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The journey of writing *Murder Most Queer* began during my gay adolescence in the 1980s, which coincided with the emergence of the AIDS crisis and the rise to power of conservative movements that vilified queer people. Throughout my teens and twenties, my anxiety and anger over these circumstances found expression in the political rage of LGBT activism, the robust rebellion of the queer punk subculture, the shimmering darkness of queer goths and new romantics, the vibrant violence and passion of gay novels by authors ranging from James Baldwin to Dennis Cooper, the ironic nihilism of New Queer Cinema—and the surprising number of homicidal homosexuals I found flourishing onstage in the American theater. I continued to stalk these characters into the twenty-first century because I found them beautiful and horrible, abject and empowered, ridiculous and profound, virtuous and sinister. The contradictions and ambiguities intrigued me, and at times frightened me, and this book is the result of my need to peer into the darkness and wrestle with the monstrous and the marvelous.

Many mentors, colleagues, and friends have aided me in my work on *Murder Most Queer*, and I’m especially grateful to professors David Savran, Judith Milhous, and Alisa Solomon, who guided this project through its initial incarnation as a dissertation at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. The CUNY Graduate Center provided an excellent home for those of us working at the intersection of theater studies and queer studies, and I consider myself fortunate to have also studied with Jill Dolan and Marvin Carlson, as well as the late George Custen and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick. The Vera Roberts Dissertation Award, generously endowed by Professor Roberts, offered crucial financial support during the dissertation process. My fellow students at the Graduate Center were
constantly engaged in the exchange of ideas and perspectives, and being part of this community of emerging scholars was crucial to the creation of this book. The Graduate Center is also the home of the Center for Lesbian and Gay Studies (CLAGS), where I had the good fortune to work for many years under the directorships of Jill Dolan, Alisa Solomon, and Paisley Currah. In addition to much-needed support from the Monette-Horowitz Dissertation Award, CLAGS also offered me a vital home in the field of queer studies, invaluable mentorship and scholarly opportunities, and an incomparable team of coworkers and comrades, including Preston Bautista, Rachel Cohen, Heidi Coleman, Sara Ganter, Claudia Moreno Parsons, and Lavelle Porter.

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Many of my thoughts about the theater in general and queer killers in particular were explored in the vibrant exchange of ideas that occurs in the classroom, and this work would not have been possible without the intelligence, creativity, and engagement of all those who have been my students. I’m much obliged to the colleagues who gave me the opportunity to create and teach courses in theater history and dramatic literature during
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This book is dedicated with love to my partner in crime, David Zellnik.