

# Documents From The American Laboratory Theatre: A Treasure Trove of Early American Drama

*Imagination is allowed full play at the American Laboratory Theatre. In "The Straw Hat" (above) and "Much Ado About Nothing" (below) the costumes and scenes, designed and created in the Workshop, won favorable comment from leading critics.*



The American Laboratory Theatre, founded in 1923 by Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, was a groundbreaking theatre company that played a pivotal role in the development of American drama and acting. The company's archives, now housed at the Billy Rose Theatre Division of The New York Public Library for the Performing Arts, offer a fascinating glimpse into the early years of the American theatre movement.

## The Founding of the American Laboratory Theatre

The American Laboratory Theatre was founded in 1923 by Richard Boleslavsky and Maria Ouspenskaya, two Russian émigrés who had been trained in the Stanislavski system of acting. Boleslavsky and Ouspenskaya believed that the American theatre needed a new approach to acting and directing, one that would focus on the inner life of the character and the development of a realistic and naturalistic style of performance.



## Acting: The First Six Lessons: Documents from the American Laboratory Theatre by Oscar Browning

★★★★☆ 4.5 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 372 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Screen Reader	: Supported
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 234 pages
Paperback	: 46 pages
Item Weight	: 4.8 ounces
Dimensions	: 8.5 x 0.11 x 11 inches



The American Laboratory Theatre's first production was Chekhov's *The Seagull*, which opened in New York City in 1923. The production was a critical and commercial success, and it helped to establish the company's reputation as one of the most innovative and exciting theatre companies in America.

### The American Laboratory Theatre's Mission

The American Laboratory Theatre's mission was to develop a new generation of American actors and directors who would be able to bring a

fresh and vital approach to the stage. The company's training program was rigorous and demanding, and it emphasized the importance of character development, improvisation, and ensemble work.

The American Laboratory Theatre also played an important role in the development of new American plays. The company produced several world premieres, including Eugene O'Neill's *The Emperor Jones* and Elmer Rice's *The Adding Machine*.

### **The American Laboratory Theatre's Legacy**

The American Laboratory Theatre closed in 1933, but its legacy continues to influence American theatre today. Many of the company's alumni went on to become successful actors, directors, and teachers. The company's training methods and artistic principles have also been adopted by countless other theatre companies.

The American Laboratory Theatre was a groundbreaking theatre company that played a pivotal role in the development of American drama and acting. The company's archives are a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of the American theatre.

### **The Documents**

The American Laboratory Theatre archives include a wide range of materials, including photographs, playbills, programs, scripts, correspondence, and financial records. The collection provides a unique and comprehensive look at the company's history and its impact on the American theatre.

Some of the highlights of the collection include:

- Photographs of the company's productions, actors, and directors
- Playbills and programs from the company's performances
- Scripts of the company's productions, including many world premieres
- Correspondence between the company's directors, actors, and staff
- Financial records that document the company's operations

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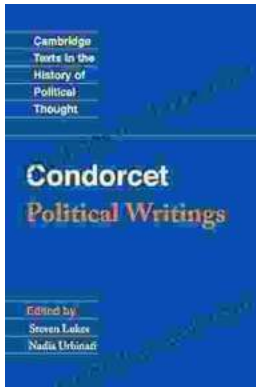
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