

What the Wine-Sellers Buy Plus Three: Four Plays by Ron Milner (African American Life Series)

Ron Milner

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A collection of four plays by contemporary playwright, screenwriter, and director Ron Milner. Much of Black literature from the 1940s through the 1960s deals with the search for identity and asks the question, Should Blacks define themselves in relationship to white people and white culture? In dramatizing the struggles and desires of the Black working class and lower middle class, renowned Detroit playwright Ron Milner responds to this question by letting Black culture - Black music in particular - be not only his subject but part of his form of expression and way of being in the world.

The four Milner plays collected here - Checkmates, What the Wine-Sellers Buy, Jazz-Set, and Urban Transition - are characterized by their attention to African American social and psychological culture. Checkmates (1990) explores the relationships of two Black couples who are generations apart in age and attitudes - one new at the games and realities of love, the other experienced. What the Wine-Sellers Buy (1974), a coming-of-age tale set on Detroit streets in the 1950s, looks at the conflict between the lure of the streets and a mother's teachings. The highly innovative Jazz-Set is Milner's tribute to jazz - a play that works like a jazz composition, where the musicians and music are one and characters' life experiences and memories are "played" as music. Urban Transition (1995) picks up on themes introduced in What the Wine-Sellers Buy to examine how the drug subculture has made its way into current mainstream culture. Ron Milner is one of America's most prolific and foremost playwrights. His plays have become required texts in many of the emerging repertory theaters of the Black and progressive theater communities.

Four Plays will be of interest to students of the theater, theater scholars, and those interested in African American and American literature.



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