WILLIAM GRANT STILL AND THE BALANCE OF POPULAR VS. CLASSICAL: PACE & HANDY, BLACK SWAN, AND *SHUFFLE ALONG*

by

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ABSTRACT
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Although known for his classical compositions, the African American composer William Grant Still worked in the popular music market at Pace & Handy Music Publishing, Black Swan Records, and as an orchestrator and pit musician for the black musical, *Shuffle Along*. These are all early experiences that must be considered when discussing his later success in art and popular music and that can offer valuable insight for scholars. In order to understand these employment experiences, this thesis places Still in the cultural context of early-1920s New York. By examining the ideology of racial uplift and the African American entertainment scene in the 19th and early 20th centuries, a better understanding of Still's experience is gained. The experiences he had in early 1920s New York did not encompass his popular music output alone, but a much wider and important experience of learning, as a young black man, about how to function in a society where racial stereotypes directly played a role in how African Americans were viewed—not only within their own race but also within the social structure of the wider American culture.

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Looking forward to the next chapter!

Introduction

The African American composer William Grant Still (1895-1978) has been referred to as the "Dean of Afro-American composers" and a "Harlem Renaissance man."[1] He is also credited as being the first African American to have a symphony performed by a major orchestra (*Afro-American Symphony,* 1931), to conduct a major symphony orchestra (LA Philharmonic, 1936), to have an opera staged by a major company (*Troubled Island*, 1949), and to have an opera aired on national television (*Bayou Legend* premiered on PBS in 1981).[2] While all of these titles and firsts are significant, they provide little insight into Still's life and experiences as a black man growing up and thriving in the popular music scene in early-1920s New York City.

Much research has been done on Still's later compositions and particularly his works that followed *Afro-American Symphony* (1930). However, his career in and influences from the field of popular music in early 1920s New York have largely been overlooked. Jon Michael Spencer mentioned that while in New York in the early 1920s, Still learned much in the "school of experience," but Spencer offered few details about that experience.[3] What was Still's school of experience? He worked at Pace & Handy Music Publishing, Black Swan Records, and as an orchestrator and pit musician for the black musical, *Shuffle Along*. These early experiences must be considered when discussing Still's later success in art and popular music and they can offer valuable

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[1] Gayle Murchison, "'Dean of Afro-American Composers' or 'Harlem Renaissance Man': The New Negro and the Musical Poetics of William Grant Still" in *William Grant Still: A Study in Contradictions*, ed. Catherine Parsons Smith (Berkeley CA: University of California Press, 2000), 39.

[2] Ibid., 39.

[3] See Jon Michael Spencer, "An Introduction to William Grant Still," in *The William Grant Still Reader: Essays on American Music*, ed. Jon Michael Spencer (Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 2.

insight for scholars. How did his time in the field of popular music, specifically in music publishing, the recording studio, and in the theater, contribute to his success as a composer? In order to understand this experience, Still must be placed in the cultural context of early-1920s New York. With whom did he work? Where did he work? What were the racial and political dynamics of his workplaces and his employers? An overview of nineteenth century African American history, ideology, and entertainment will also help place Still's later experiences into context.

The Civil War and its 1863 Emancipation Proclamation freed millions of slaves who were largely uneducated and unprepared to survive in a highly discriminatory society. During the Reconstruction period following the Civil War, newly freed Southern African Americans, as well as those already free in the North struggled to find a place in society. Chapter One explores the ideas of African American leaders, including the orators and social reformers Frederick Douglass (1818-1895), Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), and W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963), who sought strategies to incorporate free African Americans into American society.

Chapter Two provides a contextual overview of black entertainment as it emerged after the Civil War. From blackface to all-black minstrelsy, circus sideshows, and vaudeville, African Americans had been active in the entertainment industry not only through sheet music and in the recording studio, but also on the stage. Blackface minstrel characters like "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon" shaped the stereotyped images of African Americans. How did these forms of entertainment contribute to the identity and artistic output of African Americans during the early 1920s and what might Still have learned while working in this environment?

This overview of the transition from blackface minstrelsy to all-black minstrel shows as well as the context and creation of early blackface minstrel characters allows for a better understanding of how African American entertainers were able to later succeed on stage in all-black minstrel shows and vaudeville: forms of entertainment that were critical to the success of black entertainers later in the 1920s. While these stereotypes did allow African Americans lucrative stage careers, they also limited the kinds of expression for African Americans into the twentieth century. [4]

Chapter Three provides information about Still's work experience from 1919 - 1921 with W.C. Handy at Pace & Handy Music Publishing. During this time, Pace & Handy published Still's first known popular song, "No Matter What You Do." W.C. Handy and Harry Pace's business relationship provided the landscape for one of the first black-run blues music-publishing companies. What types of music were big sellers? How did this factor into Handy's decisions about what music to publish?

Also important to this chapter were the composers and the performers. The context of the songs and songwriters spanning the era of minstrelsy through the coon song and blues provides information on how these forms shaped the publications of Pace & Handy.[5] After Still completed his tenure at Pace & Handy, he remained in contact with

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[4] Overviews of blackface and all-black minstrel shows are provided in Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara, eds., *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy* (Hanover CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), and Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974). Eileen Southern, *The Music of Black Americans: A History*, 3rd ed. (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997), and Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press, 1997) outline forms of entertainment that influenced blackface minstrelsy and provide context for minstrel stereotypes.

[5] David A. Jasen and Gene Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around: Black Popular Songwriters, 1880-1930* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998) provides information on numerous African American songwriters spanning different genres from the turn of the century through the end of the 1920s.

Handy and valued Handy's opinions on many issues regarding business and life.[6] As one of Still's first professional work experiences, the job at Pace & Handy influenced Still's development, not only as a young composer, but also in business etiquette.

Chapter Four focuses on Still's employment at Black Swan Phonograph Company. Still served as arranger, recording manager, and musical director for the Black Swan Phonograph Company in the early 1920s. Many of his individual popular songs were performed and recorded on this label by artists such as Ethel Waters, Josie Miles, and Fletcher Henderson. Composed under a pseudonym, most of the original manuscripts of these compositions have been lost, but several recordings exist. A survey of the people Still met during this time and the marketing of Black Swan recordings offers insight into this period of his life.

Research about Black Swan Phonograph Company is limited, but growing. Ted Vincent's *Keep Cool: The Black Activists Who Built the Jazz Age* and David Suisman's dissertation "The Sound of Money: Music, Machines, and Markets, 1890-1925," provide information about marketing aspects of the record company.[7] *Black Swan: The Record Label of the Harlem Renaissance* contains all of the catalog listings, some advertisements, and a complete discography of the records produced by Black Swan.[8] Tim Brooks's *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919* is a valuable resource

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[6] For published correspondence between W.C. Handy and William Grant Still, see Eileen Southern, "Letters from W.C. Handy to William Grant Still," *The Black Perspective in Music* 7, no. 2 (1979), 199-234 and "Letters from W.C. Handy to William Grant Still," *The Black Perspective in Music* 8, no. 1 (1980), 65-119.

[7] Ted Vincent, *Keep Cool: The Black Activists Who Built the Jazz Age* (East Haven CT: Pluto Press, 1995) and David Suisman, "The Sound of Money: Music, Machines, and Markets, 1890-1925" (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 2002).

[8] Helge Thygesen, Mark Beressford, and Russ Shor, *Black Swan: The Record Label of the Harlem Renaissance* (Nottingham: VJM Publications, 1996).

for biographies of the people who Harry Pace chose to record at Black Swan and those with whom William Grant Still had contact.[9]

The general history of recorded music, especially that of African American music, is also discussed in this chapter. To gain an understanding of the recording dynamic at Black Swan, the experiences of Ethel Waters and Fletcher Henderson were considered.[10] Given that Still was employed as music director at this time, he would have been directly involved in the recording processes for these musicians.

Chapter Five focuses on the African American musical, *Shuffle Along* (1921), with music and lyrics by Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake. Still played oboe in the orchestra pit for the show's first run in 1921, and later orchestrated some of its songs. Cited by critics Langston Hughes and James Weldon Johnson as a sign of the incipient Harlem Renaissance, *Shuffle Along* also furthered African American stereotypes by including standard blackface characters from black vaudeville shows.[11] Chapter Five places the show in context by reviewing the history of black stage entertainment since the Civil War, comparing *Shuffle Along* to previous black musicals, and outlining reviews of the show. A study of *Shuffle Along* provides information on the people Still met, the types of music he learned, and his witnessing of stereotypes and broken stereotypes.

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[9] Tim Brooks, *Lost Sounds: Blacks and the Birth of the Recording Industry, 1890-1919* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1997).

[10] Biographies of both Waters and Henderson have accounts of their experiences at Black Swan. For further research see, Ethel Waters, *To Me It's Wonderful* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), Ethel Waters, *His Eye Is On the Sparrow* (Cambridge MA: Da Capo Press, 1992), and Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing: Fletcher Henderson and Big Band Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).

[11] Cary D. Wintz, "Harlem Renaissance," *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e0008 (accessed May 4 2013).

William Grant Still's professional experiences in early 1920s New York City played a role in his compositional growth and development, but I want to suggest a different perspective on Still's "school of experience" in the city. While Still composed and arranged during this period, I will argue that the most valuable experience he gained during this time was learning how to succeed as an African American entertainer. As a young man in New York City he learned how to market himself in a world where African Americans had to manage a delicate balance between sophisticated and "primitive" in order to gain widespread popularity in art forms.

In the later 1920s, the Harlem Renaissance shaped him in important ways, as Parsons Smith has demonstrated in some of her research. But it was the work experience, the "school of experience" of pre-Harlem Renaissance New York and learning how African Americans like W.C. Handy and Harry Pace, Bert Williams and George Walker, Ethel Waters, and Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake operated and dealt with racial stereotypes that would prove most beneficial to Still. Later in his career he worked with people like Paul Whiteman, who wanted Still's music because it fit his business model of marketing jazz to white audiences. Still worked in film and radio but also composed art songs and symphonies. The "school of experience" in early 1920s New York did not encompass his popular music output alone, but a much wider and important experience of learning, as a young black man, about how to function in a society where racial stereotypes directly played a role in how African Americans were viewed—not only within their own race but also within the social structure of the wider American culture.

Chapter One
Striving for Racial Uplift

The Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the ratification of the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Amendments in 1865 and 1868 following the Civil War were designed to abolish slavery and incorporate African Americans as United States citizens. However, before the Emancipation Proclamation, slaves constituted approximately 13 percent of the entire United States population and that 13 percent represented 90 percent of the African American population of the United States.[1] The abolition of slavery freed nearly four million people. The freedmen lacked education, literacy, land and resources, and had few legal and political rights.[2] In the post-war Reconstruction period, Frederick Douglass became a leading voice for African Americans in the struggle for racial uplift. This meant balancing the needs of the African Americans against the still racially charged atmosphere of the United States.

Frederick Douglass

African American social reformer, writer, and educator, Frederick Douglass (1818-1895) suggested imitation of white public education as a method of racial uplift. White education in the nineteenth century taught literacy, instilled moral values, and followed the classical *mimesis* of Plato and Aristotle.[3] Therefore, the ability to understand,

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[1] Delano Greenridge-Copprue, "Freedmen," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1619-1895: From the Colonial Period to the Age of Frederick Douglass*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0004/e0231 (accessed February 18, 2014).

[2] Ibid.

[3] Kirt H. Wilson, "The Racial Politics of Imitation in the Nineteenth Century," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 89, no. 2 (2003), 89-91. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, classical *mimesis* is the idea that deliberate imitation of one group of people by another plays a role in social change.

speak, and write became important to freedmen. African Americans designed their education on the models that surrounded them: those of the white majority. As evidenced by a number of anti-miscegenation laws in the South, some of the white population viewed the struggle for civil rights as an attempt by the African Americans to destroy white culture and hegemony. New Jersey Senator John Stockton, who voted against the Fourteenth Amendment, questioned African American school desegregation and felt that it forced integration and signaled the end of racial purity.[4] How could African Americans become literate and educated through white educational models when white middle-class leaders believed that educated African Americans would ruin white culture?

Frederick Douglass needed to help the African Americans form an identity, while proving that he was not a threat to white society. He accomplished this through public speeches and his three published autobiographies: *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, an American Slave* (1845), *My Bondage and My Freedom* (1855), and *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (1881 rev. 1892).[5] He modeled his autobiographies after Benjamin Franklin's, presenting a rags to riches approach towards individualism and a reliance on the written word as a means of affecting society.[6] The primary audience for these works was the majority white population from whom he sought acceptance.[7]

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[4] Ibid., 98.

[5] Frederick Douglass, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass: An American Slave* (New York: Penguin Books, 1982), Frederick Douglass, *My Bondage and My Freedom* (New York: Arno Press, 1968), and Frederick Douglass, *Life and Times of Frederick Douglass* (New York: Bonanza Books, 1962).

[6] For a more detailed look at specifics in Douglass's autobiographies, see Kimberly Drake, "Rewriting the American Self: Race, Gender, and Identity in the Autobiographies of Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs," *MELUS* 22, no. 4 (1997), 91-108. Drake compares the biographies of African American writer and abolitionist speaker Harriet Jacobs, author of *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861), and Douglass. She places them in the historical context in which they were written, taking into account their readership as well as nineteenth century cultural views on race and gender.

[7] Ibid., 91-108.

The competing challenges required to be accepted into a society but also maintain a sense of self-identity is evident in many of Douglass's writings and speeches, and represents the struggle and balance that is still required of African Americans to the present day. A sampling of his speeches is the best way to demonstrate this. The texts are presented chronologically, and present a careful and thoughtful rhetoric that attempts to satisfy both black and white audiences. The title and date of each speech is provided for those wishing to research further context regarding these speeches.

> "The Colonizationist Revival" - May 31, 1849
> You have no prejudices against blacks – no more than against any other color – but against the black man appearing as the colored gentleman. He is then a contradiction of your theory of natural inferiority in the colored race.[8]

> "These Questions Cannot Be Answered By The White Race" – May 11, 1855
> One thing is certain – whether we are capable, or have natural abilities to rise from a condition in life to a higher state of civilization – these questions cannot be answered for us: they must be answered by ourselves. We must show them we are skilled architects, profound thinkers, originators or discoverers of ideas, and other things connected with a higher state of civilization.[9]

> "A Friendly Word to Maryland" – November, 17, 1864
> We must educate ourselves. Let us resolve to point the finger of scorn at every colored man who refuses to send his children to school. You will find that the more intelligent and refined you become, the more your white brethren will respect you.[10]

> "Our Destiny Is Largely In Our Own Hands" – April 16, 1883
> There is but one destiny it seems to me, left for us, and that is to make ourselves and be made by others a part of the American people in every sense of the word. Assimilation and not isolation is our true policy and our natural destiny.[11]

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[8] All speeches are reprinted from the *Douglass Papers* and found in John R. McKivigan and Heather L. Kaufman, eds., *In the Words of Frederick Douglass: Quotations from Liberty's Champion* (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2012), 175.

[9] Ibid., 52.

[10] Ibid., 89.

[11] Ibid., 58.

The quotations represent multifaceted ways in which Douglass attempted to appease both black and white audiences. Representing his views on education, racism, and assimilation, his speeches outline the idea of racial uplift that influenced black leaders for years. The white fear of black identity and assimilation as well as the African American struggle for balance and racial uplift appears continuously in African American literature, schools, and entertainment. Douglass's words embody the beginnings of a racial struggle that has been ongoing since before the abolition of slavery.

Booker T. Washington: The Conservative

African American educator, presidential advisor, and author, Booker T. Washington (1856-1915) strove to expand upon Douglass's ideas of racial uplift. In his 1901 autobiography, *Up From Slavery*, Washington attempted to break down stereotypes that African Americans were unintelligent and pressed the white community to give black citizens a chance to prove their worth.[12] However, he also suggested that blacks not seek social equality and refrain from fighting for voting rights and desegregation in schools.[13] This view was later criticized as accommodation to southern whites.[14]

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[12] Booker T. Washington, *Up From Slavery: An Autobiography* (New Brunswick NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1997).

[13] Jacqueline M. Moore, *Booker T. Washington, W.E.B. Du Bois, and the Struggle for Racial Uplift* (Wilmington DE: Scholarly Resources Inc., 2003), 34-35.

[14] Washington has been criticized by scholars for his accomodationist attitudes towards the advancement of the African American race. For an historical overview on Washington scholarship, see Pero Gaglo Dagbovie, "Exploring a Century of Historical Scholarship on Booker T. Washington*," Journal of African American History* 92, no. 2 (2007), 239-264. For further examples of Washington's accomodationist and assimilationist attitudes, as well as those of his African American contemporaries, see Gordon E. Thompson, *The Assimilationist Impulse in Four African American Narratives: Frederick Douglass, James Weldon Johnson, Richard Wright, and LeRoi Jones* (Lewiston NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2011).

By the time his autobiography was published in 1901, Washington was already a prominent public speaker and had founded the Tuskegee Normal and Industrial Institute in Alabama in 1881. Designed to provide African Americans with an industrial education, the school's curriculum included academic subjects such as math and science as well as the teaching of skilled trades like farming.[15] Washington's school was created to help African Americans improve themselves, however, his conservative teachings also suggested that blacks not strive for voting rights and remain segregated at social functions.[16] It was this viewpoint that further enhanced his reputation as an accomodationist, and Moore has described him as "a man whom whites could rely on to keep an even temperament and propose conservative solutions."[17]

Booker T. Washington's 1895 Atlanta Compromise was an agreement between African American and Southern white leaders. It has been criticized for its conservative suggestions for racial uplift.

> As we have proved our loyalty to you in the past, in nursing your children, watching by the sick-bed of your mothers and fathers, and often following them with tear-dimmed eyes to their graves, so in the future, in our humble way, we shall stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach, ready to lay down our lives, if need be, in defense of yours, interlacing our industrial, commercial, civil, and religious life with yours in a way that shall make the interests of both races one. In all things that are purely social we can be as separate as the fingers, yet one as the hand in all things essential to mutual progress.[18]

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[15] Moore, *Booker T. Washington*, 30-31.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 30.

