In Black and White: Photographs of Black Theater by Alix Jeffry

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IN BLACK AND WHITE
Photographs of Black Theater by Alix Jeffry
Houghton Library / March 21 – July 22, 2022

Alix Jeffry’s (1929–1993) documentation of the rise of Off Broadway movement in the 1950’s and 60’s, the archives of shots capturing groundbreaking productions of Amiri Baraka’s Dutchman and Adrienne Kennedy’s Funnyhouse of a Negro, which premiered in 1964 at the height of the Civil Rights movement. Both plays cast a stark light on the state of race in America and portray with unsettling power the experience of millions of Black Americans for whom the promise of equality was still a lie.

Jeffry went on to photograph many leading Black figures in the performing arts as a freelancer for the New York Times. She credited African American artist and activist Lena Horne with encouraging her to pursue a career in photography after Horne invited her backstage to take her picture. In addition to over forty thousand production photos, Jeffry’s archive contains nearly twenty thousand portraits. A few are published here for the first time.

The Alix Jeffry Archive was a gift of Frederick R. Koch and Jeffry’s partner, Mary Alice Morris.

Leslie Rivers and Cynthia Belgrave in Funnyhouse of a Negro
Contact sheet of scenes from Funnyhouse of a Negro starring Billie Allen
Robert Hooks and Jennifer West in Dutchman
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