

PAL: Perspectives in American Literature - A Research and Reference Guide - An Ongoing Project

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Chapter 8: Paul Eliot Green (1894-1981)

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Primary Works

Salvation on a String, 1924 (short stories); *In Abraham's Bosom*, 1927 (Pulitzer Prize); *Potter's Field: A Symphonic Play of the Negro People*, ?; *The Lost Colony*, 1937; *The Southern Cross*, 1938; *Out of the South*, 1939 (collection); *A Start in the Life*, 1940; *The Common Glory*, 1947; *Stephen Foster*, 1959; *Texas*, 1966; *Trumpet in the Land*, 1970.

Green, Paul. *Lonesome road; six plays for the negro theatre*. NY: R. M. McBride & Company, 1926. PN6120.N4 G7

Selected Bibliography

Avery, Laurence G. ed. *A Paul Green Reader*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1998.

Roper, John H. *Paul Green: Playwright of the Real South*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2003.
Paul Green (1894-1981): A Brief Biography

A Student Project by Erin Bright

Paul Green was born March 17, 1894 in Lillington, North Carolina. He married Elizabeth Lay, the daughter of a reverend. She would eventually prove to be another promising author in the Playmakers.

He called for an indigenous Negro theater in the early 1920s which helped pave the way for the emergence of the professional Negro as both an actor and a cultural spokesman for his cultural heritage.

He was a member of the National Institute of Arts and Letters and a Library of Congress Consultant. He had also received countless honors and awards.

According to Vincent Kenny in *Paul Green*, Paul Green's plays have been seen by more men, women, and children than have all the works of Arthur Miller and Edward Albee. Despite these facts, he is still a virtually unknown playwright.

Many believe that there are two reasons for his virtual obscurity from the public. The first reason is that he rejected the commercial theater and that he only relied on the outdoor drama. The second reason was his subject matter: he used unpopular themes that people could not easily relate to in his heroes.

All of Green's work fit into three categories:

1. The bitter lot of the white tenant farmer
2. The plight of the black man in his fight with the soil and society
3. Emphasis on Symphonic Drama (which began in 1937 with *The Lost Colony*)

Paul's first published work came out in 1924: *Salvation on a String*, a collection of short stories. He won the Pulitzer Prize for *In Abraham's Bosom* in 1927. He completed his first music drama *Potter's Field: A Symphonic Play of the Negro People*. He reached a turning point in his career in 1937 with *The Lost Colony*, a play that used symphonic drama. All of plays after this would use symphonic drama.

Wrote numerous one-act plays such as *Out of the South*, a collection of nine one-act plays and several complete plays (1939), *The Southern Cross* (1938), and *A Start in the Life* (a play for radio) (1941).

He wrote eleven symphonic dramas including *The Common Glory* (1947), *Stephen Foster* (1959), (1966), and his final symphonic drama in 1970 *Trumpet in the Land*.

Wrote the screen version of John Howard Griffin's *Black Like Me* in 1964.

He was awarded the Albert Schweitzer Medal for Artistry in 1987 and inducted in the Theater Hall of Fame in 1993.

Paul Green died in May, 1981 at the age of 87.

Sources

Kenny, Vincent S. *Paul Green*. Twayne Publishers, Inc. New York, NY. 1971

Paul Green Link. <http://www.csustan.edu/english/reuben/pal/chap8/8intro.html>. March 1, 1998

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