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.

This book looks at aspects of Penumbra Theatre Company’s history as a case study of African American theatrical practice. It reveals the history of African American theatre to be vibrant, diverse, and vital. The book is unique because it is the first work focused entirely on Penumbra Theatre, a theatre of national importance. It is also unique because it situates black theatre practice in conversation with a variety of concurrent political and social movements. It also outlines both the achievements and challenges of African American theatre production for those interested in participating or producing similar work. As such, it has both theoretical and practical application.
Chapter one looks at the founding of the theatre, its initial mission, and the establishment of a particular production aesthetic during the first year of the theatre’s existence.

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.

Chapter seven depicts the unique economic challenges that face African American arts institutions and covers the various strategies Penumbra’s board of directors have used to face these challenges. Also covered in this chapter is the expansion of the education department and new play development initiatives during the mid and late two thousands.
Building a Repertoire and an Ensemble
Macelle Mahala

in Penumbra: The Premier Stage for African American Drama

Published in print: 2013 Published Online: August 2015
Publisher: University of Minnesota Press
DOI: 10.5749/minnesota/9780816683741.003.0002
Item type: chapter

Chapter two covers the professionalization of the theatre, paying particular attention to the development of an ensemble practice that created a significant local and national reputation.

Black Nativity
Macelle Mahala

in Penumbra: The Premier Stage for African American Drama

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Chapter three examines three versions of Penumbra’s annual holiday production of the musical, Black Nativity, which serves as a specific example of local community engagement.

Intercultural Collaborations
Macelle Mahala

in Penumbra: The Premier Stage for African American Drama

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Item type: chapter

Chapter six calls attention to Penumbra’s intercultural collaborations with specific playwrights such as William S. Yellow Robe Jr. and Suzan Murakoshi. This chapter also details specific efforts to engage diverse audiences on a variety of intercultural issues.