

BLACK DRAMA: THIRD EDITION

AFRICAN, AFRICAN AMERICAN, AND DIASPORA



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Black Drama

Black Drama, now in its expanded third edition, contains the full text of more than 1,700 plays written from the mid-1800s to the present by more than 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. Over 40% of the collection consists of previously unpublished plays by writers such as Langston Hughes, Ed Bullins, Willis Richardson, Amiri Baraka, Randolph Edmonds, Zora Neale Hurston, and many others.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.

The works from early twentieth-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 (LeRoi Jones), 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.

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.

Publication details

Black Drama contains the full text of more than 1,700 plays, along with associated visual resources. We consulted several important bibliographies in creating the collection, and the collection's unpublished portion has evolved mostly under the direction of the living playwrights themselves.