

# The Creative Spirit

AN INTRODUCTION TO THEATRE | FOURTH EDITION

Stephanie Arnold





FOURTH EDITION

# The Creative Spirit



An Introduction to Theatre



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**Stephanie Arnold**  
*Lewis and Clark College*



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*For Mark and for Daniel—  
who provide the inspiration and the joy.*



# Preface

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I wrote *The Creative Spirit* for students like mine, whose interest in live theatre is critical to its future. My goal has been to give students the information they need for an in-depth understanding of the way theatre creates meaning. Rather than using a multitude of examples from plays that students may not have seen, I have chosen to focus on fewer works in greater detail, allowing students to become immersed in the worlds of the plays, the lives of the characters, and the choices involved in bringing these texts to the stage. My teaching has convinced me that students gain the most comprehensive understanding of theatre when plays are presented both in the context of culture and history and in relation to performance.

In order to create this textbook, I turned to my professional colleagues in the theatre and asked for their participation. I selected plays that I thought represented important artistic, philosophical, and social issues and sought out productions of those plays. I sat in on rehearsals and performances. I interviewed playwrights, directors, actors, and designers. I invited theatres to contribute photographs of their productions so that a visual story would accompany a written story. I wove quotes from my interviews through the descriptive material so that the practitioners could be part of a shared dialogue with the students. I tried to create a sense of what it would be like to be in the rehearsal process and what it would be like to be an audience member at the production. I also considered what kind of historical and social background materials would help students

understand the plays that they were reading. Building a substantive cultural context meant considering historical, political, and economic background materials as well as musical and artistic sources. The presentation of the cultural context could then demonstrate for students the place of the theatre in the development of the community and the way the theatre represents a gathering place of knowledge as well as of individuals.

## FIVE COMPLETE PLAYSSCRIPTS

At the core of the text are five complete plays: *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* by August Wilson, *And the Soul Shall Dance* by Wakako Yamauchi, *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* by Tony Kushner, *Dog Lady* by Milcha Sanchez-Scott, and *Buried Child* by Sam Shepard. Four of the plays are used to illustrate chapter themes: in Chapter 3 *Joe Turner's Come and Gone* illustrates the playwright's vision; Chapter 9 includes *And the Soul Shall Dance* as an example of expressing a worldview through realism; in Chapter 11 *Angels in America: Millennium Approaches* is included as an example of expressing a worldview through theatricalism; and in Chapter 14 *Dog Lady* illustrates the genre of comedy. The final play, *Buried Child*, is meant for a group project, although it may also be used as an additional or alternative example for other chapters. These five works demonstrate the power of contemporary American theatre to address the questions and concerns of our time.

## EXAMPLES FROM A RANGE OF CULTURES AND PERIODS

In addition to the five complete plays, extended examples from classic and contemporary drama are included throughout. Chapter 1, for example, details ritual performance among the Hopi Indians of the Southwestern United States, and Chapter 2 includes an extended discussion of *Medea* by Euripides. Medieval mystery cycles, Elizabethan drama, Iranian theatre, the Beijing Opera of China, seventeenth-century French comedy, European modernism, and mid-twentieth-century American musicals are among the types of drama represented. The primary focus, however, is still the rich diversity of contemporary American theatre. And because the theatre's eloquence depends on visual imagery as well as on language, *The Creative Spirit* is supported by 200 production shots, design sketches, renderings, and drawings that highlight the exciting work of today's theatre artists.

## AN INTEGRATED APPROACH: CONTEXT AND PERFORMANCE

I have tried to show students how to explore the text of a play as a theatre practitioner might, and how this exploration also enriches their experiences as audience members. Each of the book's five complete playscripts is accompanied by a discussion of the playwright's other works, his or her sources, and the historical and cultural context that informs the play's plot, setting, and characters. "In Context" boxes provide timelines related to the play; for example, a list of key dates in the African American experience offers some background for *Joe Turner's Come and Gone*. Following each playscript (except the project text *Buried Child*) is a section on the performance and production of the play at one or more representative American theatres. The theatres range from small, innovative theatres, such as the Eureka Theatre and East West

Players, to large regional companies, such as the Oregon Shakespeare Festival and the Mark Taper Forum, to Broadway playhouses. This integrated approach is most apparent in these "case study" chapters, but I have also discussed cultural context and performance choices in the book's ten other chapters.

