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Brent S. Salter  
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**NEGOTIATING COPYRIGHT IN THE AMERICAN THEATRE:  
1856–1951**

Drawing on fascinating archival discoveries from the past two centuries, Brent Salter shows how copyright has been negotiated in the American theatre. Who controls the space between authors and audiences? Does copyright law actually protect playwrights and help them make a living? At the center of these negotiations are mediating businesses with extraordinary power that rapidly evolved from the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries: agents, publishers, producers, labor associations, administrators, accountants, lawyers, government bureaucrats, and film studio executives. As these mediators asserted authority over creativity, writers organized in response, through collective minimum contracts, informal guild expectations, and professional norms, to protect their presumed rights as authors. This institutional, relational, legal, and business history of the entertainment history in America illuminates both the historical context and the present law. An innovative new kind of intellectual property history, the book maps the relations between the different players from the ground up.

Brent Salter is a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Stanford Center for Law and History, Stanford Law School. His research focuses on legal and business histories of creative communities, intellectual property history, histories of labor organization in creative industries, contemporary and historical issues in arts policy.

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# Negotiating Copyright in the American Theatre: 1856–1951

**BRENT SALTER**

Stanford Law School



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