary mores; her plays will often feature women artists as protagonists
- 1939 Lillian Hellman's *The Little Foxes*
Shirley Graham's *I Gotta Home*
- 1940 Shirley Graham's one-act *It's Morning*, and radio drama *Track Thirteen*
- 1941 Lillian Hellman's most overtly political play, *Watch on the Rhine*, wins the New York Drama Critics Circle Award for best American Play
- 1944 Lillian Hellman's last political drama, *The Searching Wind*
- 1945 Mary Chase's *Harvey* wins the Pulitzer Prize, running for 1,775 performances
- 1946 Lillian Hellman's *Another Part of the Forest*
- 1947 The first Tony Awards dinner is held
Marsha Norman born; Norman will win acclaim for her intense dramas which often subvert traditional narrative strategies
- 1948 Poet and playwright Ntozake Shange (Paulette Williams) born; Shange will become known for her artistic innovations, especially the "choreopoem"
- 1949 Alice Childress' *Florence*
Lillian Hellman's adaptation of Emmanuel Robles' *Montserrat*
- 1950s-60s Emergence of Off-Broadway, regional and university theatre
- 1950 Wendy Wasserstein born; Wasserstein will become a playwright known for creating strong women's roles and will be the first woman playwright to win a Tony Award

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- 1951 Lillian Hellman's *The Autumn Garden*
Paula Vogel born; Vogel's plays will focus on the non-traditional family, and social issues such as AIDS, domestic violence, sexual abuse, and the feminization of poverty
- 1952 Alice Childress' *Gold Through the Trees*
Lillian Hellman directs a revival of *The Children's Hour*; in this same year she is called to testify before the House Un-American Activities Committee
Beth Henley born; Henley will be known for creating women characters who define themselves apart from men; her first New York production will earn her a Pulitzer Prize
Emily Mann born; Mann will become known for her documentary dramas, her focus on gender roles and sexual politics, and her several tours of duty as artistic director for theatres from Minneapolis to New Jersey and New York
- 1955 Alice Childress' *Trouble in Mind* wins an Obie
Lillian Hellman's adaptation of Jean Anouilh's *The Lark*
- 1956 Performance artist and writer Karen Finley born; Finley will earn an MFA in Performance Art at the San Francisco Art Institute; her work will focus on victimization, the dysfunctional family, and the eroticization of the body
Performance artist, director, actress Anna Deavere Smith born
- 1957 Lillian Hellman writes the book for *Candide*, a musical based on Voltaire
- 1958 Ketti Frings' *Look Homeward, Angel* wins the Pulitzer Prize
- 1959 Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* opens at the Ethel Barrymore Theatre and runs for 530 performances, winning a New York Drama Critics Circle Award; New York revivals in 1979 and 1983 will earn critical acclaim as will a musical version, *Raisin*, produced in 1973
- 1960 Association of Producing Artists founded
Lillian Hellman's last stage play, *Toys in the Attic*