## VOICES OF THEATRE ARTISTS

In writing *The Creative Spirit*, I wanted to bring to the forefront the energy, passion, and commitment of artists working in the theatre today. I wanted students to hear playwrights, actors, designers, and directors explain, in their own words, the choices and methods they use in their work. To obtain this material, I have interviewed more than fifty theatre artists over the course of preparing the four editions of the book. The playwrights Milcha Sanchez-Scott and Wakako Yamauchi; directors Libby Appel, Ping Chong, Clinton Turner Davis, Olga Sanchez, and Tony Taccone; actors LeWan Alexander and BW Gonzalez; designers Deborah Dryden, Ming Cho Lee, and R. Eric Stone; dramaturgs Oscar Eustis and Stephen Weeks; and choreographer Shen Wei are among the commentators on plays and productions discussed in the text.

## NEW TO THE FOURTH EDITION

The fourth edition of *The Creative Spirit* strengthens the presentation of writing about the theatre, expands coverage of world theatre, and moves to a four-color format with enhanced visual design and many new color photographs fully integrated throughout the text. With new materials on the critic, the dramaturg, and review writing for students, combined with the continuing features of the casebook studies of full play texts and their productions and the project chapter, *The Creative Spirit* now includes all of the resources for a complete course.

- A new section on writing about the theatre (Chapter 13) focuses attention on the contributions of the dramaturg and the critic. Placed in relationship to studies of dramatic structure (Chapter 12) and genre (Chapter 13), this section introduces students to the work of writers who are responsible for analyzing play texts and productions. The dramaturg and the critic are seen as writers who join with playwrights, directors, actors, and designers in building a dialogue about the theatre.
- A new appendix of guided writing assignments for students provides teachers with additional pedagogical tools and builds on the approaches of the dramaturg and the critic introduced in Chapter 13. Structured assignments include reviewing productions, preparing research materials for display, and conducting interviews. These new writing assignments offer students opportunities to exercise critical thinking and creativity in their own writing about the theatre and parallel the assignments in Chapter 15, in which students have the opportunity to practice elements of theatre production.
- New coverage of *Medea* by Euripides (Chapter 2) offers students a more streamlined discussion of Greek drama and is supported by photographs and reviews from two startling, contemporary productions of the play: one by the Abbey Theatre of Ireland and one by the Classical Theatre of Harlem. The two reviews of *Medea* (Chapter 13), which are new to this edition, also complement the new material on dramatic criticism.
- Expanded coverage of Chinese theatre brings students in touch with recent developments in world theatre involving interactions between Chinese and Western theatre artists. Discussions of spoken language drama (Chapters 2 and 8), puppet

theatre (Chapter 5), and dance (Chapter 11) complement the study of Chinese opera that is a continuing feature of the book in Chapter 2. New interviews with the Chinese theatre practitioners Lin Zhao-hua, artistic director of the Beijing People's Art Theatre, and Shen Wei, artistic director of Shen Wei Dance Arts, help identify some of the changes taking place in Chinese theatre since the end of the Cultural Revolution in 1976.

- A new section on the American theatre artist Ping Chong (Chapter 5) introduces students to the aesthetic and social concerns of this visionary director as he creates a collaboration with the Shaanxi Folk Art Theatre of China.
- The use of color photographs throughout the book and a new four-color design heightens the appeal of the visual program and the presentation of the text. Over fifty new color photographs provide coverage of many exciting new plays and productions, including *Gem of the Ocean*, *The Pillowman*, *Miss Julie*, *Awake and Sing*, *9 Parts of Desire*, *The Teahouse*, *The Soldier's Tale*, and *Hedda Gabler*.

## SUPPLEMENTS

The following supplements are available through a McGraw-Hill sales representative.

