

# Black Drama

## African, African American, and Diaspora

*Black Drama* (second edition) contains the full text of approximately 1,450 plays written from the mid-1800s to the present by 250 playwrights from North America, English-speaking Africa, the Caribbean, and other African Diaspora countries. Many of the works are rare, hard to find, or out of print. James Vernon Hatch, the playwright, historian, and curator of the landmark Hatch-Billops Collection, is the project's editorial advisor. Nearly a quarter of the collection will consist of previously unpublished plays by writers such as Langston Hughes, Ed Bullins, Willis Richardson, Amiri Baraka, Randolph Edmonds, Zora Neale Hurston, and many others.

Each play is extensively and deeply indexed, allowing both keyword and multi-fielded searching. The plays are accompanied by reference materials, significant ancillary information, a rich performance database, and images. The result is an exceptionally deep and unified collection that illustrates the many purposes that black theater has served: to give testimony to the ancient foundations of black culture; to protest injustices; to project emerging images of the New Black; and to give voice to the many and varied expressions of black creativity.

*ALA Choice* listed *Black Drama* as “essential.” *Library Journal* said that the collection is “highly recommended for all libraries.” *Booklist* called the database “nearly flawless.”

### American writers

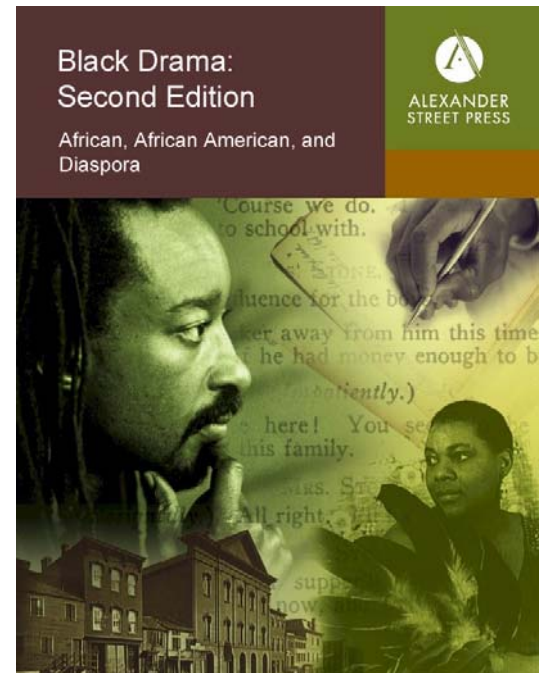
The works from early 20th-century America include key writings of the Harlem Renaissance, works performed for the Federal Theatre Project, and plays by critically acclaimed dramatists through the 1940s.

Included are the plays of Langston Hughes, Paul Laurence Dunbar, Zora Neale Hurston, Ira Aldridge, Shirley Graham, W.E.B. Du Bois, Randolph Edmonds, Georgia Douglas Johnson, May Miller, Willis Richardson, Eulalie Spence, and many others. The plays address a wide range of struggles and triumphs, including migration to Northern cities, mothers keeping families together, exploitation by white land owners, interracial unity, racial violence, civil rights activism, and the black war hero.

American works from the later twentieth century cover the Black Arts movement of the sixties and seventies, works performed by the Black Arts Repertory Theatre/School (BARTS), The Negro Ensemble Company, and other companies. The collection includes plays by Amiri Baraka, James Baldwin, Ossie Davis, Charles Fuller, Ron Milner, Adrienne Kennedy, Anna Deavere Smith, Alice Childress, Charles Smith, Dael Orlandersmith, Ntozake Shange, Melvin Van Peebles, Joseph Walker, Richard Wesley, and August Wilson, to name a few. The plays explore themes including civil rights, desegregation, and a wide range of ideologies—integrationist and separatist, revolutionary and nationalist.

*The plays of a real Negro theatre must be: 1. About us. That is they must have plots which reveal real Negro life as it is. 2. By us. That is they must be written by Negro authors who understand from birth and continual association just what it means to be a Negro today. 3. For us. That is, the theatre must cater primarily to Negro audiences and be supported and sustained by their entertainment and approval. 4. Near us. The theatre must be in a Negro neighborhood near the mass of ordinary Negro people.*

W.E.B. Du Bois, “Krigwa Players Little Negro Theatre,” in *The Crisis*, v.32, July 1926



## The African Diaspora

African and Caribbean drama is represented by a wide collection of plays from Ghana, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Nigeria, Kenya, South Africa, the West Indies, the United Kingdom, and other parts of the world. It includes works by writers such as David Edgecombe, Bode Sewande, Ngugi wa Thiong'o , Femi Osofisan, Zakes Mda, John Ruganda, Dennis Scott, Zulu Sofola, Paul Boakye, Errol John, Fatima Dike, Clifford Sealy, Joe de Graft, Richard Rive, Bole Butake, Matsemela Manaka, Errol Hill, and Derrick Walcott. The plays deal with the social and political ills stemming from colonialism, slavery, and apartheid; the struggle for independence; African history; and neocolonialism. Of particular interest is material written as "Township Theatre" in South Africa under apartheid and during the development of black grassroots urban theatre.

## Alexander Street's *Semantic Indexing*

Using nine tables of contents, users can browse by plays, authors, characters, theaters, productions, companies, media resources (posters, playbills, articles, etc.), subjects, and years. Full-text searching for keywords and phrases can be further limited using fields for the author's gender, age when writing, race, ethnicity, and nationality; the play's title, year published, year written, first year produced, original language, name of work adapted from, number of characters, number of scenes, number of acts; the performer's name; the character's name, occupation, gender, sexual orientation, race; and more.

*Semantic Indexing™* lets users answer questions that are otherwise impossible to ask. Queries like these are easy to answer with just a click or two:

- Give me all scenes that discuss single parents in plays written by South Africans.
- What plays written in the '60s and '70s address the subject of desegregation and include a character who is a white politician?
- Show me the cast for the first production of James Baldwin's *The Amen Corner*.
- Show me playbills from plays representing the Harlem Renaissance.
- Show me all plays produced in New York in which Ossie Davis starred.

## Publication details

*Black Drama* is available on the Web, either through one-time purchase of perpetual rights or through annual subscription. It contains the full text of approximately 1,450 plays, along with associated visual resources. We consulted several important bibliographies in creating the database, and content selection is under the further guidance of our editors and advisors, including James Vernon Hatch. The collection's unpublished portion has evolved mostly under the direction of the living playwrights themselves.

The database was initially released in 2002. In 2008, the second edition was released, with 250 additional plays and 50 newly added playwrights, including rare and hard to find diaspora materials and other items available only through this database.

