



Stages of Struggle and Celebration: A Production History of Black Theatre in Texas (Jack and Doris Smothers Series in Texas History, Life, and C)

Sandra M. Mayo, Elvin Holt

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From plantation performances to minstrel shows of the late nineteenth century, the roots of black theatre in Texas reflect the history of a state where black Texans have continually created powerful cultural emblems that defy the clichés of horses, cattle, and bravado. Drawing on troves of archival materials from numerous statewide sources, *Stages of Struggle and Celebration* captures the important legacies of the dramatic arts in a historical field that has paid most of its attention to black musicians.

Setting the stage, the authors retrace the path of the cakewalk and African-inspired dance as forerunners to formalized productions at theaters in the major metropolitan areas. From Houston's Ensemble and Encore Theaters to the Jubilee in Fort Worth, gospel stage plays of the Black Academy of Arts and Letters in Dallas, as well as San Antonio's Hornsby Entertainment Theater Company and Renaissance Guild, concluding with ProArts Collective in Austin, *Stages of Struggle and Celebration* features founding narratives, descriptions of key players and memorable productions, and enlightening discussions of community reception and the business challenges faced by each theatre. The role of drama departments in historically black colleges in training the companies' founding members is also explored, as is the role the support of national figures such as Tyler Perry plays in ensuring viability. A canon of Texas playwrights completes the tour. The result is a diverse tribute to the artistic legacies that continue to inspire new generations of producers and audiences.

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