Childress, Alice


Childress grew up in Harlem, New York City, where she studied drama with the American Negro Theatre in the 1940s. There she wrote, directed, and starred in her first play, *Florence* (produced 1949), about a black woman who, after meeting an insensitive white actress in a railway station, comes to respect her daughter's attempts to pursue an acting career. *Trouble in Mind* (produced 1955; revised and published 1971), *Wedding Band* (produced 1966), *String* (produced 1969), and *Wine in the Wilderness* (produced 1969) all examine racial and social issues. Among Childress' plays that feature music are *Just a Little Simple* (produced 1950; based on Langston Hughes' *Simple Speaks His Mind*), *Gold Through the Trees* (produced 1952), *The African Garden* (produced 1971), *Gullah* (produced 1984; based on her 1977 play *Sea Island Song*), and *Moms* (produced 1987; about the life of comedienne Jackie "Moms" Mabley).

Childress was also a successful writer of children's literature. *A Hero Ain't Nothin' but a Sandwich* (1973; film 1978) is a novel for adolescents about a teenage drug addict. Similarly, the novel *Rainbow Jordan* (1981) concerns the struggles of poor black urban youth. Also written for juveniles were the plays *When the Rattlesnake Sounds* (1975) and *Let's Hear It for the Queen* (1976). Her other novels include *A Short Walk* (1979), *Many Closets* (1987), and *Those Other People* (1989).