

Topic Page: [Belasco, David, 1853–1931](#)

Definition: **Belasco** from *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate(R) Dictionary*

 [pronunciation](#)

David Belasco 1853–1931 Am. dram. & producer

Summary Article: **Belasco, David**

From *The Columbia Encyclopedia*

(bəˈlāsˈkō), 1853–1931, American theatrical manager and producer, b. San Francisco. He was actively connected with the theater from his youth, and while associated with Dion Boucicault in Virginia City, Nev., he was first exposed to scenic realism. At 19 he became stage manager of the Baldwin Theatre in San Francisco. His first venture as a playwright was when, in 1880, in association with James A. Herne, he toured the country in *Hearts of Oak*, a play adapted by them from an old melodrama. Connections with the Frohmans brought him to New York City in association (1882–84) with the Madison Square Theatre and later (1886–90) as stage manager of the Lyceum. He became an independent producer in 1895. Known for his minutely detailed and spectacular stage settings, Belasco showed inventiveness in his use of stage lighting. A creator of stars, he was lucratively associated with Mrs. Leslie Carter, David Warfield, Blanche Bates, Frances Starr, Ina Claire, and Lenore Ulric. His plays, mostly adaptations, were vehicles for his actors and for his lavish settings. His most successful writing combinations were with Herne, Franklyn Fyles, Henry C. De Mille, and John Luther Long. In 1907 he built the Stuyvesant Theater, later known as the Belasco, during his fight against the Theatrical Syndicate of the 1890s. The New York Public Library has his collection of theatrical materials. He wrote *The Theatre through Its Stage Door* (1919, repr. 1969).

See his plays, ed. by R. H. Ball (1940, repr. 1965);
biography by W. Winter (2 vol., 3d ed. 1925, repr. 1972).

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