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978-0-521-51980-9 - Native American Drama: A Critical Perspective

Christy Stanlake

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## NATIVE AMERICAN DRAMA

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 – plativity, 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.

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CHRISTY STANLAKE



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*For two remarkable Oklahomans*  
*Mother, who taught me our state's history*  
*‡*  
*JudyLee, who taught me to see new trails*

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## *Abbreviations*

AIM	American Indian Movement
AITE	American Indian Theater Ensemble
BC	British Columbia
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
HOOP	Honoring Our Origins and People
IAIA	Institute of American Indian Arts
NATE	Native American Theater Ensemble
NAWPA	Native American Women Playwrights Archive
NMAI	National Museum of the American Indian
OSU	Ohio State University
TCG	Theatre Communications Group
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles