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THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA
CHAPEL HILL

THE CAROLINA PLAYMAKERS
FREDERICK H. KOCH, DIRECTOR

November 20, 1933

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Dear Mr. Marshall:

I am glad to know of your interest in the dramatic activities of the Negro colleges in the South.

The occasion I referred to in our conversation here was the Third Tournament of the Negro Intercollegiate Dramatic Association held in Coburn Hall, Virginia Union University, in Richmond on April 5, 1933. Four colleges participated: Morgan College, Baltimore; Virginia State College, Petersburg; Hampton Institute; and Howard University. Morgan college presented an interesting Negro folk-play of saw-mill life, "Bad Man", by Randolph Edmonds, the director of the group.

I was invited to Richmond as "critic judge" of the tournament and was much impressed with the enthusiasm and the freshness of the work. It seemed to me that here in these Negro colleges we have the beginnings of an authentic Negro folk drama and theatre.

Ever since I came back to the South sixteen years ago, I have had a great interest in the talents of the Negro and have done what I could from time to time to encourage it. Our Carolina Playmakers have never played for a more interested or responsive audience than at Hampton Institute on the night of December 1, 1928 when we played Paul Green's Negro comedy, "The Man Who Died at Twelve O'clock" and two other plays from our repertory. The audience of about 15,00 Negro students fairly rolled over on the floor in their enjoyment of Paul Green's comedy. Dr. R. N. Dett (colored) head of the Department of Music at Hampton wrote of the performance there, "It was so faithfully and characteristically presented that Negroes themselves were pleased to the point of enthusiasm. One hardly finds words sufficiently expressive to balance the accomplishment of these pioneer creators and interpreters with adequate commendation."

For the past three years we have had guest performances in The Playmakers Theatre here by students of St. Augustine College for Negroes (Raleigh), and this year the work has been enthusiastically begun at Shaw University (also at Raleigh) with one of our most talented Carolina Playmakers, Loretto Carroll Bailey, author of Job's Kinfolks and Strike Song, as part-time director.

Only the other day I was called upon to speak at Bennett College for Negroes in Greensboro and I found there an enthusiastic dramatic group forming under the trained leadership of Professor Walter L. Smith. It is interesting to note in this connection that the distinguished Negro actor of The Green Pastures, Richard B. Harrison (DeLawd), was given an ovation on the occasion of the performance of the play recently in his home town, Greensboro. At that time he announced his intention of resuming his work as dramatic director at the Agricultural and Technical College for Negroes, there, when his long engagement with The Green Pastures is done.

There seems to be an awakening in the Negro colleges of the South promising much in the development of an authentic Negro Folk Theatre.

Mr. John Marshall
The Rockefeller Foundation
49 West 49th Street
New York City, New York

Yours cordially,
Frederick H. Koch
Kenan Professor of Dramatic Literature.