

Northwestern University Library Reference Department

How to Find a Play Review

Performances of plays are regularly reviewed in newspapers and magazines. These reviews are valuable sources of information about plays and their production. Criticism of plays as literature can also be of considerable value, but will not be included in this guide. All materials listed here are in the Reference Room unless otherwise specified.

COLLECTIONS OF REVIEWS

New York Theatre Critics Reviews. NY: Critics Theatre Review, 1940-1994. **L792.05 N567**

This publication contains the entire text of reviews of Broadway and off-Broadway plays, reprinted from the major newspapers and from magazines such as *Time* and *Newsweek*. An annual index by playwright, actor and producer is published. Continued by *National Theatre Critics' Reviews*, 1995-96. (No longer published).

On Stage: Selected Theater Reviews from the New York Times, 1920-1970. NY: Quadrangle, 1973. **792.9 B396o**

The reviews reprinted here can be located by a title and playwright index.

BIBLIOGRAPHIES

The texts of most reviews are not located in the Reference Room; often it will be necessary to consult a bibliography or index to find where a review is located in a particular magazine or newspaper. The bibliographies listed here provide extensive lists of reviews:

Salem, James M. *A Guide to Critical Reviews*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1966-1991. **016.8092 S163g**

Pt. I: American Drama, 1909-1982. Pt. II: The Musical, 1909-1989. Pt. III: British and Continental Drama, 1909-1977.

This work indexes reviews in general periodicals and newspapers, during time periods indicated. Reviews are listed under the name of the playwright; there are indexes by play title and by co-author.

New York Times Theater Review Index, 1870-1919. NY: New York Times and Arno Press, 1975. **792.9025 N5325**

Continued by:

The New York Times Directory of the Theater. NY: Arno Press, 1973. **L792.9025 N532**

This book indexes play reviews from the *New York Times* published between 1920 and 1970. Both this and the previous volume have a personal name index (by playwright, producer and actor) and a title index.

Samples, Gordon. *How to Locate Reviews of Plays and Films*. Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1976. **016.791 S192h**

This is helpful in locating additional sources for play reviews. Since it was published in 1976, it does not list recently published books.

International Bibliography of Theatre. Brooklyn: Theatre Research Center, 1982- . Annual. **L016.79205 I61**

Substantial bibliography. Reviews are listed under "Drama-performance/productions". but need to be found by searching under the title of the play in the subject index.

INDEXES AND ABSTRACTS

Electronic

Academic Universe. Dates of coverage vary; many titles date back to the mid-1980s.

<http://er.library.northwestern.edu/detail.asp?id=35389&pn=1>

Select the "News" section, then choose "Arts & Sports." Type in the name of the play or playwright (or both) on the Keyword line. Make certain the Source pull-down menu is set to "Book, movie, music & play reviews." Select a date range from the Date pull-down menu, or type in dates in the appropriate boxes. The reviews in this collection are taken from approximately 20 major U.S. and international newspapers.

Expanded Academic ASAP (also known as EXAC). Covers 1980 to the present.

<http://er.library.northwestern.edu/detail.asp?id=35303&pn=1>

Choose the Keyword Search option, and type the name of play and "theater reviews," e.g.:rent and theater reviews

Historical Newspapers Online. (Includes: *Palmer's Index to The Times* [London], 1790-1905; *The Official Index to The Times* [London], 1906-1980; and *The Historical Index to The New York Times*, 1863-1905.)

<http://er.library.northwestern.edu/detail.asp?id=41918&pn=1>

Search for the name of the play as keywords. Then look for headings such as "Drama" or "Dramas," "Theatrical Productions," or "Theatres &c."

Newspaper Abstracts. Covers 1989 to present.

<http://er.library.northwestern.edu/detail.asp?id=34436&pn=1>

Covers over 50 national and regional U.S. newspapers, including the *Chicago Tribune*. Select the Advanced Search option, and type the name of the play on the top line. On the same line, choose "Title" from the pull-down menu. Select "Performance Review" from the pull-down menu labeled "Record Type."

Readers' Guide Abstracts. Covers 1983 to the present.

<http://er.library.northwestern.edu/detail.asp?id=34474&pn=1>

Select the Advanced Search option, and type the name of the play on the top line. On the same line, choose "Title" from the pull-down menu. Select "Form Review" from the pull-down menu labeled "Record Type Phrase."

Web of Science. Covers 1982 to present. (Includes the *Arts & Humanities Citation Index*)

<http://er.library.northwestern.edu/detail.asp?id=34543&pn=1>

Select "Full Search." At the Full Search screen, select "All Years." Click on "General Search." Type the name of the play or playwright on the Topic line and select "Theater Review" from the list of document types at the bottom of the search screen.

Printed

Annual Magazine Subject Index. Boston: Boston Book Co., 1908-1949. **050 M18**

Each volume contains a separate section at the end, the "Dramatic Index," which was one of the best listings of play reviews in periodicals during the years when this was published.

Chicago Tribune Index. 1972- . Monthly. **L071 C532 Index**

Search under "Theater" in recent volumes, and under "Drama" or "Plays and Theatrical Reviews" in older volumes.

Humanities Index. Bronx, N.Y., H.W. Wilson Company. Monthly. 1974- . **016.1 H918 R28f (Index area, located in the Center Square, opposite side of the Encyclopedia shelves)**

Preceded by: *Social Sciences and Humanities Index*, 1965-1974. *International index*, 1907-1965. **(Same location)**

Select the volume covering the year of the production. A listing by title of all play reviews covered in the volume can be found under the heading "Theater Reviews" in recent volumes, "Dramas—Criticisms" in older volumes. Full citations are listed under the name of the playwright.

New York Times Index. 1851- . Monthly. **L071 N532 Index**

Play reviews are found under the heading "Theater" or in older volumes under "Theater—Reviews."

Readers' Guide to Periodical Literature. Minneapolis: H.W. Wilson, 1901- . **L050 R28f (Index area, located in the Center Square, opposite side of the Encyclopedia shelves)**

Select the volume covering the year of the production. A listing by title of all play reviews covered in the volume can be found under the heading "Dramas—Criticisms, plots, etc.—Single works." Full citations are listed under the name of the playwright.

The Times Index. Reading, England: Newspaper Archive Developments, 1785- . Monthly. **L072 T58 Index (volumes for 1980 to present in Reference; inquire about earlier volumes at the Reference Desk)**

This indexes the *Times* of London; look under "Theatre" in recent volumes. In older volumes, search under "Theatrical Productions" or "Drama."

You will also need to use NUCat, the online catalog, in order to find where periodicals and newspapers are located in the libraries. A separate handout, *How to Find a Periodical*, will help you use NUCat for this purpose. If you do not find the review you are looking for, please ask a reference librarian for assistance.

Last Revised: 1 June, 2001
