Decolonizing the Stage
Christopher B. Balme

This book is a major study devoted to post-colonial drama and theatre. It examines the way dramatists and directors from various countries and societies have attempted to fuse the performance idioms of their indigenous traditions with the Western dramatic form. These experiments are termed ‘syncretic theatre’. The study provides a theoretically sophisticated, cross-cultural comparative approach to a wide number of writers, regions, and theatre movements, ranging from Maori, Aboriginal, and Native American theatre to Township theatre in South Africa. Writers studied include Nobel Prize-winning authors such as Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, and Rabindranath Tagore, along with others such as Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Jack Davis, Girish Karnad, and Tomson Highway. This book demonstrates how the dynamics of syncretic theatrical texts function in performance. It combines cultural semiotics with performance analysis to provide an important contribution to the growing field of post-colonial drama and intercultural performance.

Irving Berlin's American Musical Theater
Jeffrey Magee

“The mob is always right” was the idea that charged Irving Berlin’s career in American popular music. Taking off from that claim, this book represents a wide-ranging exploration of America’s greatest songwriter and his role in creating twentieth-century musical theater. Drawing on past scholarly efforts and a vast store of recently released archival material, the book strives to break new ground in focusing on Irving Berlin’s half-century of work for the Broadway stage—a career that tracks
the development of American musical theater itself. The book traces a fundamental paradigm shift from early twentieth-century values of variety entertainment, manifested in Berlin’s revues and revue-like comedies, to an increasing emphasis on coherent, well-crafted scripts for musical comedy, in which songs were more thoroughly integrated into the plot. Throughout, Berlin maintained a unique balance by fitting musical numbers tightly to their show contexts, and addressing their historical moment, while preserving their integrity as individual songs that could have their own lives in the musical marketplace as jazz and cabaret standards, and as popular classics whose sheet music enjoyed pride of place in the piano benches of American homes. Like Berlin’s songs and shows, the book is designed for a wide readership of musical theater aficionados as well as serious students of music, drama, and popular culture—and anyone interested in the story of a poor immigrant boy whose life and work expressed so well the American dream.

From the Margins to Center Stage: Tyler Perry’s Popular African American Theatre

Rashida Z. Shaw

in From Madea to Media Mogul: Theorizing Tyler Perry

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DOI: 10.14325/

If Perry now functions as a platform onto himself, his career began with seemingly much less broad, but no less significant, aspirations. In her analysis of taste, class, and the popular, in Chapter Two Rashida D. Shaw places Tyler Perry’s career within the context of a Black performance and theatre history that extends back to the nineteenth century, as she centralizes the history of the “Chitlin Circuit” or “Urban Theatre.” After establishing a literary cultural history that frames and restages the popularity, appeal, and reception of Perry’s plays, Shaw’s analysis more closely explores the ramifications of Perry’s behind-the-scenes role and onstage presence at the 2012 Tony Awards during a year that resulted in numerous historic successes for not only African American theatre-makers, but also for African American-centric productions in general.
Chapter 1 examines efforts to stage versions of Greek tragedy on the American professional stage from the nineteenth century to 1931. Colleges and universities and a developing outdoor theater movement set the stage for the first successful professional productions of the Greek tragedy in translation in the 1910s and 1920s. Figures such as the H. Granville Barker, Katherine Tingley of the American Theosophical Society, the noted actress/producer Margaret Anglin, Maurice Browne and Ellen van Volkenberg of the Chicago Little Theatre, George Cram Cook and his Provincetown Players, and Eugene O'Neill turned to Greek tragedy to develop and promote serious poetic drama in the United States and to develop aesthetically innovative interpretations of the Greek originals.

Extended Voice
Eric Salzman and Thomas Desi
in The New Music Theater: Seeing the Voice, Hearing the Body

This chapter discusses Roy Hart, the Roy Hart Theater, and the roots of extended vocalism; widening of vocal range and inclusion of non-traditional vocal sounds and techniques; the American monologists; Meredith Monk, her techniques, vocal esthetic, and music-theater works; other well-known performers; and Quog Music Theater and the American Music Theater Festival.

Enter Sentimentality
David Monod
in The Soul of Pleasure: Sentiment and Sensation in Nineteenth-Century American Mass Entertainment

Page 3 of 11
This chapter explains why running an American theatre was a risky business in the first decades of the nineteenth century. According to a German tourist in 1837, “the fault lies not so much with the managers as with the public itself. The Americans are not fond of any kind of public amusement...their evenings are either spent at home or with a few of their friends, in a manner as private as possible.” Two conditions had to be met for the theatre to place itself on a firm footing. First, the cultural space for its development had to open, and this required a shift in values and tastes. Second, theatre professionals needed to occupy that space and find ways of enlarging it.