[18] This text, from Washington's speech at the Atlanta Exposition in 1895, was reprinted from Rebecca Carroll, ed., *Uncle Tom or New Negro?: African Americans Reflect on Booker T. Washington and Up From Slavery 100 One Hundred Years Later* (New York: Harlem Moon, 2006), 210.

W.E.B. Du Bois later attacked this passage as being too conservative and accomodationist in that it did not push African Americans to strive for equality.[19] Washington also highlighted the African American race as being more worthy than immigrants with his promise to "stand by you with a devotion that no foreigner can approach."[20] Washington thus attempted to advance the African American race by suggesting its superiority over immigrants—an increasing threat to white citizens in the North. Washington envisioned that the gradual process of economic prosperity within the African American race would give way to equal rights.[21]

Recent scholarship has taken new approaches in the understanding of Washington's conservatism by placing his ideas into the context of the time in which he lived. These studies outline both the origins and necessity of black conservative thought. In the wake of emancipation, the thousands of slaves who had little to no education needed to find ways to advance in a society that was not accustomed to their presence as free people. Christopher Allen Bracey and Robert Norrell have performed recent research that shows that accomodationist and assimilationist attitudes and educations were not uncommon or frowned upon by other African Americans during this time period.[22]

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[19] W.E.B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk: 100th Anniversary Edition* (Boulder CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2004), 30.

[20] Carroll, *Uncle Tom or New Negro?,* 210.

[21] James M. Beeby, "The Atlanta Compromise," in *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, http://africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/ (accessed January 23, 2014).

[22] For further information see, Christopher Allen Bracey, *Saviors or Sellouts: The Promise and Peril of Black Conservatism. From Booker T. Washington to Condoleeza Rice* (Boston MA: Beacon Press, 2008), 1-26, Robert J. Norrell, "Have Historians Given Booker T. Washington a Bad Rap?," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 62 (2008/2009), 62-69 and "Booker T. Washington: Understanding the Wizard of Tuskegee," *The Journal of Blacks In Higher Education* 42 (2003/2004), 96-109.

W.E.B. Du Bois: The Radical

African American sociologist, author, and civil rights activist, W.E.B. Du Bois (1868-1963) initially agreed with Washington's Atlanta Compromise, calling it "a word fitly spoken."[23] However, in his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903), a collection of scholarly essays that challenged black passive leadership and white racism, Du Bois dedicated Chapter Three of the book to a critique of Washington's educational policies and accomodationist attitudes.[24] By 1905, Du Bois was demanding equal voting rights for African Americans and suggesting that African American fight for those rights. He also stressed a more classical education for young African Americans, as opposed to Washington's Tuskegee model of vocational training.[25]

Du Bois also disagreed with Washington's idea that blacks should rise from the bottom up which meant first learning skills and trades that kept them subordinate to white people.[26] Du Bois created the concept of the Talented Tenth, suggesting that the top 10 percent of the black population, which included educated leaders and those with higher education would lead the race out of poverty and discrimination.[27] His idea that blacks could fight for rights was radical to a point. However, like Washington, Du Bois still

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[23] Raymond Wolters, *Du Bois and His Rivals* (Columbia MO: University of Missouri Press, 2002), 53 citing a letter from W.E.B. Du Bois to Booker T. Washington written on September 24, 1895.

[24] James N. Leiker, "Souls of Black Folk, The," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e1121 (accessed February 16, 2014), Wolters, *Du Bois and His Rivals*, 64, and Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk*, 23-32.

[25] Wolters, *Du Bois and His Rivals*, 55.

[26] Moore, *Booker T. Washington*, 62.

[27] Ibid.

believed in keeping some aspects of the races separate as he was outspoken about maintaining miscegenation.[28]

With the organization of his Niagara Movement in 1905, a meeting of middle to high-class black leaders, Du Bois called for a more radical approach to civil rights and attempted to quell the monopoly that Washington had garnered with the press. Encouraging African Americans to protest for and demand equal voting rights and denouncing all forms of segregation based on color were a few of the issues discussed at the meeting.[29] According to historian Manfred Berg, the conflict between Du Bois and Washington was such that:

> In the view of Du Bois and his associates, Washington's philosophy of accommodation amounted tacitly to accepting the white-supremacist doctrines of black inferiority. Equality of rights, radicals [like Du Bois] believed, were a necessary condition for economic progress rather than its ultimate reward, and could be achieved only by courageously protesting racial injustice and oppression.[30]

A few years after the Niagara Movement was founded, the National Negro Conference, later named the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), met for the first time from May 31 to June 1, 1909.

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[28] Wolters, *Du Bois and His Rivals*, 35.

[29] L. Diane Barnes, "Niagara Movement," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e0907 (accessed January 23, 2014). For further information on Booker T. Washington and his involvement with the Niagara Movement see, Christopher E. Forth, "Booker T. Washington and the 1905 Niagara Movement Conference," *The Journal of Negro History* 72, no. 3-4 (1987), 45-56. For more information on the conflict between Du Bois and Washington see, Mark Bauerlein, "Booker T. Washington and W.E.B. Du Bois: The Origins of a Bitter Intellectual Battle," *The Journal of Blacks in Higher Education* 46 (2004/2005), 106-114.

[30] Manfred Berg, "National Association for the Advancement of Colored People," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e0862 (accessed January 23, 2014).

The NAACP was racially integrated and among the founders were white businessman John Milholland, white journalist Oswald Garrison Villard, and white journalist and suffragist Mary White Ovington.[31] The association catered to upper and middle-class black and white families and distributed a monthly publication, *The Crisis*. Publication of the *The Crisis* began in 1910 and Du Bois served as editor. Designed originally to catalog the activities of the NAACP, *The Crisis* soon became a vehicle for Du Bois's opinions and ideas for racial uplift. From 1912 through circa 1913, increasing tension between Villard and Du Bois over financial matters and control of *The Crisis* caused Villard to call for Du Bois's resignation as editor. However, circulation of *The Crisis* under Du Bois had expanded from 1,000 to 22,500 from the first issue in 1910 through 1912. Due to the successful circulation numbers, the NAACP allowed Du Bois to remain editor of *The Crisis* and Villiard resigned in 1913.[32] *The Crisis* appealed to members of Du Bois's Talented Tenth and by 1919, the majority of the NAACP's 62,000 members were African Americans who had access to the publication.[33]

The ideas of racial uplift from the speeches and writings of Douglass, Washington, and Du Bois have permeated American culture since the end of the Civil War. Their ideas led to the emergence of the Harlem Renaissance in mid-1920s New York City and shaped all aspects of African American life as well as life in the wider American society. At the turn of the twentieth century, African Americans were steeped in these ideas.

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[31] Moore, *Booker T. Washington*, 83.

[32] Wolters, *Du Bois and His Rivals*, 78-85.

[33] Ibid., 90, and Moore, *Booker T. Washington*, 84-85.

Chapter Two
Nineteenth Century Popular Entertainment: Blackface to Vaudeville

Popular entertainment in the nineteenth century often provided an escape and offered an outlet for Americans to view and laugh at social, political, and cultural concerns. This contextual overview of black entertainment as it emerged after the Civil War discusses blackface, all-black minstrelsy, and vaudeville. African Americans were active in the entertainment industry not only through sheet music and in the recording studio, but also on the stage. Early nineteenth entertainment was critical to the success of black entertainment at the turn of the century and into the 1920s. Portrayals of "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon," and performances by the Virginia Minstrels and the Fisk Jubilee Singers, allowed for the inclusion of African Americans in the popular entertainment business around the 1870s. However, they also forced African Americans to perpetuate stereotypes that had been in place since the 1830s.

T.D. Rice and "Jim Crow"

The creation myth of "Jim Crow" is that in the late 1820s, Thomas D. Rice (1808-60), a white blackface entertainer, met a crippled African American stable worker who was doing a song and dance as he worked. Rice thought that the work song and dance would provide interesting material for a new number in his one-man blackface show, bought the African American's clothing, learned the dance, wrote new verses, and went on stage singing and dancing to the lyrics, "I Jump Jim Crow."[1] Dale Cockrell suggests that the song was not an instant success and that the creation of the character was

[1] Robert C. Toll, *On With The Show* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 82-83.

developed in a different manner. Cockrell believes that the earliest playbill listing "Jump Jim Crow" was dated September 22, 1830. [2] Rice had been performing in blackface by that time, and the concept of darkening the skin to play a black character was not new.[3] Cockrell posits that Rice may have developed the song after hearing a young English boy, Sam Cowell, who later became a famous music hall singer in London, singing a different popular blackface song, "Coal Black Rose."[4] "Coal Black Rose" was about two black men fighting over the same woman.

Regardless of the origins of the "Jim Crow" character, it became popular across the nation. Rice successfully portrayed the Jim Crow character in New York City in 1832 and then toured the country. In 1836, he performed "Jim Crow" in London.[5] W.T. Lhamon suggests that the success of "Jim Crow" provided a lucrative career for Rice:

> By 1835, T.D. Rice…had extended his song into hundred-verse extravaganzas. He was wheeling through them from New Orleans to New York. He had written three plays capacious enough to house his jumps, his 'Yah! Yah!' cackle, and his backtalk: *Oh Hush!* (1832), *The Virginia Mummy* (1835), and *Bone Squash Diavolo* (1835). [6]

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[2] Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 62-63.

[3] This tradition dates back to at least the early 1600s when white performers darkened their skin or wore black masks to perform the role of Othello in William Shakespeare's *Othello* (ca. 1604); see John Strausbaugh, *Black Like You: Blackface, Whiteface, Insult and Imitation in American Popular Culture* (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2006), 62.

[4] Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 62-63.

[5] Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up,* 28.

[6] W.T. Lhamon Jr., "Turning Around Jim Crow," in *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Stephen Johnson (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 27.

According to Robert C. Toll, many of the early black minstrelsy songs were of British origin. The "Jim Crow" melody is European in nature: a mix between an English stage song and an Irish folk song (See Figure 1).[7]

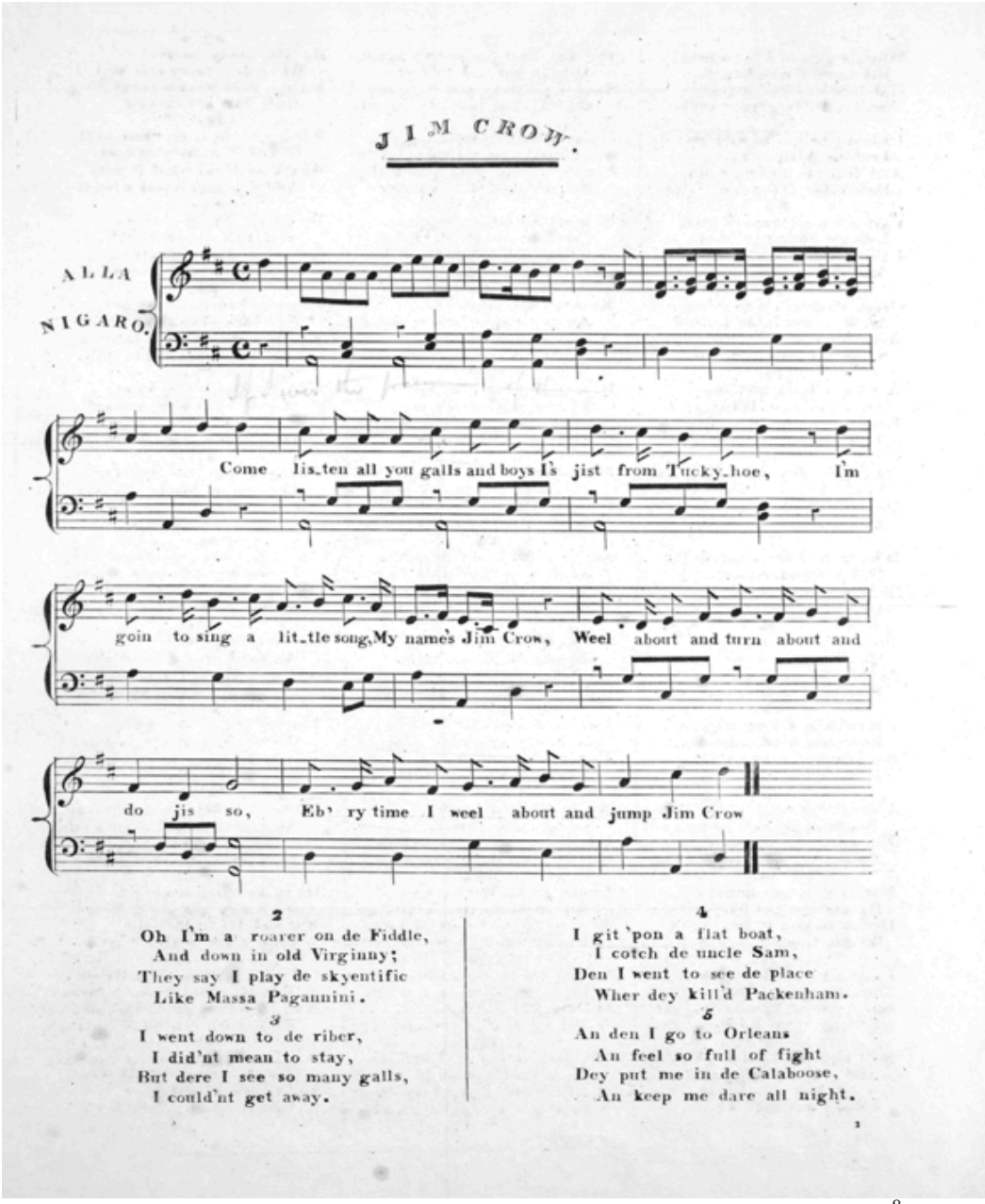

Figure 1: "Jim Crow" Sheet Music (No Date). Includes verses 1-5.[8]

[7] Toll, *Blacking Up*, 27.

[8] Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/catalog/levy:017.044a (accessed February 27, 2014).

According to the lyrics, which varied based on performance venue, geographical location, and social or political culture, Jim Crow was a black man from the Southwest (i.e., south and west of the Appalachian mountains) who wore ragged clothing, was a womanizer, and was politically outspoken.[9] The images on sheet music furthered this stereotype (See Figure 2).

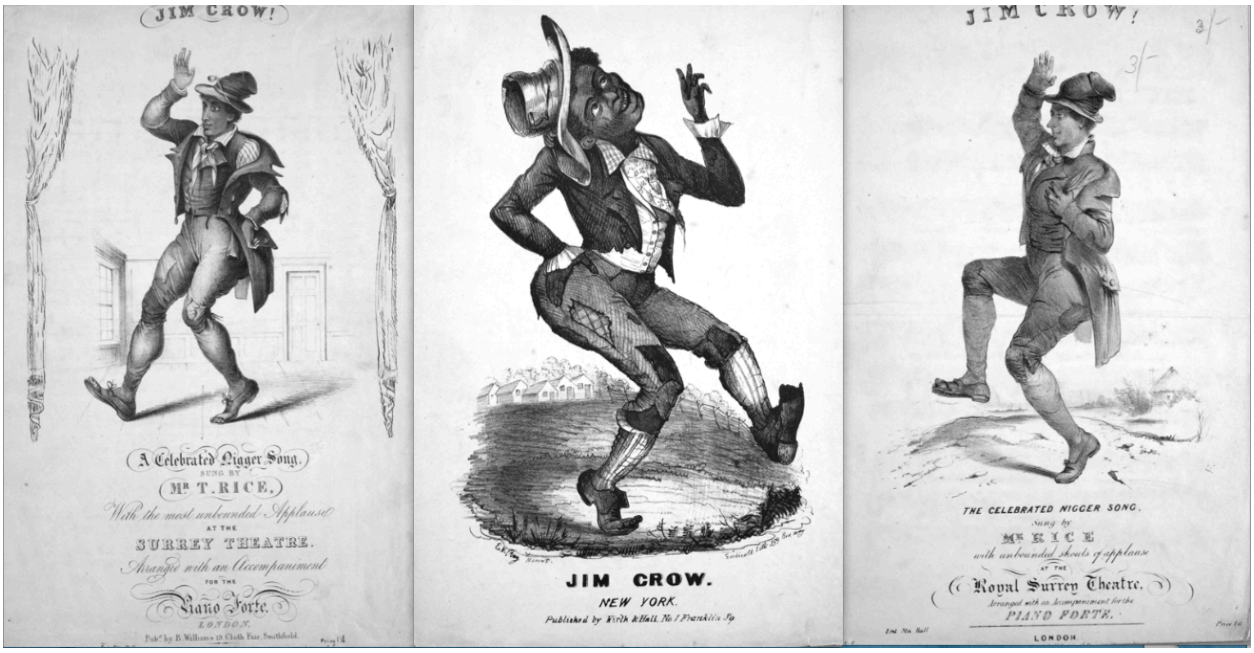

Figure 2 (a)-(c): Various Editions of "Jim Crow" Sheet Music (Published between 1835 and 1845).[10]

Accounts from local newspapers like the *New York Herald* and the *Spirit of the Times* affirm that the audience who attended shows featuring the "Jim Crow" character were raucous and unsophisticated and usually consisted of lower-class, young, white

[9] Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 71-72.

[10] Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/catalog/levy:017.044a, http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/catalog/levy:017.115, http://levysheetmusic.mse.jhu.edu/catalog/levy:017.114 (accessed February 27, 2014).

males.[11] Critics from those same papers suggested that elite audiences (white, middle to upper class) should not attend the show as it was linked to a working-class culture of fighting, gambling, drinking, and sexual deviance.[12]

Cockrell also suggests that minstrelsy is linked to European mumming traditions. Mumming plays in England were popular during the early nineteenth century and featured performers in blackface who entered the homes of the wealthy and performed plays that commented on social and political problems. Irish, German, and English immigrants brought mumming plays to America.[13] "Jim Crow" and other blackface performances may have also stemmed from this tradition.

Thus, taking class into account, Cockrell argues that to the white upper class, "Jim Crow" represented racial inferiority, but to the lower class to which the character catered, "Jim Crow" was entertainment that used a representation of the Other to address social, political, and cultural conflicts.[14]

George Washington Dixon and "Zip Coon"

Another minstrel stereotype that appeared on stage during the 1830s was "Zip Coon." George Washington Dixon (ca.1801-1861), a contemporary of T.D. Rice,

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[11] Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 66-69.

