The recent rise in publications and professional productions of Native American plays moves Native theatre from specific, cultural communities into larger, more generalized audiences, who quickly discover that Native plays are uniquely different from mainstream drama. This is because Native theatre is its own field of drama, one that enacts Native intellectual traditions existing independently from Western drama yet capable of extending mainstream theatrical theories. This study contends that Native dramaturgy possesses a network of distinctive discourses pertaining to Native American philosophies and relating to theatre’s performative medium. Following an introduction that traces Native American theatre history from the 1900s to today, Native American Drama moves into a critical examination of Native dramaturgy. The study privileges voices of Native literary theorists, including Gerald Vizenor, Robert Allen Warrior, and LeAnne Howe, to introduce four Native discourses – platiality, storying, tribalography, and survivance – that intersect performative elements of space, speech, action, and movement. To demonstrate how these discourses address Native dramaturgy without reducing the multi-dimensionality of Native theatre, Stanlake applies them to Native plays, ranging from Lynn Riggs’ The Cherokee Night to Tomson Highway’s Ernestine Shuswap.

A leading scholar in the field of Native American theatre, Christy Stanlake approaches her work through a fusion of theory and practice. Her theoretical works in Native theatre have been published by Modern Drama and the Journal of Dramatic Theory and Criticism. She also guest-edited the recent Nations Speaking: Indigenous Performances Across the Americas and serves as an editorial advisor for the Alexander Street Press’ North American Indian Drama collection. Her artistic ventures include working as the dramaturg for JudyLee Oliva’s Te Ata world première, the first professional play produced by a Native nation, and directing the United States Naval Academy’s 101-year-old theatre program, the Masqueraders.
NATIVE AMERICAN DRAMA:
A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

CHRISTY STANLAKE
For two remarkable Oklahomans
Mother, who taught me our state’s history
&
JudyLee, who taught me to see new trails
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3. Production photograph of Cheri Maracle and Lisa Ravensbergen from Western Canada Theatre’s production of *Ernestine Shuswap Gets Her Trout*. Photograph by Murray Mitchell.  
5. Production photograph from NATE’s production of *Foghorn*. Photograph by Chris Spotted Eagle, courtesy of Hanay Geiogamah.  
6. Photograph of Marie Clements as Rosemarie/Jane Russell from *Urban Tattoo*. Photograph by Teri Snelgrove, courtesy of Marie Clements.

Cover photograph: DeLanna Studi as Young Te Ata in JudyLee Oliva’s *Te Ata* world première, 2006. Photograph by Rex Knowles, courtesy of Knowles and USAO Archives.
Creating this book has been a journey and, as on any meaningful journey, there have been many people and organizations who have touched my life and guided me along the way…

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x

Acknowledgments

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**Abbreviations**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>AIM</td>
<td>American Indian Movement</td>
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<td>BIA</td>
<td>Bureau of Indian Affairs</td>
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<td>HOOP</td>
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<td>Theatre Communications Group</td>
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