BAMBOULA!

BLACK MUSIC BEFORE THE BLUES

Exhibition Conceived and Curated by John Davis
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John Hay Library • Brown University
Providence
Publication made possible by the generous support of Guy Poulin/Type A Print Inc. and members of the Brown University Class of 1979.

Catalogue Design
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Published in conjunction with the exhibition, Bambooz! Black Music Before The Blues.

March 14 — May 5, 2017

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Acknowledgements
The Exhibition Curator would like to express his deepest appreciation to Harriette Hemmasi, Brown University Librarian, and to Christopher Geisler, Director of the John Hay Library and Special Collections, who allocated so much of their time and expertise as well as the resources of the Brown University Library toward bringing this exhibition to fruition. Many thanks also go out to other members of the Brown University faculty and staff — particularly, Barrymore Boggs, Tiffini Bowers, Jennifer Braga, Sarah Dylla, Dana Gooley, Janie Johnson, Rebecca Rix and Butch Rosvin — all of whom brought a wellspring of energy, knowledge, and experience to the project. Special gratitude is extended to Thomas Tisch ’76, former Chancellor of Brown University, who first proposed this exhibition to the Brown University Library, and to Tom Gesmar ’69 and David Bright ’79, without whose vision and support this catalogue would not exist.

Curatorial Consultant to John Davis
Larry Zimmerman

To my father,
Brown University Professor Emeritus Robert P. Davis, who first introduced me to the African American rare books, sheet music, and ephemera that are the basis for this exhibition and my career as a pianist.

Cover Illustration
[Print] A Negro Slave Dance – The Bambooz!
E.W. Kemble [1861-1933]
The Century Co., 1886
Collection of John Davis

Frontpiece
[Book] Poems of Cabin and Field
Paul Laurence Dunbar [1872-1906]

Photograph by members of the Hampton Institute Camer Club, Hampton Virginia

New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1899
Collection of John Davis

Back Cover Illustration
[Sheet Music] Bambooz!, Danse de Nigres:
Fantaisie pour Piano, Op. 2
Louis Moreau Gottschalk [1829-1869]

Boston: Oliver Ditson, c. 1844-1845
Collection of John Davis
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Introduction

Bamboula! Black Music Before the Blues comes at a particularly fraught moment in American history. With the "Black Lives Matter" movement still simmering after Barack Obama's two terms in office and the most racially-charged presidential campaign in recent memory, this exhibition is an in-depth and authoritative survey of the African-American roots of popular music and show business in the United States. On display are seminal and visually arresting printed artifacts of the shared African- and European-based musical tradition established in colonial America, a cultural synthesis that continues to shape our nation's identity. These first flowerings of the trans-oceanic dynamic triggered by the African slave trade, often referred to as the "Black Atlantic," played a foundational role in the development of jazz, rhythm & blues, and rock 'n roll, and initiated a set of structural parameters and comedic archetypes that have become hallmarks of the American performing arts in theater, film, radio and television.

The 18th-, 19th-, and early 20th-century books, pieces of sheet music, and ephemera included in the exhibit, are drawn from both the personal collection of the Exhibition Curator and Brown graduate (Class of 1979), John Davis, as well as the extensive holdings of the John Hay Library. Mr. Davis' archive of rare 19th-century printed musical African Americana, widely respected in the antiquarian book and ephemera world, is the bedrock of his career as a concert pianist devoted to works influenced by black culture of the American Deep South. The Harris Collection of the John Hay Library is regarded as one of the premiere institutional archives of early American sheet music and ephemera. *

John Davis '79, Pianist and Exhibition Curator

"It is a rather curious thing...that we needed Dvorak to tell us what we have known very well during the past 40 years." - Indianapolis Freeman, as quoted in The New York Sun, March 24, 1894.

Upon his arrival in the United States in 1893, Antonin Dvorak, the Czech composer of the New World Symphony, remarked that, "In the Negro melodies of America I discovered all that is needed for a great and noble school of music." As well-meaning and prescient as Dvorak's frequently cited pronouncement may seem even today, the composer's statement came at least a hundred years too late. The cultural cross-pollination between Americans of African and European descent began, in fact, virtually the moment slaves first set foot in the colonies against their will in the early 17th century. Nowhere is this symbiosis more evident than in music. Countless extant books, pieces of sheet music, and other ephemera of the pre-recording era leave little doubt that a shared African- and European-based musical tradition, encompassing folk, concert, and theater music, had been established well before Dvorak's often-quoted remark.

Published slave narratives, interviews of former slaves, and printed accounts by white observers are replete with descriptions of the central role African American vocal and instrumental music-making played in the rural antebellum south. Music, and the dancing that often accompanied it, were integral components of everyday life in the "quarters" and of virtually all secular and religious slave rituals. Call-and-response work songs helped coordinate the movements of field laborers clearing land and harvesting cotton, tobacco, and sugar cane on the plantation; of routabouts loading cargo on and off boats docked on the river levees; and of steel-driving men laying track for the burgeoning American railway system. Plaintive chants, called "field hollers," often doubled as a form of coded communication between slaves working in the fields. After sundown, laborers would return to their cabins and elevate their spirits with music and dancing (see Inside Front Cover). Drumming and the playing of banjo and fiddle tunes on makeshift instruments would alternate with the singing of ballads, Creole melodies, children's play songs, and negro spirituals. The physical movements that invariably accompanied this music would be adorned by rhythmic clapping of different parts of the body, a practice referred to by slaves as "pattin' juba."
Slaves also engaged in a number of spoken word traditions that were forerunners of 20th-century American comedy routines and hip hop music. Printed sources, beginning with Joel Chandler Harris’ *Uncle Remus: His Songs and His Sayings* (see Figure 1) and Thomas W. Talley’s *Negro Folk Rhymes*, recount how African Americans amused each other in the plantation south with verbal toasts, street cries, testimonials, African-imported animal trickster tales, and what African American folklorist and novelist, Zora Neale Hurston, called “lies,” drawn-out allegorical stories filled with humor, life lessons, and metaphors for a people coping with a hard-scrabble existence in a hostile, foreign land. Although examples of these texts were not published until after the Civil War, the telling of folktales was, by all accounts, a staple of social interaction among slaves long before emancipation.