[12] Ibid., 69-70.

[13] Ibid., 41-51.

[14] Ibid., 82-86. To solidify his argument, Cockrell notes court cases and police reports from New York, Boston, and Philadelphia that highlight the urban and social atmosphere that surrounded typical audience members.

appeared in blackface and sang what he described as "African American melodies."[15] In the late 1820s Dixon was appearing on stage billed as "The American Buffo Singer" and singing the song "Coal Black Rose," the same song that T.D. Rice heard young Sam Cowell perform.[16] Like Rice's "Jim Crow," the "Zip Coon" character emerged sometime in the early 1830s and was performed for audiences of lower class young men.[17]

The music for "Zip Coon," similar to "Jim Crow," is related to an Irish folk song (See Figure 3).[18] The melody, the same as the popular fiddle tune, "Turkey in the Straw," was later marketed as sheet music in the early 1920s as "a rag-time fantasy" and "adaptation of the 1834 song 'Zip Coon,'" and featured a blackface performer holding a banjo on the cover (See Figure 4).

[15] Barbara Lewis, "Daddy Blue: The Evolution of the Black Dandy," in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Reading in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara (Hanover NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 257.

[16] Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 96, and Dale Cockrell, "Of Soundscapes and Blackface: From Fools to Foster," in *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Stephen Johnson (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 55.

[17] Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder*, 102-103, and Cockrell, "Of Soundscapes," 55.

[18] Toll, *Blacking Up*, 27.

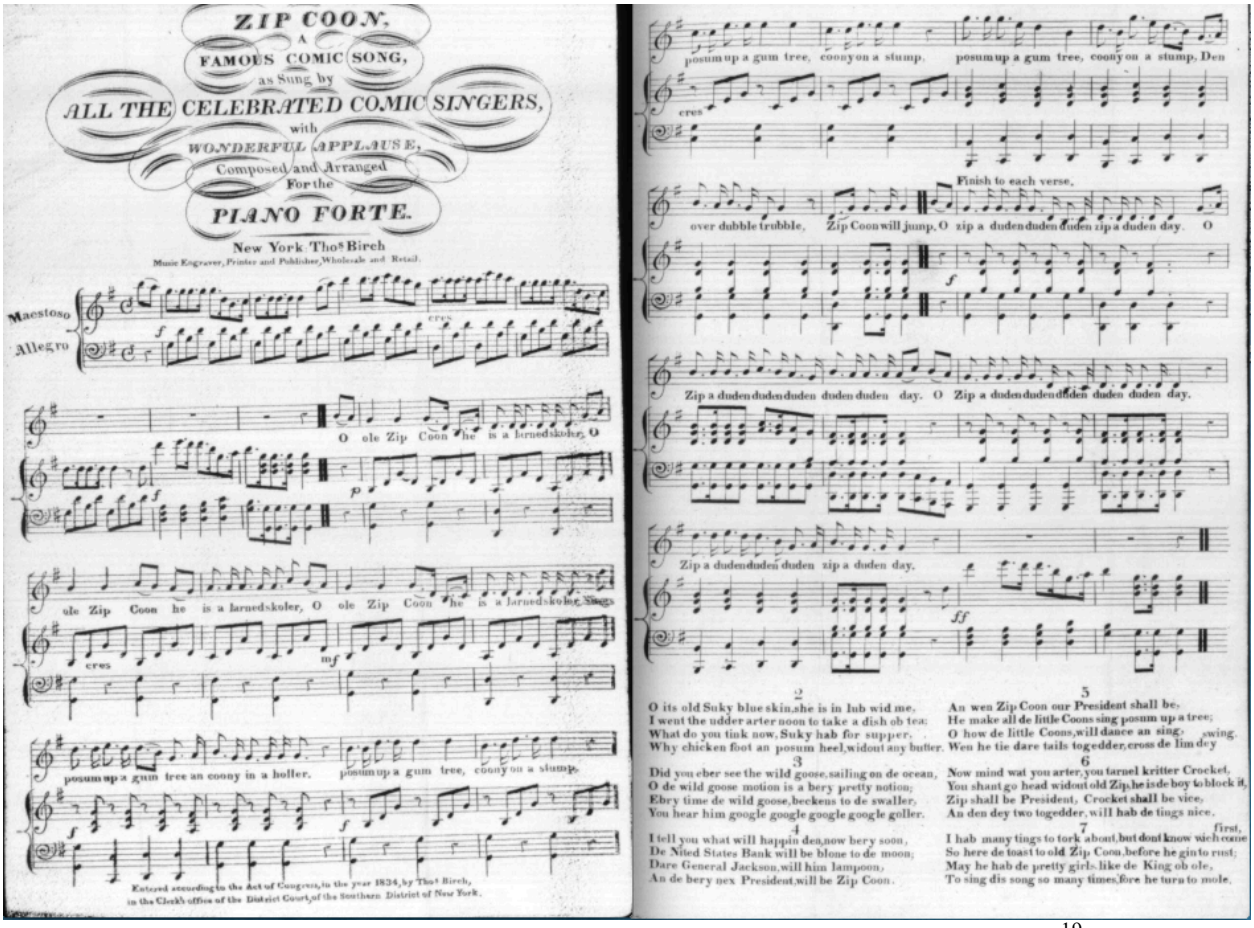

Figure 3: "Zip Coon" Sheet Music. Publisher: Thos. Birch, New York, 1834.[19]

[19] Sheet music available at the Library of Congress, accessed March 1, 2014, http://www.loc.gov/item/sm1834.360780.

Figure 4: "Turkey in the Straw" Sheet Music. Publisher: Leo. Feist, New York, c1920.[20]

"Zip Coon" was a different stereotype than "Jim Crow." Although both men were comedic "buffons" and sang about love and politics, "Zip Coon" was well dressed, not in rags (See Figure 5).[21] "Zip Coon" was portrayed as a freedman and a literate scholar, a northern, urban dandy; however, the character was a mockery because he had a sense of entitlement and high political aspirations.[22] African Americans had few political rights and white audiences found humor in the aspiring African American who had little hope

[20] Sheet music available at the Library of Congress, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.award.rpbaasm.1133/default.html (accessed April 23, 2014).

[21] Toll, *Blacking Up*, 27.

[22] Lewis, "Daddy Blue," 267-268, Cockrell, "Of Soundscapes," 55, and Louis Chude-Sokei, "The Uncanny History of Minstrels and Machines, 1835-1923," in *Burnt Cork: Traditions and Legacies of Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Stephen Johnson (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2012), 125.

for obtaining political equality. So while the lyrics often tackled social and cultural issues, the "Zip Coon" portrayal also helped solidify feelings of white superiority. "Zip Coon" could also have been viewed as attacking the upper-class population as the character denigrated them through shared dress and pretensions.

Figure 5: "Zip Coon" Sheet Music Cover. Publisher: Thos. Birch, New York, 1834.[23]

Eric Lott concludes that the blackface acts of "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon" highlighted the social unrest apparent in many industrialized cities, especially in the northern states.[24] W.T. Lhamon concludes that these early blackface performances were not an accurate portrayal of African American life and culture, but were, instead,

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[23] Sheet music available at the Library of Congress, accessed March 1, 2014, http://www.loc.gov/item/sm1834.360780.

[24] Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 111.

fantasies in which differences of race, class, region, and circumstance were explored.[25] These early forms of blackness (the portrayals of "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon"), imaginary creations by white performers, came to be seen by the higher class as an authentic representation of the race. It was not the job of the performers to accurately portray African American life or even African Americans, but rather to use the image of the Other to amuse and engage audiences.[26]

The image of the Other was not limited to characters in blackface. Stereotypes of immigrants, especially the Irish, were also common on the minstrel stage. By the 1830s, the Irish character, Paddy, a comic representation of an Irishman who had little concern for his physical well-being but a high vision of himself, was common on the stage. Sometimes Paddy appeared in blackface even though most Irish immigrants were white.[27] So blackface may not have been as much a representation of a race, but rather a way to distinguish the Other.

Even German stereotypes such as fondness for beer and food appeared on the minstrel stage. However, due to the German culture associated with Goethe and Schiller and the composers Beethoven and Schubert, Germans were more often viewed as higher class and did not face as much ridicule in minstrelsy.[28]

Even if the blackface representations of "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon" were not initially intended to perpetuate racial stereotypes, they provided some of the earliest

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[25] Lhamon, "Turning Around," 24.

[26] Toll, *On With the Show*, 82-83, Lhamon, "Turning Around," 24, and Maurice, "From New Deal to No Deal," 208.

[27] William H.A. Williams, *'Twas Only and Irishman's Dream: The Image of Ireland and the Irish in American Popular Song Lyrics, 1800-1920* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1996), 64-65.

[28] Ibid., 82.

examples of white performers exploiting the image of a different race to succeed financially in the popular entertainment business. To the audiences, both lower and upper class, "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon," as some of the first representations of blackness in popular culture, became the expectation of authentic black performance.

The Virginia Minstrels

As mentioned above, early white blackface performers used the image of the Other in order to address societal concerns regarding politics, gender, race, and class. The image of an African American was only a resemblance and the actors were not necessarily attempting to provide an accurate portrayal of African Americans.[29] The emergence of the minstrel show as a new entertainment form, however, took the stereotypes that had been created by early performers like Rice and Dixon and exaggerated aspects of those blackface performances. In the early 1840s, four white men, Billy Whitlock, Frank Pelham, Dan Emmett, and Frank Brower, formed the Virginia Minstrels in New York City.[30]

Like blackface performances, minstrel shows were not designed to accurately portray African American culture. Blackface performances that featured "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon" were solo songs and dances interspersed with other short comedies and skits that were designed for the theater.[31] Minstrel shows featured a group of performers in blackface. The professional entertainers in minstrel shows, who were usually from the

[29] Cockrell, "Of Soundscapes," 63.

[30] Toll, *Blacking Up*, 30.

[31] Ibid., 51.

North, chose specific Negro elements and culture to include in their shows.[32] These elements included slave weddings, coon hunts, lovers' separations, harvest celebrations, and slave weddings.[33] The Virginia Minstrels were only together for about six months, but their act established some of the conventions that became common to the minstrel show.[34]

Initially, the Virginia Minstrels performed between acts of larger stage shows at theaters in New York and Boston.[35] In 1843, when they gave their first full-length show in Boston, the Virginia Minstrels gathered their chairs in a semicircle, sat with their limbs at odd angles, featured the instruments of fiddle, banjo, bones, and tambourine, danced in angular ways with exaggerated movements, dressed like plantation Negroes, and used blackface to exaggerate their facial features (highlighting larger lips and rolling eyes).[36] Entertainment in early minstrel shows following the Virginia Minstrels model included equestrian scenes, comic songs, and burlesque lectures. Also featured were solo banjo songs, ensemble pieces, black impersonations, and a song by a female impersonator. Much of these features were also common in other theatrical forms like variety.

Early minstrel shows were divided into two parts. The first act usually featured the stereotypical northern dandy like "Zip Coon" and the second half featured southern

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[32] Ibid., 51.

[33] William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana IL: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 13.

[34] Ibid., 18.

[35] Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 92.

[36] Hans Nathan, "The Performance of the Virginia Minstrels," in *Inside the Minstrel Mask: Readings in Nineteenth-Century Blackface Minstrelsy*, ed. Annemarie Bean, James V. Hatch, and Brooks McNamara (Hanover NH: Wesleyan University Press, 1996), 35-36, and Toll, *Blacking Up*, 52 citing an English review from a performance in and the biography of Dan Emmett, Hans Nathan, *Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy* (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).

slaves.[37] The end of the first act also featured a stump speech in Negro dialect. This was a parody of an African American, often politically driven, attempting to speak in the same manner as the white, educated middle to upper class.[38]

Some minstrel troupes featured sentimental ballads and plantation songs, in which freed slaves fondly remembered life on the plantation. These minstrel shows were popular in mostly Northern cities before the end of the Civil War. The masses craved popular entertainment and slavery and the plantation system were important public issues. The minstrel show allowed a fun and light-hearted way for white audiences to explore their feelings about those challenging issues.[39]

Post Civil War: Black Minstrelsy and Jubilee Singers

After the Civil War, millions of freed slaves as well as freedmen in the North had the opportunity to enter show business in minstrelsy.[40] White minstrel shows still sometimes performed the old African American stereotypes, however, they shifted the focus of their shows to urban problems. As slavery was no longer an issue with white audiences, white minstrel shows focused on stereotypes of immigrants: Asians, Germans, and the Irish.[41] White minstrel productions became more lavish and featured larger

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[37] Lott, *Love and Theft*, 140.

[38] Toll, *Blacking Up*, 52, and Nathan, "The Performance of the Virginia Minstrels," 40.

[39] Toll, *On With the Show,* 84-86.

[40] Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 231-232.

[41] Ibid., 105.

companies and ensemble numbers.[42] Meanwhile, black minstrel shows emerged and African American entertainers became the primary representations of plantation life.

There were instances of black entertainers before the end of the Civil War, but the first permanent black minstrel troupes were formed around 1865.[43] The African American performers were forced into the stereotypes that had been established by white blackface performers. Audiences expected to see the same sort of African American stereotypes that were common in earlier white minstrel shows.[44] Thus, African American minstrel troupes like Brooker and Clayton's Georgia Minstrels and Sam Hague's Slave Troupe of Georgia Minstrels usually included plantation caricatures. Like the Virginia Minstrels and other early white minstrel shows, black shows also featured the semicircle of musicians with bones, tambourine, banjo and fiddle. The show featured an interlocutor who wore fancy clothes and introduced the acts. The first part of the show was usually comprised of a variety of novelty acts and the second part was a lavish finale that included a plantation scene.[45] These plantation scenes included a type of music that became popular in African American minstrelsy by 1875: spirituals.[46]

The American Missionary Association, an abolitionist society founded in 1846, took on the establishment of schools for freedmen as its primary role after the Civil War. It established Fisk University in 1866 in Nashville, Tennessee, to educate African

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[42] Toll, *Blacking Up*, 234.

[43] Southern, *Music of Black America*, 232.

[44] Toll, *On With the Show*, 273, and Toll, *Blacking Up*, 244.

[45] Southern, *Music of Black America*, 235, and Toll, *Blacking Up*, 244.

[46] Toll, *Blacking Up*, 244.

American students.[47] When the university experienced financial difficulties in 1871, the Fisk Jubilee Singers were organized as a touring fund-raising group for the school.[48] The singers wore formal clothing, did not perform in blackface and sang Negro spirituals. The programs for jubilee concerts did not contain jokes, dances, or catchy tunes, as they were not designed to be minstrel shows.[49] The music for the concerts was advertised as religious music of the slaves.[50] As Northern whites were not accustomed to seeing African Americans on stage in a serious fashion, the group often faced racial prejudice and hostility (obscene gestures and words) from their audiences.[51] Despite audience hostility, the Fisk Jubilee Singers were a success and performed nationally and internationally in Great Britain, Australia, Japan, India, and South America throughout the 1870s.[52]

The Fisk Jubilee Singers formalized a mode of public performance of these spirituals that Navneet Sethi characterized as "neatly clasped hands, somber countenances and dress, minimal gesticulations, control, precision, and uniformity of expression."[53] The music was often in a verse-refrain form that was sung a-capella in a

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[47] Dena J. Epstein, "Story of the Jubilee Singers," in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern,* ed. Josephine Wright with Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. (Sterling Heights MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 152.

[48] L. Diane Barnes, "Fisk Jubilee Singers," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e0427 (accessed March 5, 2014).

[49] Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 227-228.

[50] Ibid.

[51] Barnes, "Fisk Jubilee Singers."

[52] Ibid.

[53] Navneet Sethi, "Gospel Music," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e0486 (accessed March 6, 2014).

call and response style.[54] The spirituals were so popular that they produced a demand for mass-produced sheet music. In 1872-1873, Theodore Seward, a white church organist from Connecticut, compiled a book of Jubilee transcriptions to sell at performances of jubilee groups that sprang up around the country.

Although the written music could not capture the essence or spirit of the performances, the book of transcriptions often sold out at concerts.[55] The style of the Fisk Jubilee Singers and other touring jubilee groups differed from previous styles of African American folk spirituals that often featured improvisation, foot stomping, hand clapping, shouting and spontaneity.[56] These jubilee groups were performing for middle- to upper-class white audiences and thus, their representation was seen as an example of racial uplift. The authenticity of the spiritual as an African American art form was not the issue, but rather the jubilee singers and the mass-produced music books of jubilee songs were examples of how an education provided enlightenment for former slaves."[57]

Authenticity aside, the demand for jubilee performances and spirituals also affected the minstrel show. Due to the popularity of the jubilee performances in the 1870s, religion began to play a role in African American minstrel shows. For the first time, minstrel troupes added religious songs, usually performed in dialect. Robert C. Toll claims that the presentation of spirituals and jubilee music in black minstrel shows was much more representative of African American religious culture than what white minstrel groups like the Hamtown Students and serious black groups such as the Fisk Jubilee

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[54] Ibid.

[55] Epstein, "Story of the Jubilee Singers," 154-155.

[56] Sethi, "Gospel Music."

[57] Epstein, "Story of the Jubilee Singers," 152.

Singers performed.[58] The most popular religious parts of black minstrel shows were described by Eileen Southern as having "gaudily dressed, uninhibited blacks singing, shouting, laughing, and dancing in church."[59] This portrayal showed a difference in African American versus Euro-American forms of worship, even though both cultures still believed in Christianity. To white audiences, these religious portrayals provided evidence that African Americans were inferior. Despite reactions from white audiences, black minstrels were able to attract African Americans to the field of American popular entertainment and many famous black entertainers – Ernest Hogan, Bert Williams, George Walker, and W.C. Handy – began their entertainment careers with minstrel troupes.

Despite the popularity black minstrel shows gained with white audiences, the African American performers still faced racial segregation in the cities in which they performed, especially in the South. It was difficult for the entertainers to find lodging, as they were poor and were often turned away by white hotel owners.[60] African Americans often had to sleep in the theater where the show was held, in a railroad station, or sometimes in train cars.[61] Evening shows were marketed during the day when the touring minstrel troupe held a large parade in the city. The musicians would play marches through town and then stop for a while to play a concert that usually featured classical

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[58] Toll, *Blacking Up*, 237, 243.

