



FINDING THEATRE REVIEWS

Emerson Library - Webster University (Updated July 2006)

REFERENCE BOOKS

Reference books can be helpful for finding reviews of plays produced in the past. To locate a review, it is helpful to first know the year of the production. This can be determined by consulting [The Theatregoers Almanac](#) (REF PN 2266 .H53 1997), [The Oxford Companion to the American Theatre](#) (REF PN 2220 .B6 2004) or a similar reference book.

American Drama Criticism: Interpretations, 1890-1977

REF PS 332 .P3 1979

Index of criticism and interpretation of American plays published between 1890 and 1977. Updated by published supplements.

Salem, James M. [A Guide to Critical Reviews](#) Scarecrow Press: Metuchen, N.J., 1979.

REF PN 2266 .S16 1984

Three volumes list review sources in American and Canadian journals for American plays from 1909 to 1982, musicals from 1909 to 1989, and foreign plays from 1909 to 1977. Coverage includes Broadway, off-Broadway, and off-off-Broadway productions.

Part I: American Drama, 1909-1982

Part II: The Musical, 1909-1977

Foreign plays are covered in a separate volume:

Part III: Foreign Drama, 1909-1977 REF PN 2277.N5 1973

New York Theatre Critics Reviews REF PN 1601 .N4 1958-1994

This set of volumes contains reprinted reviews from a variety of newspapers and magazines for Broadway, Off-Broadway, and regional theatre. To locate reviews, check the index in the back of each volume.

Coverage of 1958 to 1994. This source changed its name to [National Theatre Critics Reviews](#) [REF PN 1601 .N4 1995-1996] offering national coverage of plays produced from 1995 to 1996. Unfortunately, this publication ceased with the 1996 edition.

New York Times Theater Reviews REF PN 1707 .N4

This set compiles the theater reviews that appeared in the New York Times. It also has a section with articles about award winning shows. Coverage: 1920-present.

Slide, Anthony. [Selected Theatre Criticism](#) Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1985-1986.

REF PN 2277 .N5 S44 1985

Volume 1: 1900-1919

Volume 2: 1920-1930

Volume 3: 1951-1950

Collects contemporary reviews, reprinted in their entirety on selected New York stage productions (dramas, comedies, musical, and revues). Selections are based the production's contemporary and historical importance. Reviews relate to original productions only with particularly notable revivals included.

PRINT PERIODICAL INDEXES

Print indexes are helpful for locating reviews of productions before 1980 that appeared in periodicals. Indexing for this time period (pre-1980) is not well covered in electronic databases.

Note: Reviews may be located under subject headings such as “Performance Reviews” or “Theater Reviews”. Some indexes may gather reviews under the name of the playwright. After using these indexes, check the online catalog to see if the library has the periodical title and volume that you need.

Humanities Index (INDEXES AI 3 .S61 H8 1974-)

Indexes journals in the humanities from 1974 to present.

Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature (INDEXES AI 3 .R48)

Indexes popular magazines from 1901 to the present.

Newspaper Indexes (Also available online via Passports):

New York Times Index (INDEXES D 410 .N4 1851-)

St. Louis Post-Dispatch Index (INDEXES AI 21 .W26 1980-)

Wall Street Journal Index (INDEXES AI 21 .W26 1980-)

WEB SITES FOR THEATRE REVIEWS

Here are a number of sites that provide reviews for currently running productions. These sites and other theatre interest sites are listed on the Passports “Theatre” page <http://library.webster.edu/theatre.html>

Aisle Say: The Internet Magazine of Stage Reviews and Opinion

<http://www.aislesay.com/>

Gives the text of theater reviews, as well as some book and recording reviews.

Backstage Online <http://www.backstage.com/>

Web version of the popular weekly for theater people with news, reviews, and job opportunities.

Curtain Up <http://www.curtainup.com/>

A theater magazine offering reviews, features, and annotated listings.

Playbill on-line <http://www.playbill.com/>

Commercial site with theatre listings for On & Off-Broadway, regional, touring, London, & summer stock. Useful for locating and acquiring tickets for productions worldwide.

New York Times Theater Reviews <http://www.nytimes.com/library/theater/>

Links to reviews from the New York Times for current Broadway and Off Broadway theater productions.

