

Asian American Drama

In the late nineteenth century, when Asian American drama made its debut, the spotlight was firmly on the lives and struggles of Asians in North America, rather than on the cultures and traditions of the Asian homeland. Today, Asian American playwrights continue to challenge established theatrical conventions by calling attention to issues and experiences that might otherwise be ignored or marginalized.

Asian American Drama brings together more than 250 plays, along with related biographical, production, and theatrical information. The collection begins with the works of Sadakichi Hartmann in the late nineteenth century and progresses to the writings of contemporary playwrights, such as Philip Kan Gotanda, Elizabeth Wong, and Jeannie Barroga.

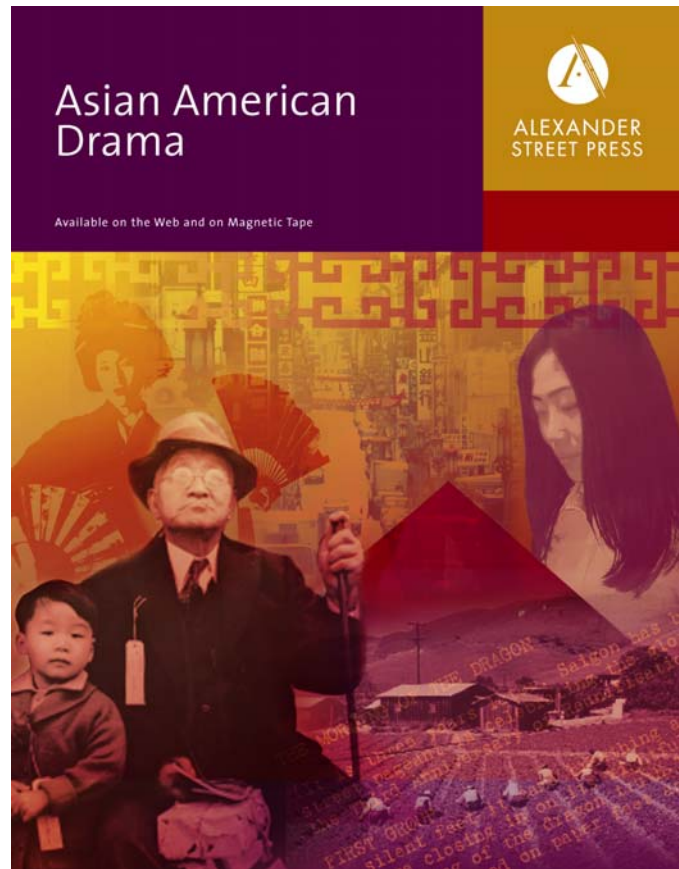
The plays have relevance well beyond the study of literature, drama, and Asian American studies. They present views of important historical events, such as the construction of the railroads in the nineteenth century, the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, and the Vietnam conflict. The plays also address sociological issues, such as assimilation, integration, and cultural identity in a Western context. The effect of Western religion is also examined. For example, David Henry Hwang's *Family Devotions* deals with evangelism and religious identity as experienced by Chinese Americans. By reenacting experiences familiar to audiences, these plays provide opportunities for viewers to examine their own reactions to racism and other experiences of their ethnicity.

CONTENT SELECTION

The initial list of playwrights was compiled using *Asian American Playwrights: A Bio-Bibliographical Critical Sourcebook*, edited by Miles Xian Liu (Greenwood Press, 2002). The list of writers then was expanded through conversations with numerous scholars and advisors and with the living playwrights themselves.

The collection is comprehensive. Significant plays have been targeted for inclusion, such as *M. Butterfly* (Hwang), *Chicken Coop Chinaman* (Chin), *Talk-Story* (Barroga), *Morning Has Broken* (Houston), *Yankee Dawg You Die* (Gotanda), *Bitter Cane* (Lim), *Letters to a Student Revolutionary* (Wong), *And the Soul Shall Dance* (Yamauchi), and *A Language of Their Own* (Yew). In addition to well-known works, the collection includes items by emerging and less familiar playwrights, including Prince Gomolvilas, Uma Parameswaran, and Bina Sharif. We aim to secure each author's complete works, including the published and the unpublished plays.

Asian American Drama represents the various ethnicities within the Asian American community. Along with many works by writers of Japanese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Chinese descent, the collection includes plays by writers of Hawaiian, Indian, Thai, Korean, Persian, and Malaysian ancestry.



Just as the lodge, the saloon, or the church did, the theatre provided a place where immigrants who often lived in cramped and dismal tenements could meet one another and enjoy being together.

– Maxine Seller, Roles of Ethnic Theater

ALEXANDER STREET'S SEMANTIC INDEXING™

Researchers will be able to analyze the text, the characters, and related production information in new ways. Each scene and character has been painstakingly indexed, allowing users to find answers in seconds that, until now, have been impossible to find:

- Show me all scenes from pre-1950 plays containing characters who are railway workers.
- When was the first production of *The Conversion of Ka'ahumanu*?
- Show me all scenes written by women that discuss sexuality.
- Show me all scenes that feature Issei and Nisei individuals.

Users will be able to search using dozens of indexed elements, including title, date, place, publisher, and other information about the play; first known production, with information about the director, production company, producer, and other production history; scene details (including subject of scene, characters, and settings) and directions; author biographical details; character details (including names, gender, occupation, sexual orientation, and age) with links to the characters' scenes; and many more indexed elements.

[These] plays... pose complex questions about how audience members as well as characters are ethnicized and racialized, hailed into complex subject-positions by the actions of the plays.

– Josephine Lee, Performing Asian America

PUBLICATION DETAILS

Asian American Drama is available on the Web, either through one-time purchase of perpetual rights or through annual subscription. It contains 252 plays in full text. Libraries that purchase perpetual rights will also receive an archival copy of the data.

Editorial advisors include: Josephine D. Lee, University of Minnesota; Esther S. Kim, University of Illinois; Karen Shimakawa, University of California, Davis; James S. Moy, University of Wisconsin, Madison.

It's about time for this kind of collection on the web. I'm happy to participate. It's history making and groundbreaking...

– Elizabeth Wong, playwright

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