Spoken word, music, and dance combined to particularly powerful effect in the black Protestant church. Slave masters, seeing Christianity as a means to maintain social control, often exposed their slaves to the disciplined teachings and emotional uplift of the church. Out of this initial entreaty to the faith emerged the African American branches of the Baptist and Methodist churches. At a typical service and at outdoor religious retreats called camp meetings, black preachers would improvise extended, emotionally-charged sermons in a half-spoken, half-sung rhythmic cadence that would elicit frequent vocal utterances from members of the congregation. Once everyone’s spirits had been elevated to a fever pitch, the minister would give way to his devoted parishioners. The faithful would then embellish traditional Protestant hymns into so-called “negro spirituals” and occasionally engage in ecstatic circular-patterned dances known as ring shout.

Spirituals, and the less-formalized “sorrow songs” referred to by W. E. B. Du Bois, are probably the most important musical outgrowths of the African-American assimilation into Christianity and the wellspring of gospel, soul and blues music to come. Notated examples of these and other African American folk music would be captured in print after the Civil War in the first published scholarly studies conducted by black and white field recorders, *Slave Songs of the United States*, by William Francis Allen, Charles Pickard Ware, and Lucy McKim Garrison (see Figure 2), and *A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies*, by Marshall W. Taylor (see Figure 3), grandfather of the avant-garde jazzman, Sam Rivers.

Out of the Protestant church came many of the first black concert singers, at least one of whom, Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield (c. 1809-1876), a.k.a. “The Black Swan” (see Figure 4), was performing in public before the Civil War. Greenfield, however, was not the first African American concert musician to gain fame. That distinction goes to Francis Johnson (1792-1844), a.k.a. Frank Johnson (see Figure 5), a keyed bugle player and violinist from Philadelphia, who led popular military bands and society dance orchestras in the early 19th century. Johnson was also the first African American musician to tour Europe and the first to become a published composer.

In his travelogue, *American Notes*, Charles Dickens captured in words the other-worldly body control exhibited by a “lively young negro” he saw perform in 1842 at Almack’s Tavern in New York City. “Single shuffle, double shuffle, cut and cross-cut,” Dickens wrote, before detailing the dancer’s “snapping his fingers, rolling his eyes, turning his knees, presenting the backs of his legs in front, spinning about on his toes and heels like nothing but the man’s fingers on the tambourine; dancing with two left legs, two right legs, two wooden legs, two wire legs, two spring legs — all sorts of legs and no legs...” The entertainer Dickens observed firsthand, scholars believe, was William Henry Lane (a.k.a. “Master Juba”) [c. 1825–c. 1853], the greatest dancer of his era and the father of American tap and break dancing.

Well before the birth of jazz, New Orleans was a particularly fertile breeding ground for 19th-century African American-inspired music. This phenomenon could be attributed to a number of factors. Laws restricting music-making by blacks in the Crescent City were perhaps the most pernicious of any metropolis in the United States. Sources refer to the singer, Old Corn Meal, and the banjo player, Picayune Butler, entertaining crowds on the streets of the French Quarter during the 1830s, ’40s, and ’50s. A dusty clearing just off the French Quarter known as Congo Square was one of the few places in the antebellum South where free and enslaved blacks were allowed to congregate and play music (see Front Cover). Not surprisingly, the public airing of these exotic and captivating sounds became fodder for the enormous music publishing industry that sprang up along Canal Street a few blocks away. The thousands of printed pieces that survive by a number of important local composers — black, white, and every racial mix in between — bear witness to the musically rich and polyglot world influenced by African American and Afro-Caribbean culture that New Orleans already was before the Civil War.

Most prominent among these Crescent City musicians was Louis Moreau Gottschalk [1829-1869], the first internationally-renowned pianist from the New World (see Figure 6). Gottschalk, identified by Alain Locke as black in *The Negro and His Music*, but probably white, wrote what is widely regarded as the first concert work influenced by African American culture. Entitled *Bamboula* and composed in 1844-45 (see Rear Cover), this piece was inspired by an African drum and dance of the same name that Gottschalk likely observed firsthand in Congo Square, just steps from his childhood home in the French Quarter, and was the first in a series of Gottschalk compositions to pay homage to his native Louisiana (see Figure 7). Less widely known are a host of works also influenced by African American and Latin American culture by Gottschalk’s New Orleans contemporaries — among them, Lucien Lambert [1828-1896], Williams T. Francis [c. 1867-1912], Basile Bares [1845-1902], and Maurice Strakosch [c. 1825-1887]. Bares, in fact, may have been the first slave to become a published composer.

