



Best Plays of the Early American Theater

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During early colonial times, traveling actors and troupes from London took the first tentative steps in establishing America's theatrical tradition. The nation's history of theater evolved slowly, but the nineteenth-century development of an authentic American theatrical voice gave rise to a growing number of noteworthy indigenous playwrights by the early 1900s. This carefully edited volume charts the progress of the American theater between 1787 and 1911, with a chronological selection of 16 of the best works from that period:

The Contrast, Royall Tyler (1787)

Superstition, James N. Barker (1824)

Charles the Second, John Howard Payne and Washington Irving (1824)

Fashion, Anna Cora Mowatt (1845)

Uncle Tom's Cabin, George L. Aiken (1852)

The Octoroon, Dion Boucicault (1859)

The Count of Monte Cristo, Charles Fechter (1883)

The Mouse-Trap, William Dean Howells (1889)

Secret Service, William Gillette (1896)

The Great Divide, William Vaughn Moody (1906)

The New York Idea, Langdon Mitchell (1906)

The Truth, Clyde Fitch (1907)

The Witching Hour, Augustus Thomas (1907)

Salvation Nell, Edward Sheldon (1908)


The Easiest Way, Eugene Walter (1909)

The Scarecrow, Percy MacKaye (1911)

Representative rather than comprehensive, this highly readable volume combines familiar but historically important plays with less well-known pieces for a fascinating introduction to early American drama.

Note: As all these plays are copyright-free, they can be performed without fee or permission by professional and amateur groups.

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Gretchen Clark:

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