[59] Ibid., 243.

[60] Southern, *The Music of Black Americans*, 234.

[61] Ibid. W.C. Handy in *Father of the Blues* describes several situations while touring with Mahara's Minstrels in which he had to sleep or hide from violent white citizens in the train cars on which they travelled.

overtures, popular tunes, and instrumental solos.[62] By the 1890s, minstrel entertainment was fading, but it left a lasting legacy of stereotypes and songs and opened a side entrance for African Americans in the entertainment business.

Variety and Vaudeville

Variety entertainment featured minstrel acts and some blackface performance, but also included acrobats, dancers, and comic sketches that were often unrelated to one another. Olio acts were performances often given between acts of larger dramas. The use of stock characters was common so performers could vary their interpretations of a character based on the cultural, geographical, or social surroundings of the performance venue. Variety, like minstrelsy, was linked to working-class audiences. [63] By the 1880s, a new theatrical form had emerged from variety. Vaudeville entertainment also featured a number of unrelated acts, however it catered to a higher class audience.[64] It also sometimes included the stars performing scenes and arias from operas in the finales of the shows. In 1896, the black vaudeville troupe Black Patti's Troubadours, starring Sissieretta Jones (1869 – 1933) was formed.[65]

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[62] Ibid., 234-235.

[63] Gillian Rodger, "Variety," in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Hiroshi Garrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[64] Gillian Rodger, "Vaudeville," in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Hiroshi Garrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

[65] Ibid., 301. Jones was nicknamed the "Black Patti" after she was compared to the famous Italian opera singer, Adelina Patti. In 1893 and 1894, she was the highest paid black performer of her day. In 1894, she performed at a benefit concert with Antonin Dvorák. She left the concert stage in the mid-1890s as she aspired to sing at the Metropolitian Opera but was denied performances because of her race. Marta J. Effinger-Crichlow. "Jones, Madame Sissieretta Joyner," in *African American National Biography*, eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0001/e0320 (accessed March 7, 2014).

The first Black Patti's Troubadours show, *At Jolly Coon-ey Island: A Merry Musical Farce* (1896) was written by Bob Cole and William Johnson, two African American men who would later be famous for penning a number of black musicals. This, like other vaudeville shows, was a musical revue that featured classical music, skits, comedians, gymnasts, burlesque, trained animals, and magicians. Black Patti and other singers who held starring operatic roles in the shows wore satin gowns, gloves and tiaras.[66] Like later black minstrel shows, black vaudeville productions consisted of three parts: Part I was a comedy skit that included funny songs and dances, Part II was an olio featuring specialty acts, vocal solos, and individual features like tumbling acts or instrumental solos, and Part III was the operatic finale.[67]

In addition to black vaudeville troupes, there were a number of white shows that featured ragtime music, ethnic stereotypes, and the continued degradation of African Americans. White performers in blackface were often seen on stage carrying knives and eating watermelons. African American Bert Williams (1874-1922) famously "blacked up" for the vaudeville stage, as his skin was too light to portray a convincing African American. Despite the continued stereotypes, African Americans like Williams, George Walker, Eubie Blake, Robert Cole, and Bill "Bojangles" Robinson were able to find success on the vaudeville stage alongside whites and immigrants like Sophie Tucker, Will Rogers, Harry Houdini, W.C. Fields, and the Marx Brothers.[68]

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[66] Ibid.

[67] Ibid., 302.

[68] Donna M. DeBlasio, "Vaudeville, African Americans In," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-First Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e1205 (accessed April 30, 2013), and Bruce McConachie, "Vaudeville," in *The Oxford Companion to United States History*, ed. Paul

Vaudeville, like minstrelsy before it, continued African American stereotypes but cleared paths for African American entertainers. The stage profession allowed African Americans to profit in a racially hostile environment. It allowed some African Americans to perform without blackface to white audiences and also, as African American were accepted (although still segregated) in the audiences in some theaters, allowed African Americans to see people of their own race succeeding on stage and in the entertainment business. At the turn of the twentieth century, both minstrelsy and vaudeville provided lasting effects on the whole of United States popular entertainment. African Americans have continued to play an important role in the shaping of American popular culture since their first performances on the stage.

S. Boyer, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t119/e1592 (accessed March 5, 2014).

Chapter Three
Pace & Handy Music Publishing

One of William Grant Still's first employment opportunities was as an arranger at Pace & Handy Music Publishing. He was first employed with the company during his college years in the summer of 1916. He and Handy attended shows in Memphis that featured black vaudevillians.[1] It was also during his brief tenure in Memphis that Still completed and published some his first known popular music arrangements: orchestrations of "Florida Blues" and "Ole Miss" as well as a military band version of the already popular "St. Louis Blues."[2] Still's original composition, "No Matter What You Do," was also composed during this time and has yet to be researched by scholars.[3] When Pace & Handy moved their office to New York in 1919, Still became a full-time arranger.[4] To comprehend Still's experiences at Pace & Handy, the background and the people involved in the business aspects of the company as well as the types of music being published must first be understood.

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[1] David Robertson, *W.C. Handy: The Life and Times of the Man Who Made the Blues*, (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), 163-164. Still claimed that it was during this time that he saw Baby Seals and Miss Floyd Fisher perform, but this would have been impossible as Seals had died in December, 1915. Therefore, it is unclear which vaudeville shows Still and Handy attended together.

[2] Elliott S. Hurwitt, "W.C. Handy as Music Publisher: Career and Reputation," (Ph.D. diss., The City University of New York, 2000), 160-162, and Judith Ann Still, Michael Dabrishus, and Carolyn L. Quin, *William Grant Still: A Bio-Bibliography*, (Westport CT: Greenwood Press, 1996), 17-18.

[3] Hurwitt, "W.C. Handy," 269.

[4] Robertson, *W.C. Handy*, 176.

W.C. Handy: Entertainer

Born in 1873 to a family of emancipated slaves, W.C. Handy (1873-1958) grew up in Florence, Alabama, during the Reconstruction period.[5] Much of Handy's biography is currently derived from sources written by Handy himself, and more scholarly work needs to be undertaken on his biography. He did not enter the business of music publishing until 1913. Until that point, he spent time in minstrel shows playing the cornet and briefly taught music in Alabama.[6]

According to Handy, his parents were not supportive of his musical inclinations when he was a child. His father, Charles B. Handy, claimed that the guitar was the instrument of the devil and when W.C. Handy brought home a cornet one day, his father demanded the young Handy return it to the store.[7] David Robertson suggests that this lack of musical support stemmed from Charles's support of Booker T. Washington's ideas of racial uplift:

> To those southern blacks in agreement with Washington's practical ideas, such as Charles B. Handy [W.C. Handy's father], the ambition for a black male to become a serious composer was presumptuous, and the art of music for educated African Americans was to be at most, limited to the hymnology of folk spirituals or to the racially uplifting performances of western European classical compositions.[8]

Because of the influence Booker T. Washington had on the African American population in the late 1800s, it is likely that the generation to which Handy's father belonged disapproved the choice of music as a profession over a more practical skill or trade.

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[5] Ibid., 23-31.

[6] For further biographical information on Handy's life during this period see Robertson, *W.C. Handy*, and W.C. Handy, *Father of the Blues: An Autobiography*, ed. Arna Bontemps (New York: Macmillan, 1941).

[7] Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 9-10.

[8] Robertson, *W.C. Handy*, 30.

Hiding his actions from his father and schoolteacher, Handy secretly purchased a cornet and began to attend dances and play in bands. At age 15, when the travelling minstrel company led by Bill Felton came to town, Handy joined Felton's show as a tenor and went on the road with the troupe for several months. He claimed that it was his first experience as a trouper.[9] During this time, Handy observed how black entertainers performed in a society that was shaped by racial segregation and stereotypes.

In 1896, Handy joined Mahara's Minstrels. The troupe, one of the most popular minstrel companies at the end of the century, featured all black performers and was managed by the Mahara brothers, who were Irishmen.[10] The Mahara brothers were well liked by the performers in the show and Mahara's Minstrels was considered to be one of the leading principal troupes for black musicians and entertainers.[11] While Handy was performing in Mahara's Minstrels, popular minstrel shows around the country included white men performing as white men, white men performing in blackface and imitating black men, black men performing in blackface and imitating white men performing in blackface, and black men performing as black men (sans burnt cork makeup).[12] The Mahara troupe performed without burnt cork makeup but still incorporated the variety of acts popular with all types of minstrel shows—female impersonators, acrobats,

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[9] Ibid., 16-18.

[10] Ibid., 56.

[11] Mark Berresford, *That's Got 'Em!: The Life and Music of Wilbur C. Sweatman*, (Jackson MS: The University of Mississippi Press, 2010), 36. For information on the formation and early success of Mahara's Minstrels, see Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Out Of Sight: The Rise of African American Popular Music, 1889-1895* (Jackson MS: The University Press of Mississippi, 2002), 115-119.

[12] Robertson, *W.C. Handy*, 57.

comedians, and other novelty acts.[13] Music in the show included cakewalks, coon songs, marches, and musical solos on instruments such as banjo or cornet.[14] During his final season with Mahara's Minstrels (1902-03), Handy was influenced by the march music of composers like John Philip Sousa and completed some compositions in that style.[15] By the time Handy left minstrelsy, he had become familiar with most of the popular music genres of the time: cakewalks, coon songs, ragtime, and military marches.

Among Handy's first successful marketing ventures was a performance that his band gave while he was music director at Agricultural & Mechanical (A & M) College in Normal, Alabama in 1900. At that time, music with "classical" titles was being given priority on concert programs. The school's president, Handy's employer, William Hooper Councill, was a follower of the educational policies of Booker T. Washington.[16] As mentioned above, Washington's Tuskegee Institute in Alabama had been established in 1881 and the curriculum focused on mathematics, science, English, and geometry, as well as the development of trades like carpentry, electricity, and welding.[17] Thus it can be concluded that at least part of A & M's curriculum was also designed around Washington's Tuskegee model.

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[13] Ibid., 57-59.

[14] Ibid. For a complete description of a typical 3-act show with Mahara's Minstrels, see Robertson, *W.C. Handy*, 56-73.

[15] Ibid., 86.

[16] Ibid., 82.

[17] For information on Washington's ideas on education and the context of educational reform during the late 1800s, see Donald Generals, "Booker T. Washington and Progressive Education: An Experimentalist Approach to Curriculum Development and Reform," *The Journal of Negro Education* 69, no. 3 (2000), 215-234.

Handy wanted to perform a ragtime piece that had been popular with Mahara's Minstrels, but he renamed it from "My Ragtime Baby" to "Greetings to Toussaint L'Ouverture."[18] He also changed the sheet music to eliminate any signs of ragtime. A comparison of the two pieces cannot be made as original manuscripts have not been located, but from Handy's account, we know that he must have changed the music in some manner from the version that he played with Mahara's Minstrels. Handy later claimed that, "I had tricked them and made them appreciate the potentialities of ragtime by giving it a high-sounding name."[19] Handy makes no mention here of whether or not "My Ragtime Baby" was originally an instrumental piece or a coon song, so it is possible that he just wanted the audience to hear the musical merits of the piece without attaching a bias to it. By changing the name of the song, Handy effectively removed references to minstrelsy and thus the song was allowed on the concert program. The middle-class African American student body at A & M College heard a ragtime minstrel song without knowing it.

Harry H. Pace: Entrepreneur

Harry Pace's (1884-1943) biography stands in sharp contrast to Handy's. Born in Georgia, Pace went to public school and later graduated as valedictorian from Atlanta University in 1903. In 1905, Pace joined W.E.B. Du Bois and Edward L. Simon to purchase a printing shop in Memphis. The three men funded and published the *Moon*

[18] L'Ouverture was a former slave and leader of the Haitian Revolution at the turn of the 19th century. He is credited with abolishing slavery in the island colony. For more information see, Barrymore Bogues, "L'Ouverture, Toussaint," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of American Thought*, ed. F. Abiola Irele and Biodun Jeyifo, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t301/e237 (accessed January 30, 2014).

[19] Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 60-61.

Illustrated Weekly from 1905-1906.[20] Designed as a publication to compete with the ideas of Booker T. Washington on topics regarding African Americans, *Moon Illustrated Weekly* did not succeed.[21]

Handy and Pace met in 1907 while Pace was a cashier at Solvent Savings Bank in Memphis. Their first musical collaboration came that same year when Cincinnati publisher George Jaberg issued their non-blues composition, "In The Cotton Fields of Dixie."[22] The song was not a success and did not garner large sales figures.[23] Pace and Handy did not partner again until 1913, when they established the Pace & Handy Music Company and published their first song, "The Jogo Blues."[24] Up until 1920, Pace lived and worked in Atlanta and in 1914 he served as a chapter president for the Atlanta division of the NAACP.[25] Therefore, Pace did not spend much time in Memphis and the majority of the marketing and publicity was conducted by Handy. Pace was also promoted to the position of secretary-treasurer at the Standard-Life Insurance Company in Atlanta.[26] Throughout his partnership with Handy, Pace often provided financial

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[20] Linda M. Carter, "Harry H. Pace," in *The American Mosaic: The African American Experience*, http://africanamerican2.abc-clio.com/ (accessed January 23, 2014).

[21] Carolyn Wedin, "Moon Illustrated Weekly," in *Encyclopedic of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e0824 (accessed January 23, 2014).

[22] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1998), 232.

[23] Peter C. Muir, *Long Lost Blues: Popular Blues in America, 1850-1920* (Champaign IL: The University of Illinois, 2010), 17.

[24] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 235.

[25] Carter, "Harry H. Pace."

[26] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 235, 240. According to Malachi D. Crawford, "Insurance Companies, African-American Owned," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e0609 (accessed February 12, 2014), by 1920,

assistance for both the publishing company and Handy's personal affairs. Pace also used his connections to aid in arranging concerts and securing recording contracts for Handy. For example, Pace refinanced Handy's debt to prevent foreclosure on a cottage, cut checks for Handy to cover music printing costs, organized a concert at a white performance venue in Atlanta, and arranged recording contracts with Columbia through his contacts in New York.[27] Handy's knowledge of entertainment and marketing combined with Pace's understanding of money and the booming market in black entertainment would prove lucrative for the next several years.

Early Music Publishers & Publications (1880-1910)

Pace & Handy were not the first African Americans to venture into music publishing. Composers at the turn of the century self-published their compositions, as it was less expensive than renting or selling them to publishers. Among the first songwriters to publish their own music were white men, including Charles K. Harris, composer of "After The Ball," and Harry Von Tilzer, who published his own work as well as the work of others.[28] And while white musicians and composers were publishing their music, it was the African American song forms and genres like coon songs, cakewalks, and rags that dominated the sheet music industry at the turn of the century.[29]

Standard-Life Insurance Company was an the largest African American owned insurance company and was one of the most profitable African American businesses in the nation.

[27] These are just a few of the instances in which Harry Pace offered assistance to both Handy and the company. For further details see Handy, *Father of the Blues*, 127-129, Robertson, *W.C. Handy*, 157, 167, and Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 235.

[28] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 119-120.

[29] Ibid., 121.

Nicknamed after minstrel character "Zip Coon," from George Washington Dixon's minstrel shows in the 1830s, and made famous by African American Ernest Hogan's song, "All Coons Look Alike To Me" (1896), the popularity of the coon song reached its height circa 1890 through 1910 (See Figure 6). One of the first coon songs was J.P. Skelly's, "The Dandy Coon's Parade" in 1880.[30] Intended to be humorous and usually performed by white performers in blackface for white audiences, coon songs often featured syncopation, had a march or dance-like quality similar to ragtime music, and had derogatory lyrics about African Americans.[31]

Coon songs often featured a character or black dandy who mimicked the behavior of whites in a buffoonish, faux-sophisticated way. They also sometimes carried on old blackface minstrel traditions and depicted a threat of violence, signified in sheet music images and lyrics by a razor (See Figures 7 and 8). Some mass produced sheet music enhanced the stereotype by including derogatory images of characters on the cover.

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[30] James H. Dorman, "Shaping the Popular Image of Post-Reconstruction American Blacks: The 'Coon Song' Phenomenon of the Gilded Age," *American Quarterly* 40, no. 4 (1988), 452.

[31] Robertson, *W.C. Handy*, 65, and James H. Dorman, "Shaping the Popular Image," 453.

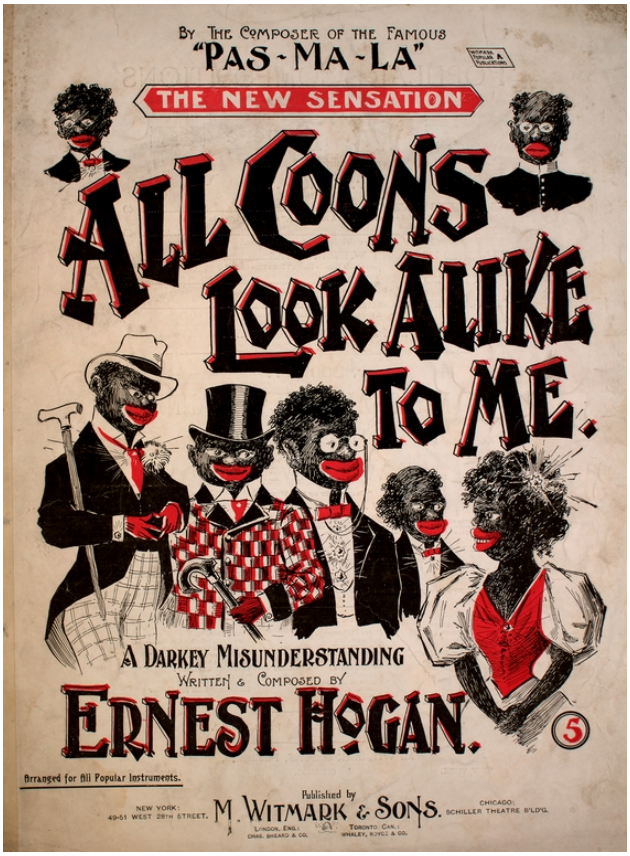

Figure 6: "All Coons Look Alike To Me" by Ernest M. Hogan
Publisher: M. Witmark & Sons, 1896

Chorus
All coons look alike to me, I've got another beau, you see,
And he's just as good to me as you, nig! ever tried to be,
He spends his money free, I know we can't agree,
So I don't like you no how, all coons look alike to me. [32]

[32] Digital sheet music and lyrics available at Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, accessed January 25, 2014, https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/16579.