A challenge to Gottschalk’s supremacy atop the New World concert circuit would eventually come from an unlikely source: a sightless and possibly autistic slave named Thomas Wiggins [1849-1908], more popularly known as “Blind Tom” (see Figure 8), and about whom Gottschalk briefly wrote in his published diary, *Notes of a Pianist*. Wiggins, born just outside Columbus, Georgia, was a child prodigy who would go on to an illustrious fifty year career after becoming in 1861 the first African American invited to perform for the President at the White
with the comic endmen, “Mister Tambo” on tambourine, and “Mister Bones” playing the bones. Part 2, the “ohio,” was a variety show of individual acts, both musical and comic. The “afterpiece,” featuring an elaborate set and the entire cast again in blackface, was usually a burlesque dramatization of a Shakespearean play or well-known opera, often culminating in a choreographed musical finale based on a cake walk, called the “walkaround.” Much of the Christy’s Minstrels’ outsized commercial appeal was owed to the black dialect songs — among them, Oh! Susanna, Camptown Races, and Old Folks At Home (see Figure 16) — written for the company by a white man from Pittsburgh, America’s most famous 19th-century songwriter, Stephen Foster [1826-1864].

Emancipation paved the way for African Americans to compete on the minstrel circuit. Under such names as Brooker and Clayton’s Georgia Minstrels, Charles B. Hicks’ Original Georgia Minstrels, Lew Johnson’s Plantation Minstrels, Hague’s Slave Troupe, Callender’s Georgia Minstrels (see Figure 17), Haverly’s Colored Minstrels, W. S. Cleveland’s Magnificent Consolidated Minstrels, and Sprague’s Georgia Minstrels, black minstrel troupes, mostly white-owned but featuring exclusively African American performers, proliferated after the Civil War. These organizations also preached “authenticity,” but of an altogether different sort than had Christy’s Minstrels before them. Brooker and Clayton’s billed itself as “The Only Simon Pure Negro Troupe in the World,” and claimed to be “composed of men who during the war were slaves in Macon, Georgia, who, having spent their former lives in Bondage...will introduce to their patrons plantation life in all its phases.” Haverly’s Colored Minstrels, according to a white reporter writing in 1880 for the New York Clipper, depicted plantation life “with greater fidelity than any ‘poor white trash’ with corked faces could ever do.”

In every other respect, however, black minstrelsy adopted wholesale the theatrical tropes established in antebellum minstrelsy. Like their white predecessors, African American minstrel shows were organized around the three-part format established in the profession’s earlier incarnation. Further blurring the lines between race and authenticity were black minstrelsy’s adoption of the sentimental dialect songs by Stephen Foster. And with some slight alterations, virtually all the same racially-inflected archetypes that had become staples of white minstrelsy endured in post-Civil War black minstrelsy. Even the endmen almost always performed in blackface!

The African American musical historian, James Monroe Trotter, in his seminal 1878 book, Music and Some Highly Musical People, captured the central conundrum facing any 19th-century observer of a black minstrel show: how does one reconcile an aversion to the many black minstrel troupes established after the Civil War, whose “principal stock in trade,” he wrote, was “the malicious caricaturing of an unfortunate race,” with the excitement of experiencing their undeniably gifted and polished performers firsthand? After forcing himself to see The Georgia Minstrels in performance, Trotter tempered his original stance, acknowledging that each of the troupe’s twenty-one members “…possess either rare vocal or instrumental (most of them both) natural talents and acquirements; and, when these qualities are combined, a performance of such

House. Ultimately, the pianist’s artistic reputation was tarnished by the shameless exploitation of him by his handlers and their sensationalized publicity campaign focused on his race, visual and mental challenges, and in-concert, extra-musical stunts (see Figure 9). The numerous expertly-crafted published compositions Blind Tom left us (see Figure 10), however, suggests that Wiggins’ unconventional performance style masked a much more serious musician rarely acknowledged by observers and critics during and after his lifetime.

The pre-Civil War era also witnessed the first theatrical appropriations of African American culture by white performers and the beginning of American show business as we know it today. When the American actors Thomas “Daddy” Rice [1808-1860] (see Figure 11) and George Washington Dixon [1801-1861] first mounted the stage in the late 1820s singing and dancing with their faces covered in a thick paste fashioned from burnt cork, blackface minstrelsy was officially born in the United States. So popular were the contrasting characters these men assumed — Rice’s “Jim Crow,” the slow-witted, black rube, in shabby, patched stabehand clothes (see Figure 12), and Dixon’s “Zip Coon,” the brash, urban African American dandy elegantly turned out in his “long tail blue” and silk pants — that they inspired a host of competing blackface portrayals by, among others, George Nichols, Bob Farrell, Joe Sweeny, John N. Smith, Billy Whitlock, and John Diamond (see Figure 13). Simultaneously lampooning and back-handedly paying homage to black culture, these comedic archetypes have proven extremely durable, persisting since then in various forms on both sides of the color line.

In January, 1843, Dan Emmett, Billy Whitlock, Dick Pelham, and Frank Brower, appeared en masse at the Chatham Theatre in Manhattan as “The Virginia Minstrels,” singing and playing the fiddle, banjo, tambourine, and bones. The minstrel troupe’s initial success spawned a wave of competing groups, among them, Bryant’s Minstrels, Buckley’s Serenaders, Campbell’s Minstrels, Christy’s Minstrels, The Ethiopian Serenaders, The Harmonicons, The New Orleans Serenaders, Overway’s Aeolians, The Sable Melodists, The Virginia Serenaders (see Figure 14), White’s Serenaders, and Wood’s Minstrels — all starring “corked up” white performers of almost exclusively Irish, working-class descent.

