



Ghana's Concert Party Theatre

Catherine M. Cole

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"... succeeds in conveying the exciting and fascinating character of the concert party genre, as well as showing clearly how this material can be used to rethink a number of contemporary theoretical themes and issues." ?Karin Barber

Under colonial rule, the first concert party practitioners brought their comic variety shows to audiences throughout what was then the British Gold Coast colony. As social and political circumstances shifted through the colonial period and early years of Ghanaian independence, concert party actors demonstrated a remarkable responsiveness to changing social roles and volatile political situations as they continued to stage this extremely popular form of entertainment. Drawing on her participation as an actress in concert party performances, oral histories of performers, and archival research, Catherine M. Cole traces the history and development of Ghana's concert party tradition. She shows how concert parties combined an eclectic array of cultural influences, adapting characters and songs from American movies, popular British ballads, and local story-telling traditions into a spirited blend of comedy and social commentary. Actors in blackface, inspired by Al Jolson, and female impersonators dramatized the aspirations, experiences, and frustrations of their audiences. Cole's extensive and lively look into Ghana's concert party provides a unique perspective on the complex experience of British colonial domination, the postcolonial quest for national identity, and the dynamic processes of cultural appropriation and social change. This book will be essential reading for scholars and students of African performance, theatre, and popular culture.

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