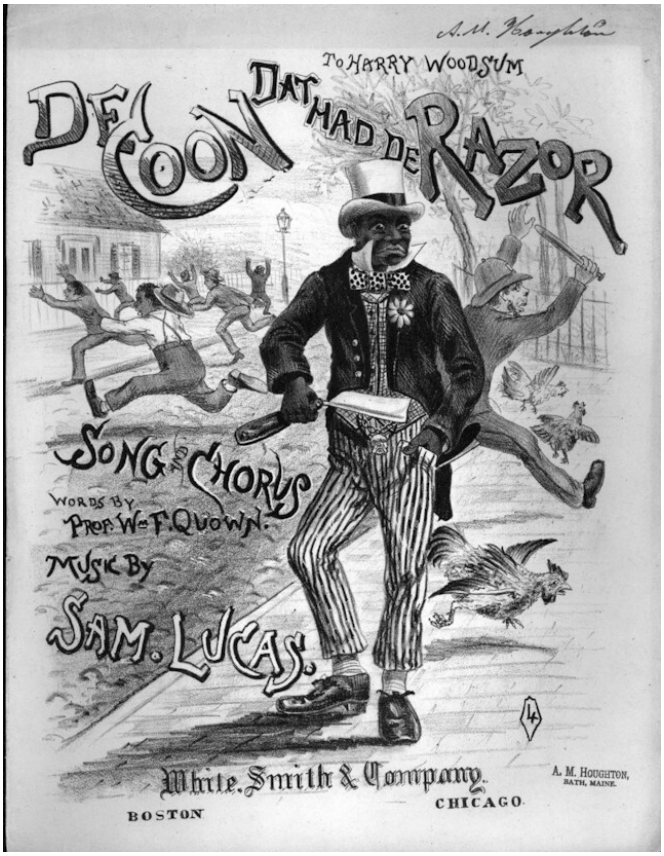

Figure 7: "De Coon Dat Had De Razor." Music by Sam Lucas. Lyrics by W. F. Quown. Published: White, Smith & Company, 1885

Verse 1
I went to a ball de other night, at Susie Simpkins hut,
Where dem coons all carry razors; and how dem niggers cut.
Ole Horace Jinks got in a row with slew foot Johny Frazier.
"Take care," squealed out ole Sally Gum, "Dat coon has got a razor."

Chorus
De coons did fly, and gals did cry, for poor ole Johny Frazier.
For dat coon he cut him mos' to def, dat coon dat had de razor.
De coons did fly, and gals did cry, for poor ole Johny Frazier.
For dat coon he cut him mos' to def, dat coon dat had de razor. [33]

[33] Digital sheet music and lyrics available at The Library of Congress: Performing Arts Encyclopedia, accessed January 25, 2014, http://lcweb2.loc.gov/diglib/ihas/loc.award.rpbaasm.0756/default.html.

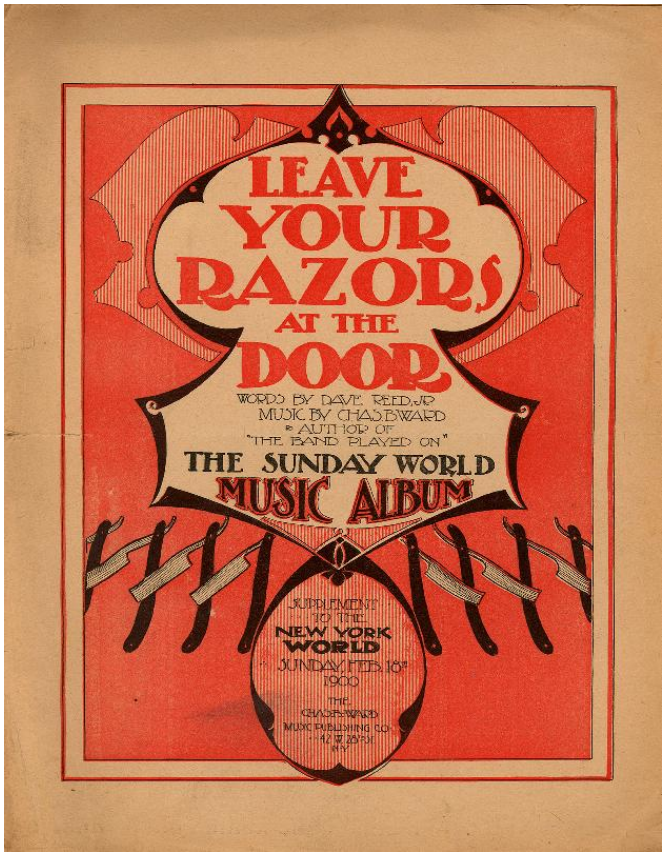

Figure 8: "Leave Your Razors At The Door." Music by Chas B. Ward.
Lyrics by Dave Reed Jr. Published: New York World, 1899

Verse 1
Oh a big burly nigger by de name of Brown, Gave a ragtime reception in a dis yere town,
All his friends and relations with their blacks came down,
For to mingle in de grand sasshay,
When they reached the hall an awful sight they saw,
'Twas a sign a hangin' on de big front door,
They read the lines a dozen times or more, 'Twas enough to turn a mans hair gray,
Ev'ry coon though he'd drop dead, For this is what he plainly read:

Chorus
Leave your razors at the door, Don't yer start no ragtime war,
Better put on some airs and leave your blades down stairs
cause they ain't in style no more
If you want some black man's gore, Don't carve him to the core
But take a good size brick and do the job up quick,
Leave your razors at the door.[34]

[34] Digital sheet music and lyrics available at Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, accessed February 14, 2014, https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/18162.

While African American racial uplift activists W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington frowned on this type of entertainment due to the derogatory lyrics, the stereotypes it placed on the race, and the popularity it garnered with low, working-class audiences, it was this type of entertainment that was a catalyst for African American success in the entertainment business.

African American entertainers, Bert Williams (1872-1922) and George Walker (ca.1872-1911) contributed to the spread of the genre. Performing among a field of white men in blackface, Williams and Walker billed themselves, "The Two Real Coons." African American entertainers at the turn of the century played to the embedded stereotypes that had been rooted in American life since before the Civil War. It was this form of entertainment that white audiences expected, and thus the way for African Americans to make money and succeed in show business. Many white early music publishers capitalized on and exploited these African Americans in their publications.[35] Booker T. Washington remarked that, "Bert Williams has done more for the race than I have. He has smiled his way into people's hearts. I have been obliged to fight my way."[36] This statement is antithetical to Washington's earlier view that African Americans should learn trades and business in order to advance the race.

The first two African American publishing companies opened in 1904 and 1905. Shep Edmonds and John H. Cook, brother of African American violinist and composer

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[35] According to Jasen and Jones in *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, Howley Haviland, F.A. Mills, M. Witmark and Sons, Joseph Stern and Company and Harry Von Tilzer – all music publishing companies run by whites - published coon songs, rags, cakewalks and songs made famous by black entertainers and composers, 121.

[36] Thomas F. DeFrantz, "Williams, Bert and George Walker," in *African American National Biography*, eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0001/e0603 (accessed January 25, 2014).

Will Marion Cook, merged their companies in late 1905 to form Gotham-Attucks Music Company.[37] Williams and Walker were among the first people signed on as writers to the new music company. Gotham-Attucks had fewer stereotypical images on their sheet music covers, which usually included landscapes, images of white people, or popular entertainers. They also did not advertise their songs as coon songs but rather just as songs.[38]

Despite having Williams and Walker as their star songwriters, Gotham-Attucks was unable to compete with the larger white-run music companies. The only advertisements they were able to place were those printed on the backs of sheet music. Williams and Walker also had better deals and worked with other publishing companies and so were not solely working for Gotham-Attucks. African American composers Ernest Hogan, Bob Cole, and Billy Johnson already had deals with other companies and therefore never published anything with Gotham-Attucks. The company was bought out by Joseph W. Stern & Company in 1911.[39]

Pace & Handy: The Publications

Between 1913-1921, the Pace & Handy Music Company submitted eighty-five titles for copyright. Of those titles, fifty-nine were published (See Appendix A). Pace & Handy had achieved success in both Memphis and Chicago; their publications were

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[37] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 121.

[38] Wayne D. Shirley, "The House of Melody: A List of Publications of the Gotham-Attucks Music Company at the Library of Congress," *The Black Perspective in Music* 15, no. 1 (1987), 79-112, offers historical insight to Gotham-Attucks and includes a list of publications, composers, lyricists, performance credits, and photographs that were part of the Gotham-Attucks sheet music catalog.

[39] For more information on the Gotham-Attucks Company see Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 121-131.

immensely popular and widespread, due in part to the travelling minstrel shows that performed the music they had published. The majority of their music was published in New York. This included new titles and reprints of popular hits like "St. Louis Blues" and "Yellow Dog Rag." During the time that William Grant Still was with Pace & Handy in New York (1919-1921), the company was at its highest point in obtaining sheet music copyrights (See Table 1).

Total Number of Copyrights Sought (Memphis, Chicago, New York)	Total Number Of Copyrights Sought in New York	Total Number Published in New York
85	56	31

Table 1: Copyrights Obtained from the New York Office of Pace & Handy.

Fifty-six of the original eighty-five titles were sent in for copyright from the New York office of Pace & Handy. Of those fifty-six titles, thirty-one made it into publication. Only six of the thirty-one publications were for solo piano and these included rags, blues numbers, a march, and a foxtrot. The remaining publications included seven songs with "blues" in the title and at least ten blues songs. Of the non-blues songs with lyrics, formats included foxtrots, novelty numbers, a waltz, and three to four art songs.[40] Handy was not discriminatory in choosing artists and focused on the greatest talent when choosing composers for the Pace & Handy catalog. Annelu Burns and Madalyne Sheppard were white songwriters who contributed the songs "O Saroo" (arranged by William Grant Still) and "Pickaninny Rose," while Al Bernard and Jimmy Cox, both popular white musicians, contributed a number of songs to the catalog."[41]

[40] For information on song titles, copyright dates and other publication information, see Appendix 1 in Hurwitt, "W.C. Handy," 527-536.

[41] Ibid.

Pre-New York Publications and the Popularization of Blues

Before arriving in New York in 1919, the Pace & Handy Music Publishing firm had enjoyed success by publishing a wide array of songs. As noted, the sheet music market was dominated by African American genres like ragtime, coon songs and cakewalks around the turn of the century. Pace & Handy also published a number of ragtime pieces, most notably Al Morton's "Fuzzy Wuzzy Rag" (1915), which was eerily similar to Scott Joplin's popular "Maple Leaf Rag," (See Figure 9).[42]

By 1915, sheet music sales of "Maple Leaf Rag," published by ragtime publisher John Stilwell Stark in 1899, had reached one million.[43] The piece, originally a piano solo, was published by Stark for a second time in 1904. The 1904 version had added words by Sidney Brown and the cover featured the stereotypical black dandy image on the cover. The first recording of the piece was made in 1904 at the Metropolitan Music Store in Minneapolis by Wilbur Sweatman (a popular minstrel who had toured with Handy in Mahara's Minstrels) & Band.[44] Thus, it is not a coincidence that Handy capitalized on the popularity of the Joplin hit by issuing a publication that sounded similar to "Maple Leaf Rag." Handy also attempted ragtime in his composition, "Ole Miss," later arranged by William Grant Still.[45]

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[42] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 240.

[43] Trebor Jay Tichenor, "John Stilwell Stark, Piano Ragtime Publisher: Reading from 'The Intermezzo' and His Personal Ledgers, 1905-1908," *Black Music Research Journal* 9, no. 2 (1989), 196.

[44] Richard Crawford, "Notes on Jazz Standards by Black Authors and Composers, 1899-1942," in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern*, ed. Josephine Wright with Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. (Sterling Heights MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 249.

[45] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 240.

An analysis of the first sections of "Fuzzy Wuzzy Rag" and "Maple Leaf Rag" highlights their similarities. Although the pieces are in different keys (Morton's is in Bb Major and Joplin's is in Ab Major) the harmonic structure, melodic movement, and rhythmic motives are almost identical. The first four measures of each composition alternate between I and V and are then followed by two measures of flat VI and V chords. The ascending scales in measures 7 and 8 of both Morton and Joplin's rag outline minor thirds. Both pieces ascend into higher registers throughout the two measures. The rhythmic motion in the left hand through measures 9 to 16 in each piece is similar as it features repeating chords that highlight I 6-4 chords that eventually lead to the dominant and resolution to the tonic in measure sixteen of each piece. The second sections of each piece both move to their respective subdominant keys before returning again to the tonic key for the final restatement of the opening theme.

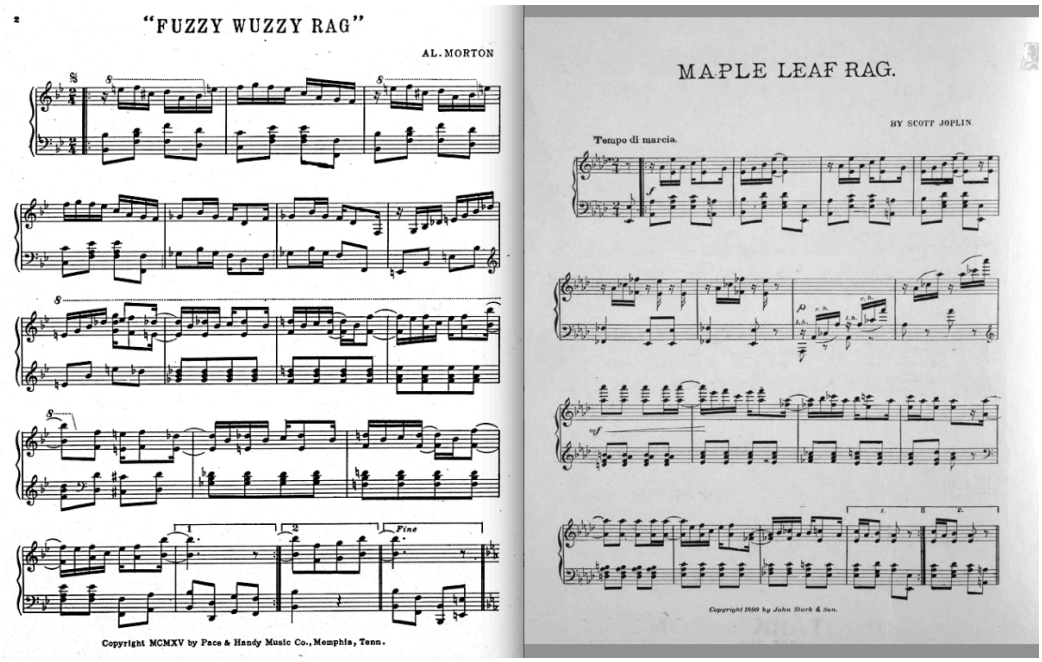

Figure 9: Comparison of "Fuzzy Wuzzy Rag" and "Maple Leaf Rag."[46]

[46] Digital sheet music for "Fuzzy Wuzzy Rag" available at the University of Colorado Digital Sheet Music Collection, http://libcudl.colorado.edu/sheetmusic/brief_record.asp?oid=500405, and "Maple Leaf Rag" at

Handy's most successful composition, "St. Louis Blues" (1914), was one of the first songs by an African American composer that broke coon song and minstrel stereotypes. The lyrics, although still written in dialect like earlier minstrel songs, did not portray the protagonist of the story as foolish, violent, or ignorant:

I hate to see de ev'nin' sun go down,
I hate to see de ev'nin' sun go down,
'Cause ma baby, he done lef' dis town.
Feelin' tomorrow lak ah feel today,
Feel tomorrow lak ah feel today,
I'll pack my trunk, make ma git-away.[47]

In addition, the style of tune was something that had not been successfully mass-produced as sheet music until this point. Earlier attempts by Pace & Handy like "The Jogo Bues" had failed to be successful. Blues music had been performed orally for years since the Civil War ended. Emerging from African American traditions of spirituals and work songs, the blues had evolved throughout the final twenty years of the nineteenth century and Ma Rainey was singing 12-bar blues in minstrel acts in 1902 long before Mamie Smith's famous recording of "Crazy Blues" in 1920.[48]

Of the Pace & Handy Memphis blues publications, several saw initial recordings before the move to New York in 1919: "The Memphis Blues" recorded in 1914 by the Victor Military Band, "The St. Louis Blues" in 1915 by Prince's Band, "Beale Street" in 1917 by Earl Fuller's Jazz Band, and "A Good Man Is Hard To Find" in 1918 by the

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Johns Hopkins University, Levy Sheet Music Collection, https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/handle/1774.2/21752, both accessed January 25, 2014.

[47] "St. Louis Blues" by W.C. Handy. Lyrics reprinted from Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 237.

[48] Horace Clarence Boyer, "Gospel Blues: Origin and History," in *New Perspectives on Music: Essays in Honor of Eileen Southern*, ed. Josephine Wright with Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. (Sterling Heights MI: Harmonie Park Press, 1992), 126-127.

Louisiana Five.[49] Sideshow tents, circus acts that had evolved from earlier tented blackface minstrel shows, featured black performers who were kept separate from the main circus.[50] These sideshows often featured performers singing Pace & Handy publications: "The Memphis Blues," "Yellow Dog Blues," "St. Louis Blues," "Joe Turner Blues," and "The Jogo Blues."[51] Pace & Handy were exploring both live and recording outlets to market their songs. The success they experienced while based in Memphis allowed them to move the business to New York.