One of the most successful white minstrel troupes was Christy’s Minstrels (see Figure 15). Claiming “authenticity,” its founder, Edwin P. Christy based his shows on his firsthand observations of blacks making music and dancing in Congo Square, where, according to an introductory biographical sketch in a Christy’s Minstrels songster, he “amassed those rich stores of entertainment which have long stamped him as the most truthful and pleasing delineator of Ethiopian humor and melody.” Christy, more importantly, was responsible for developing minstrel troupes into more fully evolved theatrical and commercial enterprises, featuring ever-larger rosters of performers, and for standardizing the minstrel show into a three-part structure later adopted in black minstrelsy.

A typical Christy’s performance began with the entire cast in blackface and in semi-circular formation. At the center was the pompous “Interlocutor,” exchanging barbs and malapropisms
delightful beauty and finish is presented, as to elicit from their audiences the most enthusiastic applause.” The three most celebrated members of The Georgia Minstrels were Billy Kershands [c. 1842-1915], considered the première black comedian of his day and described by W.C. Handy as “the man who could make a mule laugh” (see Figure 18), Sam Lucas [1850-1916], a pioneering actor, singer, and composer whose versatile career was sown in black minstrelsy but who eventually flourished well beyond the burnt cork circuit (see Figure 19); and James Bland [1854-1911], the first famous African American songwriter, often referred to as the “World’s Greatest Minstrel Man,” and “The Black Stephen Foster” (see Figure 20).

African-American pianists and vocalists also took the concert stage in force after the Civil War. With the fighting over, Blind Tom, by law emancipated but still under the control of his former owner's family, was now free to appear north of the Mason-Dixon line. Over the next forty years, Wiggins performed in virtually every corner of the United States many times over, toured France and England, and, during the flashiest periods, earned for his handlers upwards of $100,000 a year (equivalent today to $1.5 million annually). In short, Blind Tom became a phenomenon. America's first superstar black performer.

At the height of his fame, Wiggins crossed paths with an unheralded, and also sightless, black pianist fifteen years his junior from Columbia, Missouri, named John William Boone (1864-1927). On March 3, 1880, Blind Tom engaged mano-a-mano with Boone in a celebrated playoff at Garth Hall in Columbia that launched Boone's career. Boone would fashion his early identity on Blind Tom's, even adopting the early stage name, "Blind John," before settling on the more alliterative moniker, "Blind Boone," with which ultimately he became identified (see Figure 21). But the Blind Boone Concert Company, officially established in 1880 by Boone and his African American manager, John Lange Jr., and performing under the rubric, "Merit, Not Sympathy Wins," quickly moved away from the Blind Tom model. For the next 47 years, the Boone Company toured the United States and Canada virtually non-stop with programs featuring camp meeting and coon songs, minstrel tunes, spirituals, and ragtime, as well as Boone's performances of European classical music and his own salon-style piano works influenced equally by his favorite composer, Franz Liszt, and rural African American folk music. Boone's compositions would ultimately play an important role in the ragtime movement swirling around him in Missouri at the end of the 19th century, and later, in the development of the blues-based, riff-propelled "Territory" big band sound that took hold in Kansas City in the 1910s and '20s. Featuring numerous singers, a violinist, and a banjo player, as well as the star of the show, the Boone Company can be seen, along with the minstrel show, as a precursor to the big band, soul, and rhythm & blues revues that would become fixtures of American music in the pre- and post-World War II eras. The diamond-studded cross Boone always wore next to a dazzling array of bejeweled secret society pins arranged military-style on his vest even anticipated the sartorial splendor of show business to come (see Figure 22).

The African American vocal continuum established by slaves on antebellum plantations and in the pre-Civil War Protestant church continued on two primary fronts after emancipation. Historically black colleges, founded after the war to educate former slaves, soon established touring singing groups performing refined concert arrangements of pre-Civil War African American sacred and secular plantation music. The most prominent among these musical organizations was the Fisk Jubilee Singers, a choir from Fisk University in Nashville, who, via several celebrated tours of the United States and Europe during the 1870s, first exposed the world to the profound beauty of African American folk music (see Figure 23). The Hampton Singers, from Hampton Institute in Virginia, and the University Singers of New Orleans (see Figure 24) were two other important contributors to a genre that anticipated the black gospel quartets of the pre- and post-World War II eras.

Concurrently, a series of vocal descendants of Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield emerged who were precursors of the black vaudeville blues queens and African American opera singers to gain prominence in the 20th century. These pioneering 19th-century divas include the Hyers Sisters, Anna Madah [c. 1855-1929] and Emma Louise [c. 1857-1901], who would go on to produce and star in some of the first black musical theater shows not rooted in minstrelsy (see Figure 25); Rachel Walker, [1868-1943], billed as "The Creole Nightingale" (see Figure 26); and Flora Batson Bergen [1864-1906], a.k.a. "The Queen of Song."

Outliers among these women were the African American conjoined twins, Millie and Christine McCoy, and the male singer, Harry Burleigh. Born into slavery in North Carolina and promoted by P.T. Barnum and others in the era of the freak show as "The Carolina Twins" and "The Two-Headed Nightingale," Millie and Christine were accomplished singers, pianists, guitarists, and dancers. Burleigh, educated at the National Conservatory of Music in New York during Dvorak's tenure there as Director, is most remembered today as a composer, particularly of many eloquent piano-vocal arrangements of spirituals performed by Paul Robeson and other celebrated African American concert singers in the 20th century.

