

Mrs. Leslie Carter: Biography of the First American Stage Star of the Twentieth Century

Craig Clinton



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Born Caroline Louise Dudley, Mrs. Leslie Carter was destined to become one of America's principal turnof-the century actresses. In 1889, a high profile divorce case labeled her an adulteress and sent her to the
brink of poverty. With characteristic resilience, however, Mrs. Carter used infamy to her advantage.

Retaining her married name as an act of revenge against her ex-husband, she approached David Belasco, one
of the foremost playwright/directors of the day, and persuaded him to teach her the art of acting. So began
one of theatre's most prolific partnerships. Not only did Belasco become Mrs. Carter's acting coach, he
composed plays specifically as vehicles to showcase her particular talents. Although their relationship
ruptured in 1906, Mrs. Carter continued to enjoy international renown. Weathering the changing times and
methods of the early twentieth century, she persevered through stage, silent movies and vaudeville shows.

This biography focuses particularly on Mrs. Carter's successful career and on her professional partnership
with David Belasco. Spanning a period of radical transformation in American theatre, her career
reflected—and endured—the artistic changes which occurred during the decades on either side of the century
mark. Period photographs and theatrical art are included.

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