**Swing Along**

Marva Carter

Published in print: 2008 Published Online: January 2010


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Renowned today as a prominent African-American in music theater and the arts community, composer, conductor, and violinist Will Marion Cook was a key figure in the development of American music from the 1890s to the 1920s. This book looks at his life’s story, drawing on his unfinished autobiography and his wife Abbie’s memoir. A violin virtuoso, Cook studied at Oberlin College (his parents’ alma mater), Berlin’s Hochschule für Musik with Joseph Joachim, and New York’s national Conservatory of Music with Antonín Dvořák. Cook wrote music for a now-lost production of Uncle Tom’s Cabin for the Chicago World’s Fair of 1893, and then devoted the majority of his career to black musical comedies due to limited opportunities available to him as a black composer. He was instrumental in showcasing his Southern Syncopated Orchestra in the prominent concert halls of the United States and Europe, even featuring New Orleans clarinetist Sidney Bechet, who later introduced European audiences to authentic blues. Once mentored by Frederick Douglas, Will Marion Cook went on to mentor Duke Ellington, paving the path for orchestral concert jazz. Through interpretive and musical analyses, the book traces Cook’s successful evolution from minstrelsy to musical theater. Written with his collaborator, the distinguished poet Paul Lawrence Dunbar, Cook’s musicals infused American musical theater with African-American music, consequently altering the direction of American popular music. Cook’s In Dahomey was the first full-length Broadway musical to be written and performed by blacks. Alongside his accomplishments, Cook’s contentious side is revealed—a man known for his aggressiveness, pride, and constant quarrels, he became his
own worst enemy in regards to his career. The book also sets Cook’s life against the backdrop of the changing cultural and social milieu: the black theatrical tradition, white audiences’ reaction to black performers, and the growing consciousness and sophistication of blacks in the arts, especially music.

Setting the Stage
Craig R. Prentiss

in Staging Faith: Religion and African American Theater from the Harlem Renaissance to World War II

Published in print: 2013 Published Online: March 2016
Item type: chapter

This chapter narrates how black playwrights in the 1920s inherited the history of tensions between theater and church, as well as the bridges opened to theater by progressive congregations. However, the scripts they wrote reflected a range of social forces, including the changing class dynamics within the broader African American community; and nothing influenced these dynamics as profoundly as the Great Migration. The massive flow of southern blacks into northern cities permanently altered the course of both artistic and religious life among African Americans. Making sense of how religion was portrayed in early twentieth-century African American theater thus requires familiarity with the class relations affecting the lives of black playwrights, the state of theatrical development within the African American community, and the important religious movements during this era.

Black Feminist Performance
Macelle Mahala

in Penumbra: The Premier Stage for African American Drama

Published in print: 2013 Published Online: August 2015
Item type: chapter

Chapter five recognizes the practice of black feminist performance at Penumbra during the nineteen nineties and early two thousands, concentrating specifically on the work of Rebecca Rice, Laurie Carlos, and Robbie McCauley.
Other Dances
Thomas F. DeFrantz

This chapter examines the non-modern dance choreographed by Alvin Ailey. Though better known as a modern dance choreographer, Ailey created several dance pieces for ballet companies, and in doing so he broke through the conventional distinctions between American modern dance and ballet. Some of his most notable ballet works include Feast of Ashes for the Robert Joffrey Ballet and The River and Sea Change for the American Ballet Theater.

Later Dances
Thomas F. DeFrantz

This chapter examines developments in the career of Alvin Ailey during the 1970s. Ailey's choreographic output slowed considerably after the Ellington festival and he made no new dances for his company or any other for two years. Despite this, Ailey's enterprise continued to expand and his Alvin Ailey Dance Theater continued to tour extensively and represent the US as an effective cultural ambassador on overseas tour including in Japan and the Philippines in 1977. A book celebrating the two-year accomplishments of his company, titled The Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater, was published with text by Joseph H. Mazo and photographs by Susan Cook.

Itō Michio’s Hawk Tours in Modern Dance and Theater
Carrie J. Preston

This chapter examines Itō Michio’s tours in modern dance and theater, focusing on his innovative and influential work in the field.
Ito took *At the Hawk’s Well* on an international tour that introduced modernist noh to the U.S. and ultimately shaped the Japanese modern and traditional theaters. He had a remarkably successful and overlooked career as a modern dancer and theater practitioner in the U.S. before being repatriated to Japan during World War II.

**Introduction**

Helene P. Foley

in *Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the American Stage*

The introduction locates the reception of Greek tragedy on the American stage in the context of developments in American professional theater from the nineteenth century to the present. Although Greek tragedy often appeared to represent views in tension with American optimism and exceptionalism, American artists developed various ways of “Americanizing” them. Using Sophocles's *Electra* as its central example, the introduction then explores how American productions and new versions of the play by Eugene O'Neill, Joseph Chaikin, Ezra Pound, Luis Alfaro, and others have served to represent the struggle of the individual to develop a social identity and to make important choices in a challenging political environment and in the context of a dysfunctional family.