Eclipsing all other 19th-century African American songstresses in fame and vocal accomplishment was Matilda Sissieretta Jones (see Figure 27), nicknamed "Black Patti," after the celebrated Italian soprano, Adelina Patti. Early in her career, Jones performed at Carnegie Hall, in Europe, and at the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, occasionally sharing programs with Flora Batson. Frustrated, however, by her continued inability to secure engagements with legitimate opera companies in the United States or Europe, Jones agreed in the mid-1890s to headline a touring black vaudeville show, "Black Patti's Troubadours," loosely based on the three-part minstrel-show structure. The Troubadours, over the next thirty years, became one of the biggest draws in late-19th and early-20th century American show business. The company, in that time, co-starred a number of the era's most celebrated black musical theater performers, including Sam Lucas, James Bland, Abbie Mitchell, Ernest Hogan, Aida Overton Walker, and "Jolly" John Larkin, and its music was supplied early on by the eminent team of Bob Cole and Billy Johnson. But the troupe's longstanding success could be attributed primarily to Jones herself. Culminating each performance with a burlesque opera featuring the glamorous-attired Black Patti at the
center of an elaborate set, the Troubadours established Jones as the primary 19th-century forerunner of Mamie Smith, Bessie Smith, Gertrude "Ma" Rainey, and the other black vaudeville divas responsible for some of the first blues recordings.

Other trailblazing African Americans, many of whom had cut their teeth in minstrelsy, sought to move black musical theater beyond the structural and racially-charged limitations of the burnt cork circuit. These initial forays were often as actors, singers, and banjo players in one of the many white-produced, staged interpretations of Harriet Beecher Stowe's 1852 anti-slavery novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin, mounted after the Civil War. As the century progressed, however, African Americans musicians, dancers, writers, and producers increasingly took control of their own identities and careers. The first to do so were the Hyers Sisters. In 1876, Anna Madah and Emma Louise produced and starred with Sam Lucas in Out of Bondage, the first plot-driven, black-produced, musical theater work starring only African Americans, and the first to tell a story of the black experience without the racist caricaturing of minstrelsy (see Figure 28). A four-act musical drama written by the white Boston playwright, Joseph Bradford, the show evoked, according to James Monroe Trotter, the "four phases in the life of a freedman, beginning in slavery, and continuing through to his attainment of education and refinement."

Sam Lucas became, in 1878, the first African American to play Uncle Tom in a theatrical production of Uncle Tom's Cabin. In and out of minstrelsy at least until 1879, Lucas finally quit the field for good. "[Lucas] told me," recalled fellow black minstrel performer Ike Simond, that "he never would black his face again, and as I have met him in nearly every city of the United States since that time, I don't think he ever has."

The 1890s saw the emergence of numerous white-produced traveling musical revues—including Sam Jack's Creole Show and Isham's Octoroos, featuring exclusively black casts in vaudeville-style variety shows. Clarindy, or The Origin of the Cake Walk, a white-produced one-act show lasting only forty-five minutes, broke new ground in 1898 via a short run at the outdoor Casino Roof Garden in New York City, where it became the first Broadway musical written and performed entirely by African Americans. Clarindy's score, co-written by Paul Laurence Dunbar, the most famous African American poet of the late 19th century, and the composer, Will Marion Cook, was imbued with "coon songs," the term for the controversial, but highly-popular, late-19th century minstrel-type songs that incorporated the syncopated rhythms of ragtime while promoting racist stereotypes (see Figure 29). Appropriately, the show starred Ernest Hogan, a celebrated musical comedian often credited with writing the first-published coon song.

A Trip to Coontown briefly played the next year at the same Casino Roof Garden, thereby becoming the first full-length Broadway musical produced, written, staged, and performed exclusively by African Americans. Co-produced and co-written by the stars, Bob Cole and Billy Johnson, veterans of Black Patti's Troubadours, the show also featured Sam Lucas.

The 1903 production of In Dahomey constituted a quantum leap for African American musical comedy (see Figure 30). Mounted at the New York Theater, on Broadway between 44th and 45th Streets, the show became the first full-length, all-black musical to have an extended run at a major indoor Broadway house. More importantly, its "back-to-Africa" story by Jesse Shipp [1864-1934], with music by a roster of composer/lyricists led by Will Marion Cook and Paul Laurence Dunbar, was a multi-tiered sendup of many of the racist theatrical tropes established in minstrelsy. At the center of In Dahomey's narrative were its two starring roles, played by the comedy team of Bert Williams [1874-1922] and George Walker [1872 or 1873-1911]. Williams, in blackface, as the slow-witted country bumpkin, Shylock Homestead, and Walker as the uncorked-up citified fop, Rareback Pinkerton, have been dismissed by some as a mere recycling of "The Two Real Coons" characters that had become a Williams and Walker trademark in their earlier career on the black vaudeville circuit. Under closer scrutiny, however, these depictions take on a more complex cast—as subversive satirizations of the Jim Crow and Zip Coon archetypes established over a half-century earlier in white minstrelsy.

In Dahomey catapulted Williams and Walker to a level of stardom unprecedented for African American stage performers. After Walker's premature death, Williams went on to a stratospheric solo career in music, theater, and film. Over time, his comic onstage persona, always in blackface, subtly evolved from the shiftless "darky" to an intelligent, if resigned, observer of his own hardscrabble life. In 1910, he became the first African American to cross the theatrical racial divide when he starred for the first of many times in the previously all-white Ziegfeld Follies. A surviving film, entitled A Natural Born Gambler, of Williams' legendary poker routine from the 1908 show, Bandanna Land, and the recently rediscovered 1913 silent movie, Lime Kiln Field Day, in which Williams appeared with Sam Lucas and Will Marion Cooke's wife, Abbie Mitchell, suggest that Williams may have been the greatest pantomime before Charlie Chaplin.

