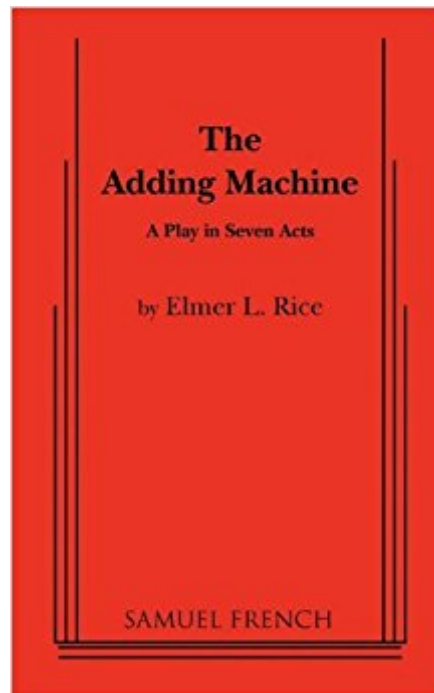




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# **The Adding Machine: A Play In Seven Acts (Samuel French Acting Editions)**



## Synopsis

Drama Characters: 14 male, 9 female 5 interior scenes and 2 exterior scenes This constantly interesting play shows in outline the life history and, in its later scenes, the death history of Mr. Zero, a cog in the vast machine of modern business.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I saw this play at college and liked it, went by the book exactly pretty good for being my first ever play to see

I really enjoyed reading this play.

I cannot write a review. I thought it was a novel.. I read a book by that title decades ago, and I thought to re-read it. I assume the error is mine. I will probably try to read it in this form.

This book was purchased for a class i am currently taking and it will be used for that purpose only.

The Adding Machine was first produced on stage in 1923 and Elmer Rice wrote the Pulitzer Prize for "Street Scene". The Adding Machine is an eye opening take on the soul of a man, who for 25 years adds up figures in the sales department, never missed a day of work and gets canned for

technology, an adding machine. The play is a satirical take on corporation, the evolution of man as the slave, and the afterlife. The man and his family or acquaintances are known as numbers, and this man, Mr. Zero, named for the bottom of the work chain. He is married to Mrs. Zero, a nag who is belittling, degrading and clearly in dismay with his demeaning status or lack of ambition. It begins with Mr. Zero, who does nothing but add figures all day; and imagines his boss giving him a raise. He works across from Miss Devore, who dreams of loving him. They carry on one-sided conversations with each other. Mr. Zero degrades and disrespects her while she wishes she were dead without him. He doesn't get the raise, but gets canned, and he goes "postal" and kills the boss. From there, the scenes change from the office to the jail, where he is the subject of a tour group as an animal in a cage. Executed, we next see him in the graveyard where he meets Shrdlu, who killed his mother. Together they expect the worst as sinners in hell, but are somehow transformed to a place like heaven, the Elysian Fields considered the final resting place of the souls of the heroic and the virtuous. Mr. Zero then encounters Miss Devore, his workmate, who "blew out the gas" after he died. It is the end, where we learn through insightful dialogue the evolution of man as the slave in the corporate world. Interesting!....Rizzo. NOTE:!!! The original play has 8 scenes, and what has been excluded from some performances is the Jail Scene.

When properly rendered, Rice's "The Adding Machine" is a powerful, weird, surreal experience. But notice that this edition is subtitled "A Play in Seven Acts". In the original script, there were eight acts (or "scenes", really), but the original Scene V was cut to streamline the production (in 1923). When they revived the play in 1956, Rice revised and restored Scene V, and this is, in my opinion, the way it should be read. You'll find the complete 8-scene script in "Elmer Rice: Three Plays: The Adding Machine, Street Scene and Dream Girl", which is also here on (ISBN 0809007355). But, really, you need to see the play before you read the text, if you possibly can. They filmed a movie version of it in 1969 (which I haven't seen), starring the inimitable Phyllis Diller playing Mrs. Zero. Leonard Maltin described this effort as "flawed but interesting," giving it two and a half stars out of four. So keep your eyes open for a dramatic or cinematic revival. Etaoin Shrdlu will thank you!

The Adding Machine by Elmer Rice is regarded by many as the first play to bring German expressionism to the American theatre. The story follows the emotional struggle of the characters rather than the plot (in fact most of the major events of the play occur off stage) until he wrote The Adding Machine. Rice was a master of the melodrama, but The Adding Machine's distinctively modern feel and disturbing message set it apart from his other plays. It includes a eerie dinner scene

where six identical couples speak a hyper active version of small talk. this play exposes common place vulgarities and everyday injustice.

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