- A **Theatre-Goer's Guide** helps students make the most of their theatre experiences. Suggestions for writing about a performance are also included.
- An **Online Learning Center**, located at [www.mhhe.com/creativespirit4](http://www.mhhe.com/creativespirit4), offers chapter quizzes, extensive Web links, exercises, and more.
- The **Instructor's Manual and Test Bank** (ISBN 0-07-255834-2) offers a variety of resources for instructors, including



assignment ideas; chapter summaries; and multiple-choice, short-answer, and essay questions.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

As *The Creative Spirit* enters its fourth edition, I am deeply appreciative of the many people who have contributed to its evolution. A large number of theatre artists have given generously of their time in helping to build the case studies of the various productions or in contributing additional interview material. The playwrights, actors, directors, and designers whose insightful commentary is found throughout the text have added immeasurably to the book's specificity and vitality. For the fourth edition, it was my great pleasure to interview a number of remarkable theatre practitioners. I thank Lin Zhaohua, the artistic director of the Beijing People's Art Theatre for meeting with me while his company was touring the United States. This interview was facilitated by Christina Kellogg of CalPerformances at the University of California, Berkeley. Wu Zhuhong, a playwright and dramaturg, graciously translated and Cheung Fai, the executive director of the Lin Zhaohua Theatre Studio in Beijing provided additional materials. I extend my gratitude to Ping Chong and Shen Wei for their commentaries and to their company managers, Bruce Allardice and Vivian Chiu, for arranging these interviews. Cynthia Fuhrman and Natalie Gilmore of Seattle Repertory Theatre arranged for the photographs of *Cathay* that accompany the discussion of Ping Chong's work and Dmitri Carter also provided valuable background information on the use of puppets. I also interviewed Olga Sanchez, the artistic director of the Miracle Theatre, whose commentary is cited in the discussion of the Day of the Dead.

Bill Mercer, the curator of Native American Art at the Portland Art Museum, furthered my understanding of Northwest Coast Native

performance traditions and Cecily Quintana, the director of Quintana Galleries, provided new images of ceremonial transformation masks. My new colleague in design at Lewis & Clark College, Michael Olich, discussed his work with me and provided two of his designs for the fourth edition. And my colleague Stephen Weeks contributed his expertise to the development of new materials on the dramaturg. The opportunity to speak with leading theatre and art practitioners and critics is one of the great joys of my continued work on *The Creative Spirit*.

A growing number of people have reviewed the manuscript at different stages of the project. I wish to thank the following reviewers for their invaluable comments and suggestions for the fourth edition:

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Hague in developing the revision plan for the fourth edition. The production staff have outdone themselves as we have moved to a four-color format. Many thanks to Christine Buese, who has done a wonderful job researching our beautiful new photographs, and also to Nora Agbayani, the photo research coordinator. The new design for the text and layout are the work of Anne Flanagan, the art editor, and Kim Menning, design manager, and I extend my appreciation to them for the exceptional visual presentation. And I warmly thank Cathy Iammartino and Chanda Feldman, production editors, for their supportive efforts in coordinating all of our work and bringing the project to a successful conclusion.

Once again, I would like to include a few words about my students. I have been most for-

tunate in my teaching career to have worked closely with many remarkable students. As I have taught them in acting and dramatic literature classes or directed them in plays, we have had the great joy of making discoveries together, learning from each other, and together reaching an understanding of the value of the theatre in our lives. I salute their talent, their openness, their idealism, and their commitment.

Finally, I acknowledge the support of my family, who have never flagged in their enthusiasm for the project or their willingness to undertake all the necessary tasks to make the book possible and to keep my sense of humor intact. Loving thanks to Mark Prieto, Daniel Arnold, Eunice Prieto Damron, and Lionel Okun.



## Author's Note

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Stephanie Arnold is Professor of Theatre at Lewis and Clark College in Portland, Oregon where she has served in the past as the Chair of the Theatre Department and the Dean of Arts and Humanities. She has also taught at the University of California, Riverside and Mills College. Professor Arnold's B.A. is from Stanford University and she holds M.F.A.

and Ph.D. degrees in theatre from the University of Wisconsin, Madison. She teaches acting, directing, and dramatic literature and has directed over forty productions for the theatre including works by classical and contemporary playwrights, musicals, and opera. Dr. Arnold's research focuses on the American theatre.



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