Ending at the dawn of the recording and silent film eras, Bamboula! Black Music Before the Blues has traversed the entire printed history of early African American music. This continuum, from its rural origins on slave plantations of the colonial period to the explosion of urban popular culture in the early 20th century, reflects both the racial tensions that continue to haunt the United States and the cross-pollination between African- and European-based cultures that has always been a hallmark of the Black Atlantic. Dvorak, for one, would have marveled at the sheer beauty and multi-tiered complexity of this material. More than a century after the Czech composer's famous 1893 pronouncement and now in the post-Obama era, it is hoped that all Americans embrace our nation's richly-layered and racially-charged musical past.
Plates

Figure 1
[Book] Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings: The Folklore of the Old Plantation
Joel Chandler Harris [1846-1900]
New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881
Collection of John Davis

Figure 2
[Book] Slave Songs of the United States
William Francis Allen [1830-1898], Charles Pickard Ware
[1849-1921] and Lucy McKim Garrison [1842-1877]
New York: A. Simpson & Co., 1867
Collection of John Davis

Figure 3 (right)
[Book] A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies
Marshall W. Taylor [1846-1877]
Collection of John Davis
Figure 4
Music and Some Highly Musical People
James Monroe Trotter [1842-1892]
Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1879
Collection of John Davis

Figure 5
[Sheet Music] Philadelphia Gray's Quick Step,
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Figure 6
[Carte de visite] Louis Moreau Gottschalk
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Figure 7
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New York: Horace Waters, 1860
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Figure 9
[Playbill] Blind Tom Concerts at Jackson Hall, Monday &
Tuesday Even'js, June 13th & 14th
Washington, D.C. c. 1866
Collection of John Davis

Figure 10
[Sheet Music] The Battle of Manassas, for the Piano
Blind Tom [1849-1908]
Chicago Root & Co., 1866
Collection of John Davis
Figure 11
[Engraving] Mr. T. D. Rice of the Theatres Royal,
[inscribed by Rice]
Artist Unknown
London: c. 1836
Collection of John Davis

Figure 12
[Sheet Music] Jimmy Crow: a Celebrated Comic Song or
Ballad, as Sung by All the Comic Singers...
T. D. Rice (1808-1860)
New York: Arwill's Music Saloon, c. 1830
Collection of John Davis

Figure 13 (right)
[Sheet Music] Who's That Knocking at the Door, from
Whitlock's Collection of Ethopian Melodies...
William Whitlock (1813-1878)
New York: C. G. Christman, 1846
Collection of John Davis
Figure 17
[Playbill] Callender's Famous Georgia Minstrels Charles
Callender, Proprietor
Providence: Franklin Printing House, c. 1872
Collection of John Davis

Figure 18
[Color Lithograph] Billy Kernands, Callender's Minstrels
Artist Unknown
Cincinnati: Stewbridge Lithographing Co., c. 1875-1885
Collection of John Davis

Figure 19
[Sheet Music] Old Uncle Jasper, as Sung by Sam Lucas
With Great Success, from Sam Lucas' Great Songs
C.A. White
Boston: White, Smith & Company, 1876
Collection of John Davis

Figure 20
[Sheet Music] In the Evening By the Moonlight, from
James A. Bland's Great Ethiopian Songs
James Bland [1854-1911]
New York: Hetchcock's Music Store, 1880
Collection of John Davis
Figure 21
[Ticket] This Ticket and 15 Cents Will Admit Any Pupil or School Child to the Blind Boone Concert
C. 1878
Collection of John Davis

Figure 22 (below)
[Book] Blind Boone: His Early Life and His Achievements
Melissa Fuell [1886-1968]
Kansas City: Burton Publishing Co., 1915
Collection of John Davis

Figure 23
[Carte de visite] Fisk Jubilee Singers
Photographer Unknown
C. 1871
Collection of John Davis

Figure 24
[ Cabinet Card] University Singers of New Orleans, in Aid of Colored Orphans' Home of Louisiana
Photographer Unknown
Philadelphia: L. A. Sawyer, c. 1880
Collection of John Davis
Figure 25
[Concert Ticket] Hyers Sisters Concert
C. 1875
Collection of John Davis

Figure 26
[Photograph] Rachel Walker: The Creole Nightingale
Photographer Unknown
C. 1895
Collection of John Davis

Figure 27 (Right)
[Broadside] The Greater Black Patti Troubadours, Black Patti (Ame. Sissiereta Jones), Greatest Singer of Her Race
Chicago: National Printing and Engraving Co., c. 1896
Collection of John Davis
Figure 28
[Broadside] The Famous Hyers Sisters Combination, Assisted by the Only Colored Comedian, Sam Lucas, In the New Edition of Out of Bondage, or, From Slavery to Freedom
Boston: Boston Job Print, 1880
Collection of John Davis

Figure 29
[Sheet Music] Who Dat Say Chicken In Dis Crowd: the Great Success of "Chorus, or The Origin of the Cake-Walk"
Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906), Will Marion Cook (1869-1944)
New York, Chicago: M. Witmark & Sons, c. 1898
Collection of John Davis

Figure 30
[Sheet Music] I'm a Jonah Man, from "In Dahomey"
Alex Rogers (1876-1930)
New York, Chicago: M. Witmark & Sons, c. 1905
Collection of Brown University Library
Checklist

Plantsation Folk Music, Dance, and Spoken Word: The First Flowerings of a Distinctly African-American Cultural Tradition

[Print] A Negro Slave Dance - The Bamboula
E. W. Kamble [1861-1935]
The Century Co., 1886
Collection of John Davis

[Book] Poems of Cabin and Field
Paul Lawrence Dunbar [1872-1906]
New York: Dodd, Mead & Company, 1899
Collection of John Davis

