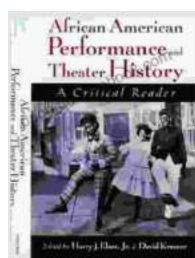


Celebrating the Rich History of African American Performance and Theater

Minstrel Shows and the Origins of Black Performance



African American Performance and Theater History: A Critical Reader by Harry J. Elam

★★★★☆ 4.4 out of 5

Language : English

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The origins of African American performance can be traced back to the minstrel shows of the 19th century. These shows, which featured white performers in blackface, caricatured and mocked African American culture and identity. However, they also provided a platform for African American entertainers to showcase their talents and challenge these stereotypes.

Vaudeville and the Rise of Black Performers



In the early 20th century, vaudeville emerged as a popular form of entertainment that featured a variety of acts, including singers, dancers, comedians, and acrobats. African American performers found success on the vaudeville circuit, and many became household names, such as Bert Williams, George Walker, and Bill Robinson.

The Harlem Renaissance and the Birth of Black Theater



The Harlem Renaissance of the 1920s and 1930s was a period of great cultural and artistic achievement for African Americans. This period saw the emergence of a distinctly Black theater, with playwrights such as Langston Hughes, Zora Neale Hurston, and Eulalie Spence writing plays that explored the complexities of African American life and history.

Broadway and the Success of African American Performers



In the decades following the Harlem Renaissance, African American performers began to break into the mainstream theater world. They starred in Broadway productions, won prestigious awards, and helped to change the face of American theater. Some of the most notable African American Broadway actors include Sidney Poitier, Harry Belafonte, Lena Horne, and James Earl Jones.

August Wilson and the Legacy of Black Theater



August Wilson is one of the most celebrated playwrights in American history. His works, such as "Fences" and "The Piano Lesson," explore the experiences of African Americans in the 20th century. Wilson's plays have won numerous awards, including the Pulitzer Prize and the Tony Award, and have been performed worldwide.

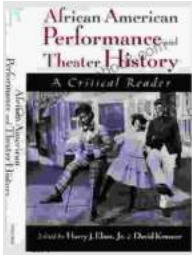
Contemporary African American Theater and Its Impact



African American theater continues to thrive today, with a new generation of playwrights, directors, and actors bringing fresh perspectives and stories to the stage. Contemporary African American theater addresses issues such as race, identity, and social justice, and has a profound impact on the American cultural landscape.

The history of African American performance and theater is a rich and inspiring one. It is a testament to the resilience, creativity, and artistry of African Americans, who have overcome adversity to create a vibrant and enduring legacy.

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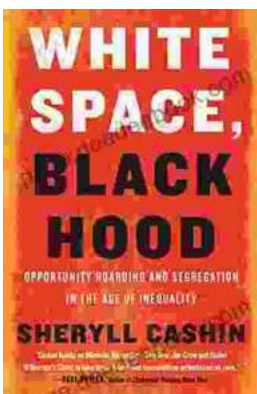


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