



Early Black American Playwrights and Dramatic Writers: A Biographical Directory and Catalog of Plays, Films, and Broadcasting Scripts

Bernard L. Peterson Jr.

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Peterson has done a great service to students of African-American theater. . . . Peterson's scholarship is impressive; the book's format is inviting . . . an indispensable reference book for academic libraries. *Choice*

This reference volume addresses an often overlooked area in the history of the American theatre, the contributions of early black playwrights and dramatic writers. At a time when they were denied full participation in many aspects of American life, including the mainstream of the theatre itself, black artists were compiling an impressive record of achievement on the American stage. This book, the most comprehensive on the subject, provides a complete look at these achievements by offering biographical information and a catalog of works for approximately 200 writers, including playwrights, librettists, screenwriters, and radio scriptwriters. From the emergence of black playwrights in the time prior to the Civil War, to the early days of film and radio in this century, the efforts of early black writers are fully documented in this work.

The book begins with an author's preface and is followed by an introductory essay that discusses the development of black American playwrights from the antebellum period to World War II. The heart of the book, the biographical directory, is organized alphabetically, with each entry providing highlights of the author's life and career; collected anthologies that include any works; and an annotated chronological list of individual dramatic works, including genre, length, synopses, production history, prizes and awards, and script sources. Three appendixes offer information on other playwrights and their works, additional librettists and descriptions of their shows, and a chronology of dramatic works by genre. A bibliography cites such information sources as reference books and critical studies, dissertations, play anthologies, and newspapers and periodicals frequently consulted, as well as significant libraries and repositories. The book concludes with title and general indexes and an index to early black theatre organizations. This work will be an important reference source for courses in black American drama and theatre history, and a valuable addition to both public and academic libraries.

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