[Book] Slave Songs of the United States
William Francis Allen [1836-1889], Charles Pickard Ware [1849-1922] and Lucy McKim Garrison [1842-1877]
New York: A. Simpson & Co., 1867
Collection of John Davis

[Book] A Collection of Revival Hymns and Plantation Melodies
Marshall W. Taylor [1846-1877]
Collection of John Davis

[Book] Uncle Remus, His Songs and His Sayings: The Folklore of the Old Plantation
Joel Chandler Harris [1848-1908]
New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1881
Collection of John Davis

[Book] Negro Folk Rhymes, Wise and Otherwise, With a Study
Thomas W. Talley [1870-1952]
[Special Autographed Edition]
Collection of John Davis

African-American Musicians First Take the Stage

Louis Moreau Gottschalk [1829-1869]
Boston: Oliver Ditson, c. 1844-1845
Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] Town Hall! Gottschalk! One Occasion Only...
Boston: F. A. Shurtleff, Plaza and Ornamental Printer, 1865
Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Philadelphia Boy's Quick Step, From Bellini's Opera I Puritani, as Performed by Johnson's Brass Band
Francis Johnson [1792-1844]
Philadelphia: L. Meignen & Co., c. 1840
Collection of John Davis

Music and Some Highly Musical People
James Monroe Trotter [1842-1892]
Boston: Lee and Shepard, Publishers, 1879
Collection of John Davis

[Pamphlet] American Notes for General Circulation
Charles Dickens [1812-1870]
New York: D. Appleton & Co., 1868
Collection of John Davis

[Carte de visite] Louis Moreau Gottschalk
E. Anthony [1839-1888]
New York: Brady's National Portrait Gallery, c. 1860
Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] The Banjo Grotesque Fantasia, on American Sketch
Louis Moreau Gottschalk [1829-1869]
Boston: Oliver Ditson, 1855
Collection of John Davis

[Book] Notes of a Pianist
Louis Moreau Gottschalk [1829-1869]
Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1881
Collection of John Davis
Black Minstrelsy: African Americans Find Opportunity and Expression in a Controversial Musical Theater Tradition

[Sheet Music] The Old Home Ain't What It Used To Be: Companion Song to Old Folks At Home, As Sung by the Georgia Minstrels and Dedicated to Charles B. Hicks C. A. White (c. 1852-1892)
- Boston: White, Smith, & Co., 1872
- Collection of John Davis

[Playbill] Callender's Famous Georgia Minstrels: Charles Callender, Proprietor
- Providence: Franklin Printing House, c. 1872
- Collection of John Davis

[Color Lithograph] Billy Kerendano, Callender's Minstrels
- Cincinnati: Sessawridge Lithographing Co., c. 1880
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Old Uncle Japorn, as Sung by Sam Lucas With Great Success, From Sam Lucas' Great Songs C. A. White (1832-1892)
- Boston: White, Smith & Company, 1876
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Carve Dat Pecunia, Original Song & Chorus, Sung With Unbounded Applause by ... Sam Lucas, of Callender's Original Georgia Minstrels
- London: F. Perry & Co., c. 1875
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] In the Evening By the Moonlight, From James A. Blans' Great Ethiopian Song James H. Bland (1854-1911)
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Oh, Dem Golden Slippers, Song & Chorus ... by James Bland, of Spongo's Georgia Minstrels
- James Bland (1854-1911)
- Boston: John F. Perry & Co., 1879
- Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] Sam Hagan's Minstrels
- London: Stafford & Co., c. 1870
- Collection of John Davis

Keyboard Continuum: Blind Tom, Blind Boone, and the Push Toward Ragtime, Blues, and Jazz

[Engraving] Blind Tom, the Musical Prodigy
- Philadelphia: Ledge Job Printing, c. 1870
- Collection of John Davis

[Playbill] Blind Tomconcerts at Jackson Hall, Monday & Tuesday Evening, June 13th & 14th
- Washington, D.C.: Printer, c. 1866
- Collection of John Davis

[Carte de visite] Blind Tom
- Washington, D.C.: Johnson's National Gallery, c. 1875
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music Manuscript] Rêve Charmant: Nocturne Pour Le Piano (incomplete, in the hand of Joseph Ponzanniti)
- Blind Tom [1849-1908]
- Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] The Wonderful Negro Boy Pianist, the Great Musical Prodigy of the Age, the Most Marvelous Genius Living, Blind Tom
- Baltimore: Sun Steam Book & Job Printing Establishment, 1884
- Collection of John Davis

[Ticket] This Ticket and 15 Cents Will Admit Any Papier or School Child to the Blind Boone Concert
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Josephine Polka, for the Piano
- Blind Boone [1864-1927]
- Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1891
- Collection of John Davis

- Chicago: Chicago Evening Journal Engraving and Printing House, c. 1860
- Collection of John Davis

White Minstrelsy: The Racially-Charged Beginning of American Show Business

[Engraving] Mr. T. D. Rice of the Theaters Royal, [inscribed by Rice]
- Artist Unknown
- London: c. 1836
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Jimmy Crow: A Celebrated Comic Song or Ballad, as Sung by All the Comic Singers ... T. D. Rice [1805-1860]
- New York: Averill's Music Saloons, c. 1830
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Who's That Knocking at the Door, from Whitlock's Collection of Ethiopian Melodies ... William Whitlock [1813-1875]
- New York: G. G. Christmas, 1846
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Cynthia Sue, from Songs of the Virginia Seesaws
- James P. Carter [Dates Unknown]
- Boston: Keith's Publishing House, 1844
- Collection of John Davis

