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John Conteh-Morgan

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This is the first study to be entirely devoted to African literary drama in French, a major component of African theatre. Beginning with a detailed analysis of its relationship to a variety of pre-colonial, but sometimes still contemporary traditions of performance which constitute part of its roots, Conteh-Morgan examines this drama both in its literary and theatrical dimensions. He discusses its development, themes and techniques and considers its attempts, since the 1980s, to move away from the predominantly text-based drama of first generation playwrights to a more performance-oriented one. He links this trend, in part, to the desire felt by many theatre practitioners to overcome an abiding paradox of this drama; that of being both popular and even radical in intent (to reach and stir a mass audience) but elitist in achievement (excluding that audience through the use of French and European stage conventions).

The book is divided into two sections: part I offers a theoretical and historical background and part II analyses key individual plays central to the repertoire. These include two from the Caribbean, which not only explore African issues but contributed to the rise of French-language African drama. Quotations from playtexts are translated into English. With its comparative references to English-language drama, its discussion of the literary and institutional influence of France on Francophone drama and of modern non-literary dramatic forms in the Francophone region, the book will be of interest to students and scholars of theatre history, French and African studies.

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# THEATRE AND DRAMA IN FRANCOPHONE AFRICA

*A critical introduction*

JOHN CONTEH-MORGAN

*The Ohio State University*



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*To my parents  
And to Nyo, Déri and Mei*

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