

# CONTEMPORARY AMERICAN THEATRE

# Contemporary American Theatre

Edited by  
Bruce King

---

Palgrave Macmillan

© Macmillan Academic and Professional Ltd 1991  
Editorial matter and selection © Bruce King 1991  
Softcover reprint of the hardcover 1st edition 1991 978-0-333-48739-6

All rights reserved. For information, write:  
Scholarly and Reference Division  
St. Martin's Press, Inc., 175 Fifth Avenue,  
New York, NY 10010

First published in the United States of America in 1991

ISBN 978-1-349-21584-3      ISBN 978-1-349-21582-9 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-21582-9

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Contemporary American theatre / edited by Bruce King.

p. cm.

Includes index.

ISBN 978-0-312-06141-8

1. Theater—United States—History—20th century.

2. American Drama—20th century—History and criticism.

I. King, Bruce Alvin.

PN2266.5.C66 1991

792'.0973'09045—dc20

90-26675

CIP

*To Nicole's Friends*

# Contents

---

<i>List of Plates</i>	page	ix
<i>Notes on the Contributors</i>		xi
Introduction by Bruce King		1
PART I Textual Drama		13
1 Women Playwrights on Broadway: Henley, Howe, Norman and Wasserstein by Barbara Kachur		15
2 Not-Quite Mainstream Male Playwrights: Guare, Durang and Rabe by Dennis Carroll		41
3 New Realism: Mamet, Mann and Nelson by David Savran		63
4 Black Theatre into the Mainstream by Holly Hill		81
5 The Sound of a Voice: David Hwang by Gerald Rabkin		97
PART II Theatre Collectives in the 1980s		115
6 Elizabeth LeCompte and the Wooster Group by Alexis Greene		117
7 Lee Breuer and Mabou Mines by S E Gontarski		135
PART III Other Forms of Theatre		149
8 Beyond the Broadway Musical: Crossovers, Confusions and Crisis by Glenn Loney		151

9	Once Upon a Time in Performance Art by Lenora Champagne	177
10	Performance Artist/Art Performer: Laurie Anderson by Mel Gordon	195
11	Contemporary American Dance Theatre: Clarke, Goode and Mann by Theodore Shank	205
12	From C-R to PR: Feminist Theatre in America by Alisa Solomon	227
	PART IV Further New Directions	243
13	Poets of Bohemia and Suburbia: The Post-Literary Dramaturgies of Farabough, Harrington and Shank by Jim Carmody	245
14	Not Either/Or But And: Fragmentation and Consolidation in the Post-modern Theatre of Peter Sellars by Don Shewey	263
	<i>Index</i>	283

# List of Plates

---

1. Contraband, *Religare* (1986)  
(Photo: Contraband)
2. Joe Goode Performance Group, *The Disaster Series* (1989)  
(Photo: Marty Sohl)
3. Martha Clarke, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1984)  
(Photo: Martha Swope Associates – Carol Rosegg)
4. Martha Clarke, *The Garden of Earthly Delights* (1984)  
(Photo: Chris Bennion)
5. Martha Clarke, *Vienna: Lusthaus* (1986)  
(Photo: Martha Swope Associates – Carol Rosegg)
6. Martha Clarke, *Vienna: Lusthaus* (1986)  
(Photo: Gary Gunderson)
7. Martha Clarke, *Vienna: Lusthaus* (1986)  
(Photo: Gary Gunderson)
8. Martha Clarke, *The Hunger Artist* (1987)  
(Photo: Tom Brazil)
9. Martha Clarke, *The Hunger Artist* (1987)  
(Photo: Tom Brazil)
10. Martha Clarke, *Miracolo d'Amore* (1988)  
(Photo: Martha Swope)
11. Martha Clarke, *Miracolo d'Amore* (1988)  
(Photo: Martha Swope)
12. Martha Clarke, *Miracolo d'Amore* (1988)  
(Photo: Martha Swope)

# Notes on the Contributors

---

**Bruce King** is co-editor of the Modern Dramatists series and editor of the English Dramatists. He has written *Coriolanus*, *Dryden's Major Plays*, *Marvell's Allegorical Poetry*, *The Macmillan History of Seventeenth-Century Literature*, *New English Literatures* and *Modern Indian Poetry in English*.

**Barbara Kachur** is Director of Theatre in the Department of Communication, University of Missouri – St Louis.

**Dennis Carroll** is Professor of Drama, University of Hawaii, author of *Mamet in the Modern Dramatists series* and *Australian Contemporary Drama, 1905–1982*.

**David Savran** teaches in the English Department, Brown University, and is author of *The Wooster Group: 1975–1985*, *Breaking the Rules* and *In Their Own Words*, a book of interviews with contemporary American dramatists.

**Holly Hill** teaches in the Drama Department, John Jay College, City University of New York. She is editor of *Playing Joan*, interviews with actresses. She reviews New York theatre for *The Times* of London.

**Alexis Greene** teaches at New York University and is a theatre critic.

**S E Gontarski** is Professor of English at Florida State University, Tallahassee, and author and editor of several books on Samuel Beckett including *The Intent of Undoing*, *Endgame: Samuel Beckett's Production Notebook*, *Shaping the Mess: the Composition of Samuel*



*Beckett's Happy Days* and *Krapp's First Tapes: Beckett's Manuscript Revisions of Krapp's Last Tape*. He is also a theatre director.

**Glenn Loney** is Professor in the Department of Theatre, Brooklyn College and the Graduate School of the City University of New York and author and editor of many books including *Twentieth-Century Theatre*, *Musical Theatre in America*, *California Gold-Rush Plays* and *Peter Brook's Royal Shakespeare Company Production of A Midsummer-Night's Dream*.

**Lenora Champagne** is a well-known performance artist, writer and director. She edited *Out From Under: Women on Sex and Death and other Things*, a collection of writing by solo women performers. She teaches at the State University of New York – Purchase.

**Mel Gordon** is Head of the Theatre Programme, University of California – Berkeley, and author/editor of *Expressionistic Texts*, *Dada Performance*, *Grand Guignol: Theatre of Fear and Terror*, *Lazzi: Comic Routines of the Commedia dell'Arte* and *The Stanislavsky Technique: Russia*.

**Theodore Shank** is Professor in the Theatre Department, University of California – San Diego, La Jolla, and author of *American Alternative Theatre* in the Modern Dramatists series. He is a well-known theatre and opera director and contributing editor to *New Theatre Quarterly*.

**Alisa Solomon** is drama critic for *The Village Voice* and various theatre journals. She teaches in the English Department, Baruch College, City University of New York.

**Don Shewey** was editor of *Seven Days* and author/editor of *Out front: contemporary gay and lesbian plays*, *Sam Shepard*, *Caught in the act* and other books.

**Gerald Rabkin** is Professor of Theatre at Rutgers University, theatre critic and author of *Drama and Commitment: Politics in the American Theatre of the Thirties*.

**Jim Carmody** is Professor in the Department of Theatre, University of California – San Diego.