- New York: Jaques and Brother, 1847
- Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Old Folks At Home: Ethiopian Melody, As Sung by Christy's Minstrels
- Stephen Foster [1826-1848]
- New York: Firth, Pond & Co., 1851
- Collection of John Davis

- Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] Positively One Night Only, Novelty on the Largest Scale! Greatest Hit of the Nineteenth Century by Buckley's Sennedorf and New Parlor Entertainment From Boston
- Boston: F. A. Searle Printer, 1867
- Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] Holley's Theatre! Continued and Merited Success of the California Minstrels, Under the Management of J. H. Hare
- Chicago: Chicago Evening Journal Engraving and Printing House, c. 1860
- Collection of John Davis
[Sheet Music] Blind Boone's Southern Rag Medley No. 2: Strings From The Flat Branch
Blind Boone [1864-1927]
Columbia, MO: Allen Music Co., 1909
Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Nearer My God To Thee: Variations, Played by Blind Boone
Blind Boone [1864-1927]
Chicago: QRS Co., Autograph Hand Played 400046, 1912
Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] Blind Boone: His Early Life and His Achievements
Melvin Fussell [1886-1968]
Kansas City: Burton Publishing Co., 1915
Collection of John Davis

* Vocal Continuum: Singing Ancestors of 20th-Century Gospel Quartets and Black Vaudeville Blues Queens

[Sheet Music] Fisk Jubilee Singers
Photographer Unknown
c. 1871
Collection of John Davis

The Original Company From Nashville, Tenn.
Boston: Music Hall, c. 1880
Collection of John Davis

[Catalog Card] University Singers of New Orleans, in Aid of Colored Orphans' Home of Louisiana
Photographer Unknown
Philadelphia: L.A. Sawyer, c. 1880
Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] The Original Norfolk Jubilee Singers
1875
Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] Hyenas Sisters Concert
1875
Collection of John Davis

[Cabinet Card] Rachel Walker: The Creole Nightingale
Photographer Unknown
1885
Collection of John Davis

[Book] Life, Travels and Works of Miss Flora Batson,
Descendant Queen of Song
Gnaden Miller
T.M. R. M. Co., c. 1906
Collection of Brown University Library

[Songster] Songs as Sung by The Black Patti Troubadours,
The Greatest Color Show on Earth
New York: M. Witmark, 1900
Collection of John Davis

[Broadside] The Greatest Black Patti Troubadours, Black Patti (Missie Siauea [sic] Jones), Greatest Singer of Her Race
Chicago: National Printing and Engraving Co., c. 1896
Collection of John Davis

[Advertisement] (Playbill) Black Patti's Troubadours, 50 Ebony Entertainers, Beginning with a Racy Musical Shit, entitled As Jolly "Cow'-ay Island, by Bob Cole and Billy Johnson
c. 1896
Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] A Coon of Pedigree, a Gem From the Black Patti Troubadours,
Wm. B. Friedlander [1884-1966] "Jolly" John Larkin
[1882-1936]
Chicago: Will Rosseter, 1907
Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen,
Arranged for Solo Voice by H.T. Burleigh
Harry Burleigh [1866-1949]
New York: J. Birrell & Co., 1897
Collection of John Davis

[Cabinet Card] Millie Christine, Two Headed Nightingale,
Born 1885
Photographer Unknown
New York: Oliver Co., c. 1875
Collection of John Davis

[Program] The Eight Wonders of the World....25 Miss Millie Christine, The Carolina Twins: Biography, Medical Description and Songs of Miss Millie Christine, The Two-Headed Nightingale
New York: M.J. Rooney & Co., c. 1890
Collection of John Davis

Breaking Down Minstrel Stereotypes: Black Theater Moves to Broadway

[Sheet Music] Good-By, Old Cabin Home: Solo, Duet, and Chorus
C.A. White [c. 1833-1892]
Boston: White, Smith & Co., c. 1877
Collection of Brown University Library

[Broadside] The Famous Hyena Sisters Combination,
Assisted by the Only Colored Comedian, Sam Lucas, In the New Edition of Out of Bondage, or, From Slavery to Freedom
Boston: Boston: Job Pringle, 1880
Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Darktown is Out Tonight: From the Great Success "Cherlindy, or The Origin of the Cake-Walk"
Cake Walk Song and Chorus
Will Marion Cook [1869-1944]
New York: Chicago: M. Witmark & Sons, c. 1898
Collection of Brown University Library

[Sheet Music] Who Dat Say Chicken In Dis Crowd:
The Great Success of "Cherlindy, or The Origin of the Cake-Walk"
Paul Laurence Dunbar [1872-1906], Will Marion Cook [1869-1944]
New York: Chicago: M. Witmark & Sons, c. 1898
Collection of John Davis

[Sheet Music] Chicken, from "A Trip to Constantin";
Bob Cole [1868-1913], Billy Johnson [1858-1916], Willis Accoe [1874-1966]
New York: Howley, Haviland & Co., c. 1899
Collection of Brown University Library

[Sheet Music] I'm a Jemsh Man, from "In Daumney"
Alex Rogers [1876-1930]
New York, Chicago: M. Witmark & Sons, c. 1903
Collection of Brown University Library

[Sheet Music] Nobody Bert Williams' Latest Oddity,
Successor to I May be Crazy but I Ain't No Fool
Alex Rogers [1876-1939], Bert Williams [1874-1922]
Collection of Brown University Library


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T. D. BANER
D. A. TRIM
C. C. ELAPP & CO.
T. S. BERRY & CO.

Boston
Boston
Cincinnati
Boston
N.York.

207 Printed in Canada

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