New York Publications of Pace & Handy

After the move to New York, Pace & Handy publications were still being performed by minstrel shows throughout the United States. The Pace & Handy blues publications, "You Can't Keep A Good Man Down," "Blind Man Blues," and "Saxaphone Blues" were touted as the newest and "up-to-the-minute songs," by cornet player Bert DeLeo, manager of the Rhoda Royal Circus. DeLeo also chose to feature a non-blues Pace & Handy publication in his show, the Egyptian intermezzo, "Sphinx."[52]

The Florida Blossoms Company, a tented minstrel show featuring a black company, had been in business since 1906. During their sixteenth annual tour in Fort

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[49] Crawford, "Notes on Jazz Standards," 249-251.

[50] Lynn Abbott and Doug Seroff, *Ragged but Right: Black Travelling Shows, "Coon Songs," and the Dark Pathway to Blues and Jazz* (Jackson MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 17.

[51] For more information on other Handy publications being performed in sideshow tents, see Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right*, 157-208.

[52] Abbott and Seroff, *Ragged but Right,* 203.

Valley, Georgia in 1920, the company featured "I'm Goin' Back to My Used to Be."[53] Pace & Handy had published the Jimmy Cox composition in October of 1919.[54]

In 1921, Handy sold the copyright for his unsuccessful instrumental version of "Aunt Hagar's Children" to the Richmond-Robbins company. Lyrics were added, the name was changed to "Aunt Hagar's Blues," and a successful recording by Alice Leslie Carter and James P. Johnson's Jazz Boys was released later that year. The song was again recorded and released in September 1923 by Ted Lewis.[55]

The Hellfighter's Band, formerly known as the 369th U.S. Infantry Band, was led by James Reese Europe and featured vocalist Noble Sissle, who later came to prominence in the African American musical *Shuffle Along*. In 1919, recently returned from the war, the group recorded several songs, one of which was Frederick M. Bryan's "The Dancing Deacon," a Pace & Handy publication.[56]

The 1920 song, "Long Gone," with music by W.C. Handy and lyrics by Chris Smith told the story of a bank robber from Bowling Green, Kentucky, and acquired some success after it was used in the 1921 musical *Shuffle Along*.[57] Handy's "Loveless Love" (1921) did not gain any commercial success until long after the copyright was acquired. Although Noble Sissle & Sizzling Syncopators recorded it in 1921, it was not a success

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[53] Ibid., 302.

[54] Hurwitt, "W.C. Handy as Music Publisher," 529.

[55] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around,* 245-246.

[56] Ibid., 166-167.

[57] Ibid., 143-144.

until 1923, when Alberta Hunter, backed by Fletcher Henderson's Orchestra, released "Loveless Love" on the Paramount label.[58]

Despite the success of several Pace & Handy Publications, the company found itself in financial trouble after moving to New York:

> The company had grown too fast, overextended itself, and acquired too many dud songs. A Pace & Handy ad in the *Chicago Defender*'s issue of October 16, 1920, illustrates the problem. There are thirty songs listed in the ad - among them: "Pee Gee Blues," Why Did You Make A Plaything of Me?," "The Insect Ball," "Louisiana Dip," "Sliding Fever," and "Manvolyne Waltz" - but there is only one good number on the list: Handy's six-year-old "St. Louis Blues."[59]

What made "St. Louis Blues" the only "good number" on the list in the opinion of Jasen and Jones? Was it the number of recordings? The public's reaction to the piece? The fact that other pieces did not reach the same status in coming years? There are no sales figures to verify this claim. However, soon after this 1920 advertisement, Harry Pace left the company to form the Pace Phonograph Company, which finally allowed black performers to sing the blues for a black-owned record company.

[58] Ibid., 246, and Crawford, "Notes on Jazz Standards," 253.

[59] Jasen and Jones, *Spreadin' Rhythm Around*, 244, summarize the ad from the *Chicago Defender* and highlight just a few of the thirty relatively unsuccessful titles that were listed.

Chapter Four
Black Swan Records

Harry Pace founded the Pace Phonograph Company after leaving Pace & Handy Music Publishing in 1921.[1] Later named Black Swan Records after African American soprano Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield, the company was the first black-run recording studio in New York City.[2] Black Swan Records was founded during the beginning of the Harlem Renaissance and designed to feature recordings made by black musicians to 'uplift' the race in the views of both black and white audiences. William Grant Still left Pace & Handy to work as an arranger and later recording manager at Black Swan in 1921.[3]

To understand the cultural context of Black Swan Records, one must acknowledge the Harlem Renaissance as well as the ideas of 'racial uplift' that led to the movement as discussed in chapter one. Harry Pace's musical choices of what songs to record, the artists he featured on the label, and the business and marketing techniques Pace used reflect ways in which he catered to a racially segregated audience. Like Pace & Handy Music Publishing, Black Swan Records provided an opportunity for Still to observe how African American musicians and entertainers balanced popular culture with

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[1] Aaron Myers, "Black Swan Records," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African American Experience, Second Edition*, eds. Kwame Anthony Appiah and Henry Louis Gates Jr., *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0002/e0558 (accessed February 5, 2014).

[2] Kathleen Thompson, "Greenfield, Elizabeth Taylor," in *Black Women in America, Second Edition*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0003/e0168 (accessed February 5, 2014). Elizabeth Taylor Greenfield (ca. 1817-1876), nicknamed "the Black Swan," was a black concert singer who performed throughout the United States and Britain. William Howland Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life: The Phonograph and Popular Memory, 1890-1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 124 suggests that Pace renamed the company to Black Swan with the intent of appealing to the black middle-class listeners who did not approve of "raucous jazz."

[3] Still, *William Grant Still: A Bio-Bibliography*, 20.

forms of classical music. David Suisman claims "Black Swan's burden was to chart a course between elite culture and popular culture, between the color blindness of music and the racism of the music business, between ideologically based enterprise and the impinging realities of capitalist markets."[4]

African Americans and African American Music in the Recording Studio

Black Swan was not the first company to record African American artists, nor was it the first to advertise "race records." George Washington Johnson, nicknamed "The Whistling Coon," was among the first African Americans to make records. He recorded minstrel repertoire for the Edison, Columbia, and Berliner companies in the 1890s.[5] Beginning in 1901, Victor Talking Machine Company recorded several black artists: "The Two Real Coons" Williams and Walker, the Dinwiddie Colored Quartet, and the Fisk Jubilee Quartet.[6] The black dance bands of Wilbur Sweatman, Ford Dabney, James Reese Europe, and W.C. Handy were also recorded by white record companies from 1903 through 1917. Piano rolls of classical pieces and piano rags by John "Blind" Boone, Eubie Blake, and Noble Sissle became popular in 1912 and continued into the 1920s.[7]

White-run recording studios also capitalized on entertainment by white artists singing music that was inspired by African Americans. Sophie Tucker, Billy Murray and

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[4] David Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture: Black Swan Records and the Political Economy of African American Music," *The Journal of American History* 90, no. 4 (2004), 1324.

[5] Suisman, "Sound of Money," 242-243.

[6] Southern, *The Music of Black Americans,* 309.

[7] Ibid., 310.

Marion Harris sang coon songs from minstrel shows.[8] Len Spencer, Cal Stewart, and Arthur Collins, white minstrel entertainers acting as black men, recorded covers of minstrel songs for whites who wanted to learn about black culture.[9]

Black Swan Records: The Music

Black Swan Records was among the first African American run record companies to advertise records featuring only black singers and musicians. Black Swan Records was in business from 1921 to 1923 and produced over 180 records.[10] Despite Black Swan's attempt to highlight art songs and classical music, the company could not ignore the demand for blues-related material. According to discographies, Black Swan recorded ninety-one total blues-related songs, which placed it second behind Okeh Records. Okeh had produced 105 blues songs during the same time period.[11]

Founded by German-American Otto K.E. Heinemann, Okeh records was the label on which Mamie Smith's "Crazy Blues" was first pressed and released in 1920.[12] This recording, often considered the first blues recording by an African American woman, was the result of a long campaign launched by African American songwriter Perry Bradford.[13] The song gained widespread popularity and led to the development of "race records."

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[8] Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life*, 111.

[9] Ibid., 112-113.

[10] Ted Vincent, "The Social Context of Black Swan Records," in *Write Me a Few of Your Lines: A Blues Reader*, ed. Steven C. Tracy (Amherst MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1999), 367.

[11] Ibid., 368.

[12] Tim Brooks, *Lost Sounds,* 374.

[13] Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1300. For an account of Bradford's campaign, see Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life,* 116-117. The campaign was designed to allow African Americans access to recording studios to sing blues material.

Because the African American population was interested in purchasing this type of record and represented a large demographic of listeners that had previously been ignored, the white-run companies, Okeh, Paramount, Brunswick/Vocalion, and Columbia, capitalized on the success of African American blues artists by issuing "race records."[14]

Pace issued a variety of musical genres on the Black Swan label. In addition to blues and ragtime, Black Swan released opera arias, spirituals and classical music.[15] Suisman suggests that this was "in order to challenge stereotypes about African Americans, promote African Americans' cultural development, and impugn racist arguments about African American barbarism."[16] It was Pace's initial plan to release music performed by African Americans and from diverse genres in order to minimize racial stereotypes and uplift the race in the eyes of both white and black societies.[17]

Black Swan's first recording in May 1921 included the sentimental songs, "At Dawning," and "Thank God for a Garden."[18] Even though the songs were advertised in *The Crisis*, the official publication of the NAACP, as "[t]he only records using exclusively Negro voices and Negro musicians," Black Swan did not hesitate to use white composers or songs that had originally been made popular by white singers.[19] "At Dawning (I Love You)" was an art song composed by white American composer Charles

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[14] Kenney, *Recorded Music in American Life,* 111, Paul Oliver, "Race Record," in *Grove Music Online*. *Oxford Music Online,* http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/22778 (accessed February 13, 2014), and Vincent, *Keep Cool*, 94.

[15] Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1297.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Suisman, "The Sound of Money, 238.

[18] Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1306.

[19] The first Black Swan advertisement is in *Crisis* 21 (1921), 41.

Wakefield Cadman with lyrics by white, female librettist Nelle Richmond Eberhart. "Thank God for a Garden" was composed by an English violinist of Spanish descent, Teresa Del Riego.[20] The artist Pace selected to record the two non-blues art songs was Revella Hughes, an African American university trained pianist and lyric soprano. Given that white-owned record companies were promoting and profiting from the sale of blues music, it is interesting to note that Pace chose to feature an African American artist singing something other than the blues as the company's first recording. This bold gesture was a way of representing African Americans performing in classical rather than blues style. Also, at this time, wealthier black families who did not approve of low-class forms of entertainment owned phonographs. A later advertisement in *The Crisis* promoted the two Revella Hughes songs as "the better class of records by colored artists," placing it as higher art than blues and jazz (See Figure 10).[21]

Black Swan's second record also did not feature any blues numbers but rather two ballads sung by African American concert violinist Carroll Clark.[22] "Eternamente (For All Eternity)" by Angelo Mascheroni and Ernest R. Ball's, "Dear Little Boy of Mine" had reached success earlier with white concert singers.[23] It was not until Black Swan's third release that a blues piece was featured. "Blind Man Blues," advertised in *The Crisis* (See Figure 11) as a blues novelty, and "Play 'Em for Mamma" were both in an upbeat ragtime style. Performed by blues singer Katie Crippen, who achieved short-lived success

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[20] Doris Evans McGinty and Revella Hughes, "From the Classics to Broadway to Swing," *The Black Perspective in Music* 16, no. 1 (1988), 93.

[21] *Crisis* 25 (1923), 137.

[22] Ibid., 1306.

[23] Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 169.

in the early 1920s, the songs were advertised in the May and June issues of *Crisis* in 1921.[24] The advertisements represent the marketing of the diverse talents of African Americans to other African Americans and the fact that they could perform in genres other than those being exploited through white "race recordings."

THE CRISIS ADVERTISER 139

"Colored People Don't Want Classic Music!"

So our Dealers write us. "Give 'Em Blues and Jazz. That's all we can sell".

We Believe the Dealer is Wrong. But unless we furnish him with What he has Demand for, he will not handle our Goods.

If you—the person reading this advertisement—earnestly want to Do Something for Negro Music, Go to your Record Dealer and ask for the Better Class of Records by Colored Artists. If there is a Demand he will keep Them. Try this list of the Better Class. Buy one or all of them:

$1.00 7101—Caro Nome (Rigoletto), Antoinette Garnes, Soprano.
1.00 7102—Ah Fors'E'Lui (Traviata), Antoinette Garnes, Soprano.
1.00 7103—The Bell Song (Lakme), Florence Cole Talbert, Soprano.
1.00 7104—The Kiss (Il Bacio), Florence Cole Talbert, Soprano.

60004 (Autumn Leaves, Piano Solo, Donald Heywood.
75c (Operatic Dream.
60005 (Swanee River, Violin Solo, Kemper Harreld.
75c (Souvenir.
2001 (At Dawning, Revella Hughes, Soprano.
75c (Thank God for a Garden.
2015 (The Rosary, Marianna Johnson, Contralto.
75c (Sorter Miss You.
2013 (Since You Went Away, J. Arthur Gaines, Tenor.
75c (Who Knows.

You will enjoy these and you will Encourage Us to make more and more of this kind of A Record.

We have a special Proposition for Music Teachers. Write for it.

Agents Wanted In Every Community.

Black Swan Phonograph Company, Inc.

HARRY H. PACE, Pres.

2289 Seventh Avenue New York, N. Y.

Mention The Crisis

Figure 10: Advertisement in *The Crisis* for a "Better Class" of records. *Crisis* 25 (1923), 137.

[24] Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing,* 22.

Figure 11: Advertisement in *The Crisis* for Black Swan's first three records. *Crisis* 21 (1921), 44.

In addition to art songs and blues numbers, Black Swan recorded religious music. The company chose formal arrangements of spirituals over syncopated gospel songs. Syncopated gospel songs were associated with less educated African Americans who

attended Pentecostal churches in the south.[25] Thus, Black Swan catered to middle- and upper-class African Americans as well as the white population. Black Swan issued the first recording of the hymn "Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing," commonly known as the Negro National Anthem.[26] The company also issued recordings of arias by Gounod and Verdi, Christmas carols, and songs by Stephen Foster.[27]

Black Swan Records: The Recording Artists

Black Swan Records featured African American artists from several different performing genres. In addition to the classical artists Revella Hughes and Clarence Carroll Clark, Black Swan also recorded sopranos Florence Cole-Talbert, Antoinette Garnes, and Hattie King Reavis.[28] Cole-Talbert had recorded Eva Dell-Acqua's "Villanelle" in 1919 for George W. Broome's Broome Special Phonograph label.[29] She

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[25] Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1310.

[26] Ibid., 1306. According to Jennifer Wood, "Johnson, John Rosamond," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience, Second Edition*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0001/e0305 (accessed February 5, 2014), the hymn composed by James Wheldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson, represented the difficulties African Americans faced after arriving in America, as well as their faith in God. It was written in 1900 for the anniversary of Abraham Lincoln's birthday and later adopted by the NAACP as its official song.

[27] Ibid., 1307.

[28] Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 487, and Paulette Coleman, "Cole-Talbert, Florence O.," in *African American National Biography*, eds. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0001/e2257 (accessed February 13, 2014).

[29] Ibid., 486. According to Ronald Enclerico, "Music Industry," in *Encyclopedia of African American History, 1896 to the Present: From the Age of Segregation to the Twenty-first Century*, ed. Paul Finkelman, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0005/e0853 (accessed February 13, 2014), George W. Broome's company was the first record company operated and owned by an African American. The classical records were marketed and then sold through mail order to largely black audiences.

later became the first African American to sing the title role in Verdi's *Aida* in 1927.[30] At Black Swan in 1922, Cole-Talbert recorded "Il Bacio (The Kiss)" by Arditi, "The Last Rose of Summer" by Balfe, and "The Bell Song" from Delibes' opera, *Lakme*.[31]

Clarence Carroll Clark was already an experienced recording artist when he sang for Black Swan in 1921. In the early 1900s, he was often featured on the Columbia record singing plantation and dialect songs.[32] Columbia never advertised him as being an African American and did not feature his photograph in any advertisements or record supplements.[33] However, *The Crisis* acknowledged Clark's race and noted his success. Clark was hired by Black Swan to record six pieces: four art songs and two spirituals.[34] The liability of having an African American photographed in advertisements of white-run companies became a selling point for Black Swan. This suggests that their primary audience was black and indicates racial pride.

Black Swan also issued a large amount of blues-related materials. As mentioned, Black Swan's ninety-one blues releases were second only to Okeh Records 105 releases, but the company was ahead of other white-run companies by a large margin: Columbia issued forty-three blues recordings, Arto had thirty-three, and Paramount had eighteen.[35]

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[30] Mildred Denby Green, "Concert Music," in *Black Women in America, Second Edition,* ed. Darlene Clark Hine, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0003/e0090 (accessed February 13, 2014). According to Marlo Price "Cole-Talbert, Florence O.," in *Notable Black American Women, Part II*, ed. Jessie Carney Smith, (Detroit MI: Gale Research, 1992), 132, Cole-Talbert performed the role at the Communale Theatre in Cozenza, Italy and was praised by Italian critics.

[31] Brooks, *Lost Sounds*, 487.

[32] Ibid., 159.

[33] Ibid., 167.

[34] Ibid., 169 and Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1306.

[35] Vincent, *Keep Cool*, 95.

This meant that Black Swan was also responsible for hiring blues artists. Despite its small size, Black Swan was able to remain relatively competitive with the other companies when signing African American artists to the label through 1922 (See Table 2).

	Jan-June 1921	July-Dec 1921	Jan-June 1922	July-Dec 1922	Jan-June 1923	July-Dec 1923
Black Swan	5	5	4	10	8	1
Others	8	13	8	10	31	43

Table 2: Blues artists recording 1921-1923. Reprinted from Ted Vincent, *Keep Cool*, 96.

