



MINSTREL SHOWS & PERFORMERS

Opening Act: an overture, opening song or song parody, and an introduction of all the performers that would be seen throughout the show. Introduce the interlocutor. Concluded with the Walk-Around. **Olio:** middle section – was filled with numerous variety acts of dances, solos, parodies, skits, and other “entertaining” slapstick comedic acts. **Afterpiece:** elaborate, racist concluding skit of life on the Southern Plantation.

Bert Williams and **George Walker**, their comedic duo initially triumphed as cakewalking comedians in their series of musical comedies. They founded a producing company, Walker-Williams, which sought out to produce original shows created by African American artists intended for African American actors.

Williams: First Black Performer to be cast and perform in the Ziegfeld Follies, Archetype of “Sad Clown.” His pathos and ability to bring an audience to tears and laughter at the same time was achieved through personal effort and professional struggle within a racist society that always treated him unequally once the makeup was removed.

Aida Overton Walker: The Queen of the Cakewalk.

INFLUENCES SEEN IN MODERN THEATRE

Modern Numbers inspired by The “Cakewalk:” “Put on Your Sunday Clothes” from **Hello, Dolly!**, “One (Finale)” from **A Chorus Line**, and “Under the Bamboo Tree” from **Meet Me In St. Louis**.

The Wiz, **Dreamgirls**, and **Bring in ‘Da Noise Bring in ‘Da Funk** allowed Broadway audiences to finally have an opportunity to see musicals that embraced the African American culture and music. These scores incorporated musical elements from popular music of the time, ultimately creating a new sound for Broadway. This truly inspired the new generation of “pop musicals” seen on Broadway in the last decade, with musicals such as **Kinky Boots**, **Legally Blonde**, and **Bring It On**.

MINSTRELSY TO BROADWAY: HOW AFRICAN AMERICANS INFLUENCED THE INDUSTRY

By: Carson Hampton Palmer

African American performers have shaped, adapted, and evolved to how we view theatre today. While much existing research is available to examine and cogitate about famous, groundbreaking Vaudevillian/Minstrelsy Performers such as Bert Williams, George Walker, etc., the theatre industry and world does not recognize the lasting impact these artists (and others) have created and how their work and contributions have evolved and influenced many future directors, choreographers, and performers. For example, the “Walk Around” shifted into the “Cakewalk” to then ultimately adapting these movements to create a style of codified dance that is currently seen on Broadway. Along with identifying their offerings, this poster points out how book musicals in the early 20th Century began to “address” racism and bigotry, while continuously feeding into racist stereotypes for specific characters and igniting the appropriation that we once saw in Minstrel Shows. While also discussing the specific material African Americans performed during Minstrel Shows and how African American composers shifted their sound from what the White audiences wanted to hear to the music that represented their culture and roots, more how the sound shifted from **Shuffle Along** to the soulful tunes of **The Wiz**.



RACISM & BIGOTRY SEEN IN SHOW BOAT

The two supporting characters: Joe and Queenie that sing two of the most famous, well-known songs “are given the most subservient jobs and show no character development... [are] forced to speak in a dialect of childish, black-pidgin English” and are ultimately back up servants to their leading actors (Hoffman 32).



COMPOSER/LYRICIST: CHARLES SMALLS

(1975) Soulful,
Pop Inspired.

“Ease on Down the Road:” This musical is classified as **“The Super Soul Musical of the Wonderful Wizard of Oz.”** In

the 1975 cast recording, the elements of soul are noticed in the gospel influences of call and response with the catchy choruses, along with the ensemble members providing “oohs” underneath the main melody.

The Wiz is most accurately depicted by its “vibrancy and unapologetic embrace of Black vernacular language —matched with a flamboyant visual production and superb choreography—drew on a variety of sources... [that] spoke directly to a wide audience of all races” (Burnim 235).



COMPOSER: EUBIE BLAKE LYRICIST: NOBLE SISSLE

(1921) Ragtime,
Swing Inspired.

“I’m Just Wild About Harry:” This song was originally intended as a waltz, which many famous white artists have performed covers of it in that time signature, but Lottie Gee encouraged Blake to shift this piece into an uptempo one-step, or fox-trot rather.

Because of this transition, we see the ragtime roots of Eubie Blake thrive.

“The musical material was varied. From the lyrical and romantic to the upbeat and jazzy, it accompanied a veritable kaleidoscope of dances and stage movements. Blake provided flashy piano interludes” (Burnim 227).



Bibliography and Song References!