**A New Theatre**

Dorothy Chansky and Terry Brino-Dean

in *The Oxford Critical and Cultural History of Modernist Magazines: Volume II: North America 1894-1960*

This chapter discusses the histories of two magazines — Theatre Arts and Drama — which facilitated the American Little Theatre Movement (1912–25). The movement eschewed theatrical commercialism in the name of something more socially significant and aesthetically refined. It wrought a sea change in how audiences, practitioners, academics, and the general public thought about theatre. The histories of both publications reveal an ongoing attempt to reach wider readerships while
also maintaining what each saw as its own identity and integrity. The two often used the same writers, and both touted the importance of amateur theatre and challenging drama. But Drama offers a case study in how management and target audience can sink an otherwise well-designed boat, while the history of Theatre Arts is a lesson in how taking the high road works best with a steadfast, solvent, single-minded visionary at the helm.

Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the American Stage
Helene P. Foley

This book explores Greek tragedy on the American professional stage from the nineteenth century to the present. Despite the gap separating the world of classical Greece from our own, Greek tragedy has provided a fertile source for some of the most innovative American theater. Helene P. Foley shows how plays like Oedipus Rex and Medea have resonated deeply with contemporary concerns and controversies—over war, slavery, race, the status of women, religion, identity, and immigration. Although Greek tragedy was often initially embraced for its melodramatic possibilities, by the twentieth century it became a vehicle not only for major developments in the history of American theater and dance but also for exploring critical tensions in American cultural and political life. Drawing on a wide range of sources—archival, video, interviews, and reviews—Reimagining Greek Tragedy on the American Stage provides the most comprehensive treatment of the subject available.

Dancing in New York
Halifu Osumare

in Dancing in Blackness: A Memoir

Dancing in New York
Halifu Osumare

This chapter describes the author’s return to the US after almost 3 years in Europe and continues to explore her blackness in the post-Civil Rights era of the early 70s (first in Boston and then in New York). Joining the Rod Rodgers Dance Company (RRDC) in NYC allows the author to become a part of developing concert dance among the major black
dance companies who were second tier to the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater. The author explores the vitality of professional NY dance and the experiences that dancing with RRDC provided, such as the Dancemobile in the 5 boroughs, the cultural integration of the Lincoln Center, and the opening of the dance season on Broadway. Additionally, she explores NY’s African dance companies and the growing need to make black dance relevant to black people in these shifting political times.

Antigone for Young (American) Audiences: A Protest Parable
Mark Seamon

in Antigone on the Contemporary World Stage
Published in print: 2011 Published Online: January 2012
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DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199586196.003.0014

This chapter discusses a 2006 production of Antigone at the Children's Theater Company of Minneapolis, Minnesota, for a teenage audience of twelve to eighteen-year-olds. The production invited a critique and discussion of post-9/11 politics and the Iraq War, in a space littered with cultural and political detritus, and stressed the problems of communication between parents and children and leaders and citizens as well as the need for political change. The audience was invited not only to empathize with the rebellious, anti-war Antigone's resistance to a physically powerful and sometimes violent Creon, but to participate directly in the production. Because Antigone was played by an African-American actress and Creon was played by a white actor, the production alluded to racism as a component of contemporary social problems.

Blackness in the Image of God
Craig R. Prentiss

in Staging Faith: Religion and African American Theater from the Harlem Renaissance to World War II
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This chapter looks at plays that frame Christianity in a positive light and utilize the Bible as raw material to tell stories affirming the dignity of the African American people. Authors Marita Bonner and Randolph Edmonds perceive faith as a cornerstone of individual and collective
advancement. May Miller and Zora Neale Hurston creatively tailored the scripture to cast blacks in a special role within God's providential order, while Owen Dodson employs the Gospels to call upon the sacredness of black humanity. The chapter also examines two of the most remarkable successes in African American theatrical history that were designed as instruments of evangelization: Garland Anderson's Appearances and Big Bethel AME Church of Atlanta's Heaven Bound.

Dynamic Reciprocity: August Wilson and Penumbra
Macelle Mahala

in Penumbra: The Premier Stage for African American Drama

Chapter four focuses on how August Wilson’s career intersected with that of the theatre and several of its company members. Penumbra nurtured and developed the early career of August Wilson. Wilson, in turn, served as a particular effective ally to and advocate for the theatre throughout his professional career.

Encountering the Other, Accosting the Self
Vasudha Dalmia

This chapter provides a glimpse at the inter-culturalism between the East and the West. It concentrates on Rustom Bharucha, a dramaturge and theatre historian who followed the phenomenon of inter-culturalism over the past decades. Knowledgeable of the Indian theatre, particularly the Bengali theatre movements of the 1960s and the 1970s, including the American and European theatres, Bharucha provides an in-depth look at the issue of inter-culturalism that entangles the Indian theatre to the Euro-American theatre. In addition, a long essay discusses Bharucha’s observations of the inter-cultural encounter and some questions that challenges the assumptions and premises of the inter-cultural debate. Moreover, the chapter also discusses at length two models offered by Bharucha as possible alternatives to the politics of unreflected inter-culturalism.