Black Swan recorded a large number of blues singers and musicians, but the most successful were Ethel Waters, Trixie Smith, and Alberta Hunter who were often accompanied by Fletcher Henderson.[36] Their Black Swan recordings were partly responsible for launching their lucrative entertainment careers. Trixie Smith was a blues and vaudeville singer from Atlanta who toured with Theater Owners Booking Association (TOBA) in 1920-21, and later recorded with Louis Armstrong and Sidney Bechet. Smith became an actress in 1932, when she starred in *The Black King,* the first of four films in which she would act.[37] Alberta Hunter spent much of her early childhood in Memphis on Beale Street and was most likely exposed to the same bands, minstrel troupes, and vaudeville shows as Pace's former business partner, W.C. Handy. After recording with Black Swan, Hunter became the first African American to record with an all-white band on the Columbia label in 1923 and also later recorded with Louis

[36] Suisman, "Sound of Money," 1321.

[37] Barry Kernfeld, "Smith, Trixie," in *African American National Biography*, ed. Henry Louis Gates Jr. and Evelyn Brooks Higginbotham, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0001/e3768 (accessed February 13, 2014).

Armstrong and Sidney Bechet. She performed in international tours throughout Europe and travelled with Paul Robeson as Queenie in Rodgers & Hammerstein's *Show Boat*.[38]

On March 21, 1921, Ethel Waters made her first recordings for Cardinal Records and was later signed by Black Swan.[39] From 1921 to 1923, she recorded over twenty songs for Black Swan and became their biggest seller with hits like, "Down Home Blues," "Jazzin' Babies Blues," "All the Time," and William Grant Still's arrangement of "Memphis Man."[40] Waters was signed to the Columbia label after Black Swan was sold. She enjoyed a lucrative career on the stage, in films, and in the recording studio.

Fletcher Henderson left Pace & Handy with Harry Pace and became the music director at Black Swan Records.[41] He toured with Ethel Waters from 1921-1923 to promote the sales of Black Swan's records, during which time he established a reputation as a reliable accompanist. He was a featured accompanist with singers like Ethel Waters and Bessie Smith on over 150 records by 1923.[42] Fletcher Henderson was raised a middle-class black man and had a college education from Atlanta University. He and Ethel Waters often fought on tour about his style of accompaniment; Waters claimed that

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[38] Michelle R. Scott, "Hunter, Alberta," in *Black Women in America, Second Edition*, ed. Darlene Clark Hine, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0003/e0202 (accessed February 13, 2014).

[39] Stephen Bourne, *Ethel Waters: Stormy Weather* (Lanham MD: Scarecrow Press, 2007), 9.

[40] Ibid., and Ethel Waters, *His Eye Is On the Sparrow*, 141. Flecther Henderson, Ethel Waters, and Harry Pace all claim that Waters's first record for Black Swan was a huge success in Walter C. Allen, *Hendersonia: The Music of Fletcher Henderson and his Musicians, a Bio-Discography* (Highland Park NJ: Jazz Monographs, 1973), 13-14.

[41] Jeffrey Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing,* 21.

[42] Ibid., 25.

he was not playing in the style of real jazz and often insulted his playing.[43] Given that Henderson was trained in classical concert music, Waters would often remark that African American music was not "his kind at all."[44]

While Black Swan chose to record popular black artists such as Ethel Waters and Alberta Hunter, it is important to note the one famous singer who was turned away from the studio. David Suisman notes that Black Swan turned away Bessie Smith because her sound was too coarse and "blacker" than other singers signed by the company, specifically Isabelle Washington who had a thinner and "more controlled" voice.[45] This represents the side of Black Swan that wanted to promote the race but only in ways that would uplift it. The raw qualities of Bessie Smith may have been too raucous for Black Swan and it is possible that Pace and the board of directors saw Smith as detrimental to the larger picture of racial uplift that the company promoted.

Black Swan Records: Business and Marketing

The board of directors at Black Swan was comprised of a number of middle- to upper-class African Americans: W.E.B. Du Bois, then editor of the NAACP monthly *The Crisis*; Dr. M.V. Boutte, pharmacist and instructor at Meharry Medical School; Dr. Godfrey Nurse, a physician and realtor; Dr. W.H. Willis, head of the Washington D.C. medical association; Truman K. Gibson, an insurance and banking executive; John P. Quander, an accountant; John E. Nail, a Harlem real estate pioneer; and Emmett Scott, a

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[43] Donald Bogle, *Heat Wave: The Life and Career of Ethel Waters* (New York: Harper-Collins Publishers, 2011), 68-69.

[44] Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 26 quoting Ethel Waters, *His Eye Is On The Sparrow*, 141-142.

[45] Suisman, "The Sound of Money," 1310.

friend of Booker T. Washington and secretary at the Tuskegee Institute.[46] As middle-class and financially sound African Americans, the board of directors, which included one of the racial uplift movement's most outspoken supporters, W.E.B. Du Bois, would have been influential in deciding the types of music necessary to promote racial uplift. Thus, Black Swan faced a dilemma. In order to make money, the company needed to sell records that were popular such as blues and ragtime, but producing those genres violated the board of director's ideas about racial uplift through musical forms like opera arias or art songs and spirituals.[47]

Black Swan marketed its records to the African American population through black publications such as *The Crisis*, *The Chicago Defender,* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*. As already mentioned, the advertisements in *The Crisis* highlighted Black Swan's dedication to using only black musicians and singers and marketed largely classical recordings. As W.E.B. Du Bois was editor, he no doubt had a say in the advertisements and therefore chose to focus on the classical music that he believed contributed to the advancement of the race. Questions, however, have been raised as to whether or not Black Swan always used African American musicians and singers. The advertisement in the July 1922 issue of *The Crisis* (See Figure 12) featured at least eight groups or individuals that might have been pseudonyms for white musicians and singers (See Appendix B).

It is important to note that the change to recording white artists under pseudonyms occurred after Black Swan bought the bankrupt Olympic Disc Record Corporation.

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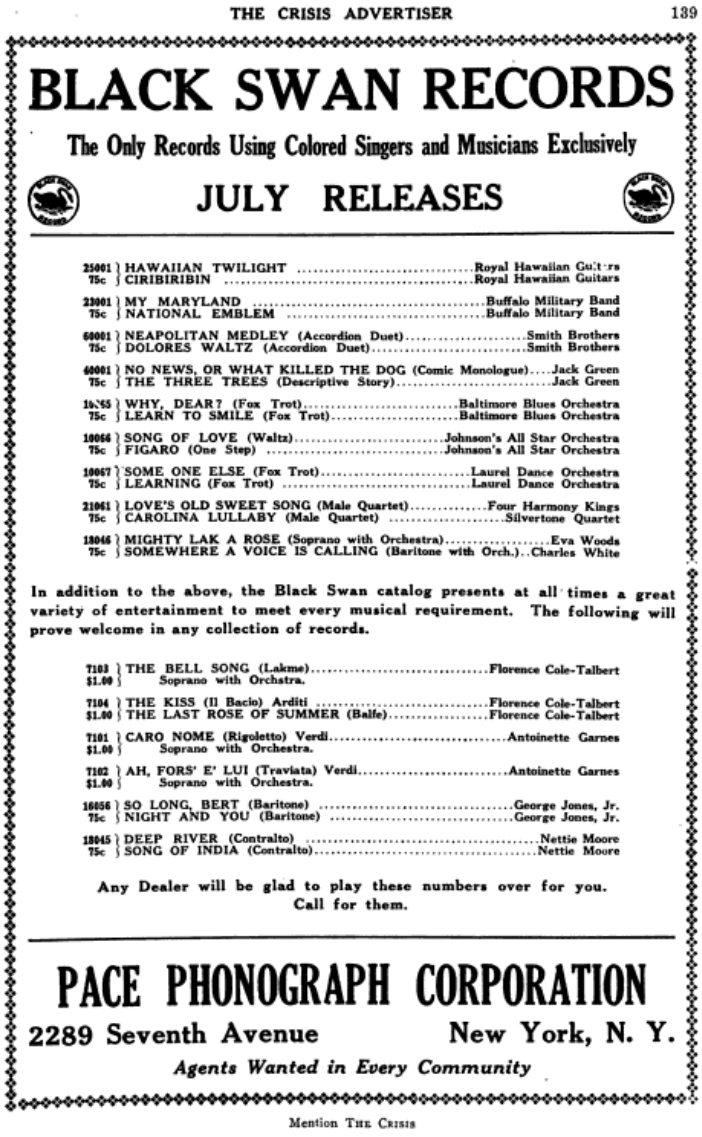
[46] Vincent, "The Social Context of Black Swan Records," 370, Shirley, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1305, and Magee, *The Uncrowned King of Swing*, 21.

[47] Vincent, "The Social Context of Black Swan Records," 369-370.

Therefore, the recordings advertised in the July 1922 issue of *The Crisis* may have been reissues of white artists who had previously recorded for other companies.[48] The advertisement, however, was still erroneous in its claim that Black Swan was using solely African American performers.



THE CRISIS ADVERTISER 139

BLACK SWAN RECORDS

The Only Records Using Colored Singers and Musicians Exclusively

JULY RELEASES

25001 / 75c	HAWAIIAN TWILIGHT	Royal Hawaiian Guitars
	CIRIBIRIBIN	Royal Hawaiian Guitars
23001 / 75c	MY MARYLAND	Buffalo Military Band
	NATIONAL EMBLEM	Buffalo Military Band
60001 / 75c	NEAPOLITAN MEDLEY (Accordion Duet)	Smith Brothers
	DOLORES WALTZ (Accordion Duet)	Smith Brothers
40001 / 75c	NO NEWS, OR WHAT KILLED THE DOG (Comic Monologue)	Jack Green
	THE THREE TREES (Descriptive Story)	Jack Green
10055 / 75c	WHY, DEAR? (Fox Trot)	Baltimore Blues Orchestra
	LEARN TO SMILE (Fox Trot)	Baltimore Blues Orchestra
10056 / 75c	SONG OF LOVE (Waltz)	Johnson's All Star Orchestra
	FIGARO (One Step)	Johnson's All Star Orchestra
10057 / 75c	SOME ONE ELSE (Fox Trot)	Laurel Dance Orchestra
	LEARNING (Fox Trot)	Laurel Dance Orchestra
21061 / 75c	LOVE'S OLD SWEET SONG (Male Quartet)	Four Harmony Kings
	CAROLINA LULLABY (Male Quartet)	Silvertone Quartet
18046 / 75c	MIGHTY LAK A ROSE (Soprano with Orchestra)	Eva Woods
	SOMEWHERE A VOICE IS CALLING (Baritone with Orch.)	Charles White

In addition to the above, the Black Swan catalog presents at all times a great variety of entertainment to meet every musical requirement. The following will prove welcome in any collection of records.

7103 / $1.00	THE BELL SONG (Lakme) Soprano with Orchestra.	Florence Cole-Talbert
7104 / $1.00	THE KISS (Il Bacio) Arditi	Florence Cole-Talbert
	THE LAST ROSE OF SUMMER (Balfe)	Florence Cole-Talbert
7101 / $1.00	CARO NOME (Rigoletto) Verdi Soprano with Orchestra.	Antoinette Garnes
7102 / $1.00	AH, FORS' E' LUI (Traviata) Verdi Soprano with Orchestra.	Antoinette Garnes
16056 / 75c	SO LONG, BERT (Baritone)	George Jones, Jr.
	NIGHT AND YOU (Baritone)	George Jones, Jr.
18045 / 75c	DEEP RIVER (Contralto)	Nettie Moore
	SONG OF INDIA (Contralto)	Nettie Moore

Any Dealer will be glad to play these numbers over for you. Call for them.

PACE PHONOGRAPH CORPORATION

2289 Seventh Avenue **New York, N. Y.**

Agents Wanted in Every Community

Mention THE CRISIS

Figure 12: Black Swan advertisement in the July 1922 issue of *The Crisis*.

The *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier* were more widely circulating publications and featured advertisements that focused on the Black Swan's blues

[48] Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1317-1320.

recordings. The advertisement in the July 22, 1922 issue of the *Chicago Defender* (See Figure 13) represents different songs than those in *The Crisis*. Readership of *The Crisis* differed from that of the *Chicago Defender* and *Pittsburgh Courier*. *The Crisis* was read by college educated, middle-class African Americans while the *Defender* and *Courier* were mass-produced and read by a larger demographic of African Americans, not all of whom were upper- or middle-class.[49] Marketing to the specific readers of *The Crisis* represented Du Bois's ideas that the Talented Tenth, as discussed in Chapter One (those who would read *The Crisis*), would be responsible for the advancement of the race.

To further promote sales of their blues records, Black Swan created a vaudeville troupe that starred the Black Swan Troubadours. Led by Ethel Waters and Fletcher Henderson, the group toured from the fall of 1921 through July of 1922. Performing in Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Baltimore, Pittsburgh, West Virginia, Ohio, Kentucky, St. Louis, Indianapolis, and Chicago, the show included dances, comic skits, and songs featured on Black Swan recordings.[50]

[49] Vincent, "The Social Context of Black Swan Records," 370.

[50] Suisman, "Co-Workers in the Kingdom of Culture," 1309.

Figure 13: Black Swan advertisement in the July 22, 1922 issue of the *Chicago Defender*.

Despite attempts to market both blues and classical music to different classes of African American listeners, Black Swan was unable to compete with the larger white-run studios who had furthered their success by signing blues and jazz artists like Bessie Smith, Jelly Roll Morton, and Louis Armstrong. The advent of radio in 1922 also proved detrimental to phonograph companies and sales numbers dropped throughout all of the major recording companies. In spring, 1924, the New York Recording Company leased Black Swan and reissued recordings through Paramount. The arrangement lasted only a year and following that, Black Swan Records was out of business with no hope for a revival.[51]

[51] Ibid., 1320-1324.

Chapter Five:
Shuffle Along

While working at Black Swan in 1921, William Grant Still also performed in the pit orchestra and provided orchestral arrangements for Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake's new musical, *Shuffle Along*. After opening at the 63rd Street Theater on May 23, 1921 in New York City, the all-black musical *Shuffle Along* played to sold-out houses and ran for 504 performances. Large audiences flocked to the show despite its rudimentary plot, which highlighted a dispute between two corrupt black grocery store owners fighting to become city mayor. Using blackface stereotypes from minstrelsy, but also incorporating sentimental love ballads and jazzy numbers, producers Eubie Blake, Noble Sissle, Flournoy Miller and Aubrey Lyles were able to draw crowds every night. The show furthered the careers of Paul Robeson, Josephine Baker, Florence Mills and also garnered the hit song "I'm Just Wild About Harry" which was later recorded by Paul Whiteman, used by Harry Truman in a presidential campaign, and a jazz standard.[1]

African American Musicals: A Brief History

Early African American musicals were vaudeville shows. While their roots were in minstrelsy, the shows had a broader variety of entertainment and material. Some of the first all-black stage productions were *The Creole Show* (1890), *The Octoroons* (1895), *Oriental America* (1896), and *Black Patti's Troubadours* (1896). The shows, however,

[1] Anthony Appiah Kwame and Henry Louis Gates, Jr., eds., "Shuffle Along," in *Africana: The Encyclopedia of the African and African American Experience, Second Edition*, *Oxford African American Studies Center*, http://www.oxfordaasc.com/article/opr/t0002/e3559 (accessed March 2, 2014).

were primarily touring shows and only experienced limited runs in New York City.[2] *A Trip to Coontown* (1898), created by Black Patti's Troubadours writers Bob Cole and Billy Johnson, was the first full-length black musical comedy.[3] The production echoed the premise of another popular comic musical, *A Trip to Chinatown* (1891), which allowed performing opportunities for white vaudevillians.[4]*A Trip to Coontown* used many of the already familiar African American stereotypes including a citified con man, a plantation darky, and a multitude of coon songs including "All I Wants Is Ma Chickens" and "I Wonder What Is That Coons Game."[5] The scenes in *Coontown* also featured the stereotypes of African Americans wielding razors and eating watermelons that had been popular in minstrelsy and vaudeville.[6] However, writers Cole and Johnson did not focus solely on African American stereotypes, but used a variety of musical styles including Asian, Arab, and Spanish motifs. The show was a hit with audiences and toured for two years before closing in 1900.[7]

The success of *A Trip to Coontown* paved the way for other all-black musicals at the turn of the twentieth century including Will Marion Cook and Paul Lawrence Dunbar's *Clorindy, the Origin of the Cakewalk* (1898) and *In Dahomey* (1903), which

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[2] John Bush Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves: A Social History of the American Musical Theatre* (Hanover MA: Brandeis University Press, 2003), 31.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Gerald Bordman, *American Musical Theatre: A Chronicle: Second Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 113-115.

[5] Jones, *Our Musicals, Ourselves*, 32.

[6] Krystyn R. Moon, David Krasner, and Thomas Riis, "Forgotten Manuscripts: *A Trip To Coontown*," *African American Review* 44 (2011), 12.

[7] Ibid., 13.

starred vaudeville entertainers Bert Williams and George Walker.[8] Slowly, black composers and writers attempted to break stereotypes in these shows by including realistic love scenes between African American characters, verbal confrontations in the lyrics directed toward white audience members, and explorations of themes other than the plantation (nature, mother, and home).[9] The song lyrics of "Darktown Is Out Tonight" and "On Emancipation Day" from *Clorindy* and *In Dahomey* are examples of how composers confronted white audiences.[10]

The fading of the field of black musicals around 1910 can be attributed to any number of reasons: the deaths of Ernest Hogan, Bob Cole, and George Walker, the abandonment of musical theater by Will Marion Cook, James Weldon Johnson, and J. Rosamond Johnson, and the beginning of World War I.[11] Then, in 1921, the white promoter John Cort brought *Shuffle Along* to the 63rd Street Theatre in New York. It grossed nearly $8 million before it closed in 1923.[12]

***Shuffle Along*: A Brief Synopsis**

Shuffle Along premiered during a difficult time in America. A slumping economy, an economic depression after the war, race riots of 1919, public lynchings, and one of the

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[8] Jones, *Our Musicals*, 32-33.

[9] For a full description of how Will Marion Cook attempted to break racial stereotypes in his works, see Marva Griffin Carter, "Removing the 'Minstrel Mask' in the Musicals of Will Marion Cook," *The Musical Quarterly* 84, no. 2 (2000), 206-220.

[10] Alex Ross, *The Rest Is Noise: Listening to the Twentieth Century* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007), 127.

[11] Jones, *Our Musicals*, 35.