Variety.Com <http://www.variety.com/>

Online version of the trade publication covering the entertainment world. For reviews of theatre productions (Broadway, off-Broadway, and regional), follow the "Legit" link under Reviews. Subscribers have access to additional reviews.

PASSPORTS DATABASES

Click on Articles/ Databases on the library's **Passports** website: <http://library.webster.edu>

The following databases may help you locate theatre reviews that appeared in magazines, journals, or newspapers.

Academic Search Premier

This general periodical index covers all subject areas and may be useful for finding reviews that appeared in magazines or journals. Fulltext is available for many of the articles. Coverage: 1980-present.

Search tip: Search the name of the play/production possibly combining it with the playwright's or actor's last name. Select "Entertainment reviews" from the "Document Type" menu in the limit section of the search form.

Lexis Nexis Academic

This database has full-text for a number of national, regional and international newspapers. Years of coverage vary with publication. *The New York Times* is covered from June 1980 to present and *St Louis Post Dispatch*, from 1989 to present. (See search example on the following page.)

New York Times Historical

Offers full-page-images and article images from the *New York Times* from its first issue in 1851 to three years before the current date (for current New York Times articles, see the [Lexis-Nexis Academic](#) database). The collection includes digital reproductions of every page from every issue, cover to cover, in downloadable PDF files.

Wall Street Journal (a UMI ProQuest database) provides complete full text coverage of the world's leading economic news. Friday's edition offers theatre and film reviews. Coverage from Nov. 29, 1985 to present. (Note: Wall Street Journal is not covered in Lexis Nexis Academic.)

How to Search Lexis Nexis Academic to Locate Play Reviews

Lexis Nexis Academic provides full-text coverage of many national, regional, and international newspapers. It is a good source for play reviews that appeared in the *New York Times*, *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, *London Times* and other newspapers.

Connecting: Start at the library's **Passports** site: <http://library.webster.edu>
Follow the link to Articles/Databases. Select **Lexis Nexis Academic** from the Choose a database/provider menu or farther down on the page select "newspapers from the "General Multidisciplinary" group. Enter your ID number if requested.

Searching: Click on the "Guided News Search" tab on the main menu to display the guided search form.

1. Select the *Arts & Sports News* category from the news category menu.
2. Select *Book, movie, music & play reviews* from the news source menu.
3. Enter the name of the play in the search box. Set the corresponding box to search "**Headline and Lead Paragraph**" in order to locate articles that focus mainly on your play. You may need to enter the playwright or actor's name if the name of the play is short or a common word that may retrieve irrelevant search results.
4. Set date range to correspond with the run of the play
5. Set specific newspaper (optional) eg. *New York Times*

Run the search and view the results.

Sample search:

Quick News Search **Guided News Search** [Tips](#)

Step One: Select a news category -- Entry Required

Arts & Sports News

Step Two: Select a news source-- Entry Required

Book, movie, music, & play reviews [Source List](#)

Step Three: Enter search terms -- Entry Required

Laramie Project in **Headline, Lead Paragraph(s), Terms**

and Moises Kaufman in **Full Text**

and in **Headline, Lead Paragraph(s), Terms**

Step Four: Narrow to a specific date range -- Optional

Previous five years

From: To:

More



Finding additional newspaper articles on a play:

More articles may have been written about a play than the reviews that appear in the “**Arts**” section of the newspaper. If a play is controversial or has generated special interest and discussion, articles may appear in other sections of the paper. Try a search of the **General News** category (Step One option).

Click on **Edit Search** to return to the guided search form.

Click on **Clear Form**

Change your Step One and Step Two settings:



The image shows a web interface for a search tool. At the top, there are two tabs: "Quick News Search" and "Guided News Search". The "Guided News Search" tab is active. Below the tabs, there are two steps:

- Step One: Select a news category -- Entry Required**
A dropdown menu is set to "General News".
- Step Two: Select a news source-- Entry Required**
A dropdown menu is set to "Major Papers". To the right of this dropdown is a red link labeled "Source List".

1. Select **General News** (Step One)
2. Select **Major Papers** (Step Two)
(Additional option: Magazines and Journals)
3. You may need to narrow the search by adding an additional keyword (actor or playwright).
4. Consider date range limits or the specification of a particular publication (check the Sources link to see what publications are covered in the database file).