Plays by
Susan Glaspell

TRIFLES
THE OUTSIDE
THE VERGE
INHERITORS

Edited with an introduction by
C. W. E. Bigsby

Additional textual notes by Christine Dymkowski
GENERAL EDITORS’ PREFACE

It is the primary aim of this series to make available to the British and American theatre plays which were effective in their own time, and which are good enough to be effective still.

Each volume assembles a number of plays, normally by a single author, scrupulously edited but sparingly annotated. Textual variations are recorded where individual editors have found them either essential or interesting. Introductions give an account of the theatrical context, and locate playwrights and plays within it. Biographical and chronological tables, brief bibliographies, and the complete listing of known plays provide information useful in itself, and which also offers guidance and incentive to further exploration.

Many of the plays published in this series have appeared in modern anthologies. Such representation is scarcely distinguishable from anonymity. We have relished the tendency of individual editors to make claims for the dramatists of whom they write. These are not plays best forgotten. They are plays best remembered. If the series is a contribution to theatre history, that is well and good. If it is a contribution to the continuing life of the theatre, that is well and better.

We have been lucky. The Cambridge University Press has supported the venture beyond our legitimate expectations. Acknowledgement is not, in this case, perfunctory. Sarah Stanton’s contribution to the series has been substantial, and it has enhanced our work. Later volumes in the series have benefited from the care and attention of Kevin Taylor.

Martin Banham
Peter Thomson
Susan Glaspell (1938, courtesy of the Theatre Arts Library, Harry Ransom Humanities Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin)
BRITISH AND AMERICAN PLAYWRIGHTS
1750–1920

*General editors:* Martin Banham and Peter Thomson

**Susan Glaspell**

A co-founder of the Provincetown Players – the group which acted as midwife to the American theatre – Susan Glaspell (1876–1948) can also lay claim to be a major figure in her own right. Her early plays were in many respects as challenging and original as those with which O’Neill made his debut. Her concern with language as subject, with character as an expression of social role, with plot as a mechanism which may ensnare rather than locate the self, made her very much a modern. In *Trifles* (1916) she developed a feminist critique of social role. In *The Outside* (1917) she staged a debate between the life force and a perverse celebration of death. In both plays silence becomes an eloquent expression of meaning. *The Verge* (1921) is an experimental work of considerable proportions, more daring in many ways than anything attempted by O’Neill. And though *Inheritors* (1921) is far more conventional it touched a contemporary nerve, questioning the nature and reality of American pieties.

Long known only for a single play, Susan Glaspell now emerges as a significant figure in the history of American drama, a woman of genuine creative daring.
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