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978-0-521-03303-9 - Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860

Rosemarie K. Bank

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Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860

Theatre Culture in America, 1825-1860 examines how Americans staged their cultures in the decades before the Civil War, and advances the idea that cultures are performances that take place both inside and outside of playhouses. Americans imaginatively expanded conventional ideas of performance as an activity restricted to theatres in order to take up the staging of culture in other venues: in issues of class, race, and gender, in parades and the visits of dignitaries, in rioting and the denomination of prostitutes, and in views of the town, the city, and the frontier. Joining up-to-date historical research with a firm and clear-headed grasp of contemporary critical theory, *Theatre Culture in America* offers a wholly original approach to the complex intersections of American theatre and culture.

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The American theatre and its literature are attracting, after long neglect, the crucial attention of historians, theoreticians, and critics of the arts. Long a field for isolated research, yet too frequently marginalized in the academy, the American theatre has always been a sensitive gauge of social pressures and public issues. Investigations into its myriad shapes and manifestations are relevant to students of drama, theatre, literature, cultural experience, and political development.

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Kent State University



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*To my father, Julius Bank,
who sought his hope in the West and never went back;
to my mother, Anna Damm Bank,
who gave the dream a home; and
to my sister, Barbara Julianne Bank,
who keeps faith with the hope and the dream.*



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ry endured their own holocausts, fiery trials, and despairs but also generated a culture constituting the very hopes and differences of all America's peoples. In the certain knowledge that nothing dies that is remembered and that dreamers move mountains, I dedicate the hard work of this book to their remembered struggle, to their hope, and to the difference their difference has made.