[12] Karen Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race: Black Performers in Turn of the Century America* (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 233.

most violent race riots in Tulsa, OK, in 1921, a week after the premiere could have hampered the musical's success.[13] However, producer Noble Sissle credited its success to the public's need for fun and laughter, expressed through the jazzy music and rhythms:

> Very few people of the Broadway theatrical managerial staffs believed us and there were few among our own group who felt we had a chance…we felt that the gloom and depression as an aftermath of the war had left the country hungry for laughter…that was so expressed in our music and rhythms. [14]

Even though the musical premiered almost a decade after some of the last popular all-black shows, it still featured many of the same conventions. The music included "ragtime ("In Honeysuckle Time"), coon songs ("Bandana Days"), blues ("Daddy, Won't You Please Come Home"), operetta-style ballads ("Love Will Find a Way"), and jazz ("Baltimore Buzz")."[15] The characters can be traced all the way back to minstrelsy: black actors Miller and Lyles donned blackface and played the comedic mayoral candidates Sam and Steve; Sissle played Tom Sharper, a political boss who was similar to the interlocutor in minstrelsy; and smaller character roles included the names Uncle Tom and Old Black Joe.[16] Although largely a revue, the show is sometimes called a book musical because of its rudimentary political plot.[17]

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[13] David Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant: African American Theatre, Drama, and Performance in the Harlem Renaissance, 1910-1927* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1997), 242-243.

[14] Ibid., 245, citing Noble Sissle's unpublished biography from the Flournoy Miller Collection, Box II, ms pg. 4-5.

[15] David Savran, *Highbrow/Lowdown: Theater, Jazz, and the Making of the New Middle Class* (Ann Arbor MI: The University of Michigan Press), 74.

[16] Ibid., 74-75.

[17] John Kenrick, *Musical Theatre: A History* (New York: Continuum, 2008), 189. Revues were collections of song and dance numbers and humorous skits that had little to no connected plot and book musicals had bare outlines of a plot with a series of chronological events. Geoffrey Block, "Musical Theater: Overview," in *The Grove Dictionary of American Music*, 2nd ed., ed. Charles Hiroshi Garrett (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013) and Thomas L. Riis and Ann Sears, "The Successors of Rodgers and Hammerstein

Audiences for the show were 90 percent white, however, the ticket prices were the same as shows starring white performers.[18] This meant that the white audience was travelling just north of Broadway and paying top dollar to see black performers in a full-length stage show. Also notable was that the seating was no longer segregated. Two-thirds of the orchestra section was still reserved for whites, but blacks were no longer confined to the balcony. Despite the non-segregated seating, many African Americans still sat in the balcony as they were unable to afford orchestra seating.[19] The musical played to middle- and upper-class citizens and allowed African Americans to experience ways in which people of their race was able to succeed economically in this form of entertainment despite stereotypes.

Shuffle Along: Breaking or Advancing Racial Stereotypes?

Stereotypical Negro aspects of the production included blackface, coon songs, ragtime, racial humor, light-skinned women in scantily clad outfits, and the portrayal of African Americans as shifty and dishonest.[20] However, *Shuffle Along* also broke stereotypes by including a sentimental love story between two Negroes (something which had previously been taboo in most musical theater). The touring companies also insisted on integrated seating in the theaters, although how fair the seating options were to

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from the 1940s to the 1960s," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Musical*, ed. William A. Everett and Paul R. Laird (Cambridge MA: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 137.

[18] Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 233, and Jones, *Our Musicals*, 70.

[19] Jones, *Our Musicals*, 70.

[20] David Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant,* 247 and Savran, *Highbrow/Lowdown*, 74-75.

African Americans should be further researched.[21] David Krasner concludes that it was this mixing of stereotypes and anti-stereotypes contributed to the show's success. He provides a detailed outline of the musical's text, which included black stereotypes (e.g., the use of "mammy" and the designation of skin tone as being either more sophisticated and lighter, or primitive and darker) and anti-stereotypes (political reactions to voting laws and a "decent, mature, loving relationship" between two African-Americans).[22]

Recently, David Thompson expanded on Krasner's initial research about how the creators of *Shuffle Along* catered to their audience. Within a brief description of vaudeville, Thompson explored the two teams of producers (who were also the main performers in the show): Sissle and Blake had a trademark style in which they did not perform in blackface and chose to wear tuxedos whereas Miller and Lyles worked within stereotypical vaudevillian conventions such as blackface, cakewalking, and off-color jokes.[23] Taking an historical standpoint, Thompson researched the backgrounds of the producers and then used that information to conclude that they created three kinds of relationships with the audience: "counteracting and subverting expectations of the time ... attempting to change audience dynamics while shifting audience perception … and reflecting cultural exchange and expansion of influence."[24]

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[21] Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant*, 248.

[22] Ibid., 249-265. Krasner provides an act-by-act critical interpretation of the show based solely on the text and how it relates to both current events and previous black musicals. This historical revisionist standpoint provides insight into the libretto and how it both explored stereotypes and broke barriers.

[23] David S. Thompson, "Shuffling Roles: Alterations and audiences in *Shuffle Along*," *Theatre Symposium* 20 (2012), 97. In this study, Thompson mentioned that he drew some conclusions from a forthcoming critical volume, edited by Rosalyn P. Schenbeck entitled *Eubie Blake and Noble Sissle: Shuffle Along*. He claimed that his article took a different approach than that of the upcoming edition, however at the time of this paper, the edition has not yet been published so an analysis of its contents cannot be included. A synopsis and brief abstract can be found at "MUSA" http://www.umich.edu/~musausa/blake.htm.

[24] Ibid., 98-101.

Thompson's argument based on the producers' performance histories is that they were able to draw from their earlier stage experiences in order to cater to both white and black audiences. Miller and Lyles played comic buffoons and "blacked up" for their performances and Sissle and Blake did not perform in blackface and donned nice suits. Thompson concluded that "good business frequently depended upon an important balance of delivering the vulgar while promising the wholesome and legitimate."[25] The wholesome were realistic love duets between two black actors and the vulgar was the retention of blackface and scantily clad women.

But how was this described mixture of styles received in New York? While Krasner argues in one instance that the musical represented the desire of African Americans to conform to stereotypes as well as a chance to publicly break down those stereotypes, he did not place it within the ideology of racial uplift.[26] Further analysis of the social consequences or contemporary historical events surrounding this show is needed to help place it in context. There is little research on how the show was advertised. How was it portrayed on billboards and posters? Where was it advertised and in what magazines, locales, parts of the city? How did advertisements or posters change depending on the neighborhoods in which they were displayed and how did this play a role in garnering a mixed audience?

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[25] Ibid., 103.

[26] David Krasner, *Resistance, Parody, and Double Consciousness in African-American Theatre, 1895-1910* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1991), 1.

Shuffle Along: Critical Reaction

The critical reception of *Shuffle Along* was mixed. White critics George Jean Nathan and Gilbert Seldes enjoyed the musical for its dance, "swinging rhythms, and coloured tunes," but also judged it as a "negro show" and as "entertainment [without art] for negroes." In contrast, African American writer Langston Hughes travelled to New York to "see the musical that 'symbolized Harlem.'"[27] Hughes's appreciation of the show was that it represented Harlem, although he did not mention why. The white critics seemed to enjoy the syncopation but dismissed much of the show as "blacks performing for blacks" which was seen as the lowest "class" of entertainment.[28]

White columnists at the New York newspapers touted the show as a generally fun musical comedy with a variety of singing and dancing. For example, reviewer Alan Dale claimed *Shuffle Along* was a "darky musical with pep and real melody."[29] Comparatively, middle to upper class African American leaders had largely negative reactions. Disapproving remarks from James Weldon Johnson, Alain Locke, W.E.B. Du Bois and Nathan Irvin Huggins noted that the show maintained the corrupt traditions of minstrelsy.[30] Clearly the racial and class divide between African Americans, popular entertainment, and the striving for racial uplift, was still an issue.

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[27] David Savran, *Highbrow/Lowdown,* 72, citing Langston Hughes as remembered by George Jean Nathan in *The World in Falseface* (New York: Knopf, 1923), 180.

[28] David Savran, "The Search for America's soul: Theatre in the Jazz Age," *Theatre Journal* 58 (2006), 461. Savran discussed the types of jazz as outlined by Charles Hamm, "Towards a New Reading of Gershwin," in *Gershwin Style: New Looks as the Music of George Gershwin*, ed. Wayne Schneider (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 5-6.

[29] David Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant,* 245 citing Alan Dale, critic from the *New York American*, May 25, 1921.

[30] Krasner, *A Beautiful Pageant*, 247 citing an Editorial from *Messenger* in January 1925. The corruptions included performing in blackface and the portrayal of some of the African American characters in the show as "shady" or "shifty."

Thompson's work on the show contradicts some of this research as he found mixed reviews (not only negative) from African American leaders. In his article, contrary to Krasner's statement, Thompson claims that James Weldon Johnson gave the production fairly positive reviews.[31] In Alain Locke's *The New Negro,* African Americans praised the show: Jessie Fauset spoke of the numerous positive aspects of the show like the humor, the dancing, and the lines that teased white audiences while Montgomery Gregory mentioned that the show allowed for a new dramatic expression by African Americans on the stage.[32] Given that *The New Negro* was not published until 1925 and the show opened in 1921, we cannot be sure if or how the show may have changed since its initial opening run. Had the performers decreased the instances of blackface or played down some of the black stereotypes?

***Shuffle Along*: Musical Analysis**

With so much talk in current research about how the musical used jazz and how the songs were influential on later bandleaders, there is a surprising lack of musical analysis. There are few surviving musical scores and the majority of the songs popularized by the shows remain not in full orchestral score format but rather in piano reductions. Thus, it is unclear how shows might have been orchestrated or what elements were changed in piano reductions. In terms of race and class, how might the music have been viewed? Both David Savran and Jeffrey Magee have broken down the styles of African American "popular music" performance during the 1920s in musical theater as

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[31] Thompson, "Shuffling roles," 105.

[32] Alain Locke, ed., *The New Negro: Voices of the Harlem Renaissance* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997), 165-166, 156.

well as other venues such as concert halls and nightclubs. Magee classifies non-musical theater jazz into a four tiered hierarchy: the highest form of jazz playing featured African American groups like the Clef Club who played in white-only ballrooms, hotels and clubs; second were musicians playing burlesque-style (with troupes and a headliner); third were the bands of African American leaders Fletcher Henderson and Billy Fowler who played a "sweetened" jazz similar to that of Paul Whiteman's all-white band; and last were the musicians playing in smaller clubs and neighborhoods.[33]

Like Magee, Savran came to a similar conclusion when analyzing Charles Hamm's ideas that there were three types of popular jazz style in the 1920s. Hamm's hierarchy or musical "caste" system was largely based on race. The highest form was white musicians playing for white audiences (which also included the composers who wrote for Tin Pan Alley and Broadway), next was black musicians playing for white audiences, and the lowest form of jazz included black musicians playing for black audiences.[34]

Both Magee and Savran called to attention the hierarchy that these assumptions created. Where does a jazzy Broadway show, played and performed by an all black cast and pit orchestra, for a mixed race audience, fit in these "caste" systems? Magee questioned the need for these hierarchies:

> Taken together, these writings have constructed a clear message linking race, musical style, and commercial inclination: black jazz is improvisatory, authentic, and noncommercial and therefore "true," and white jazz is written down, diluted, and commercial, and therefore "false." This rigid, essentialist dichotomy-which still resonates in jazz criticism-diminishes the achievements of black and white

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[33] Jeffrey Magee, "Before Louis: When Fletcher Henderson Was the 'Paul Whiteman' of the Race," *American Music* 18, no. 4 (2000), 394-395.

[34] David Savran, "The search for America's soul," 461.

> musicians alike…In fact, the dichotomy leaves young Fletcher Henderson [one of the first African American bandleaders] guilty on two counts: of making "commercial concessions" and of abandoning the "true" musical heritage that presumably was his birthright.[35]

These hierarchies fail to accurately describe *Shuffle Along*. The show does not fit neatly into any of these categories and I question whether categories of this type should be used to examine jazz. A useful study might be to examine similarities and differences between the reception of *Shuffle Along* and a contemporary Gershwin musical like *Blue Monday*. Did African Americans attend the Gershwin musical? What type of response did Gershwin's jazz receive when compared to that in *Shuffle Along*? How did race play a role in how the music was received? These are all questions that would shed new light on similarities and differences between various shows and if the music alone would have played a role in the larger "caste" system.

The lack of a critical musical analysis of *Shuffle Along* is becoming problematic. Scholars are starting to discuss the show's jazz music as being influential to George Gershwin, Paul Whiteman and other mid-1920s "jazz symphonists." Musical examples and analysis would prove beneficial to this emerging research. Lyn Schenbeck is preparing a critical edition as part of the "music of the United States of America (MUSA)" series. It will include:

> The complete original performance materials: the script and all the music, including a full score and orchestra parts. Dance steps and routines will be described. The accompanying scholarly essay will place this *Shuffle Along* in its social, racial, and historical context. The Critical Apparatus will provide an account of all sources and editorial decisions used to produce the original score, along with a description of the changes that were made from the time the show opened until it closed in 1924.[36]

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[35] Magee, "Before Louis," 392.

[36] Music of the United States of America (MUSA), "Current Projects," http://www.umich.edu/~musausa/index.htm (accessed May 7, 2013).

While this new resource, once published, will enhance the work surrounding *Shuffle Along*, it is only one other outlet of study. A musical analysis and critical edition will help outline some of the key features of the show, however it should be taken into account that most of the musicians in the pit for *Shuffle Along* memorized their music and that the music employed forms familiar to ear-players who could improvise their parts. So while a critical edition will help understand orchestrations and changes that might have been made to original scores, it is impossible to know what the musicians may have played each night. There was also no such thing as an original cast album at that time, so scholars do not have an original source to study. An original critical edition when compared to later versions of the show cannot offer a complete idea of how the show changed. If the musicians were not reading from the same score and parts every night and thus were also not writing anything in the music, it is possible that the show continued to shift and change in ways that were not documented by musical score. A study into how jazz was played in black theater could be useful in learning how these shows developed over time as well as how they may have influenced later material.

In *Shuffle Along,* African Americans balanced entertainment stereotypes with ideals of racial uplift in order to succeed in show business. Sotiropoulos concludes:

> For over a decade, black artists had carefully orchestrated their productions in an attempt both to stay true to an expressive black authenticity and to open doors to further performances in a white-dominated performance world…Their lives demonstrate how a double consciousness was lived daily. They critiqued the black middle class even while they were some of its most visible representatives…And they created comedy built on racist ideas while critiquing racism…they well understood the racist underpinnings of a modern culture they had helped create, and were hard at work exposing its foundations.[37]

[37] Sotiropoulos, *Staging Race*, 236.

The balance had been occurring for much longer than a decade and in more places than just the public stage. It can be traced all the way back to the ideas of Frederick Douglass. Douglass had to balance the material in his speeches depending on his audience, and speak in a manner that would balance the needs and social opinions of white audiences while still pushing for the advancement of the African American race. This balance, which had continued throughout the turn of the century, was precisely the school of experience William Grant Still would have encountered during his time in 1920s New York City.

Conclusion

The "school of experience" that William Grant Still had in New York City was certainly musical but more importantly, it was the experience he gained on how to present himself as a middle-class African American and balance his role as a budding classical composer with his role in the popular music market. The ideology of racial uplift that was present since the mid-1800s, the popular entertainment industry that included minstrelsy, vaudeville, and the New York stage, and his work experiences at Pace & Handy, Black Swan Records, and in the orchestra for *Shuffle Along* were all influential to his future growth as a composer.

Still, growing up in a middle-class African American family in Little Rock, AK and later attending Oberlin College, must have come into contact with racial uplift ideology as it was prevalent in much of African American middle-class life. The words of African American leaders like Frederick Douglass, W.E.B. Du Bois, and Booker T. Washington would have been known to him and influential in his upbringing. If he had been unfamiliar with lower-class entertainment such as vaudeville or minstrel shows in his youth, he certainly came to understand that type of entertainment in Memphis, a river city with a lively entertainment scene as well as in New York while working with W.C. Handy, Harry Pace, and the black entertainers who achieved fame and success in popular shows.

While working with W.C. Handy at Pace & Handy, Still observed methods to market music to a wide variety of audiences. Handy's background in minstrelsy and his understanding of the African American entertainment business provided Still with important models on how to present his himself to white audiences. The way that Handy

capitalized on popular tunes and trends in order to boost sales provided Still with experience on how to market his own compositions. The music that Pace & Handy published filled the public's desire for blues and made money; however, Handy's publication of art songs and spirituals met requirements of the African American ideology of racial uplift and appealed to middle and upper class citizens.

These ideas were furthered when Still worked at Black Swan Records with Harry Pace. Pace & Handy Publishing and Black Swan Records relied on their audience to buy their product because it was made for African Americans. They were unable to stop their audiences from purchasing mainstream products, a pressing point for classical music as it appealed to a relatively small portion of black society. At Black Swan, Still watched as Pace struggled to find a marketing balance between music that was popular with the working class (blues) and music that advanced the race (arias and art songs performed by African Americans). In order for African Americans to succeed in the recording industry, they had to be willing to play to the stereotypes that white audiences desired while at the same time finding innovative ways to realistically portray their lives, talents, and cultures. Pace advertised a majority of the art song recordings in the middle-class publication, *The Crisis*, and featured blues recordings in more mass-produced publications like the *Pittsburgh Courier* and the *Chicago Defender*.

While playing in *Shuffle Along*, Still experienced the entertainment business as a performer. He watched audience reactions to blackface stereotypes and he observed how the producers attempted to break those stereotypes. Through his work experiences he learned how to balance low-class and high-class entertainment and how to delicately challenge stereotypes, while at the same time catering to the desires of specific audiences.

These lessons are reflected in some of his work during the late 1920s. William Grant Still balanced his existing career in popular music (which is still largely overlooked by scholars) with a career in classical music.

On February 29, 1929, Still was hired as one of Paul Whiteman's arrangers and was guaranteed a $200 weekly salary on condition that he would provide two arrangements per week for Whiteman's *Old Gold Radio* show.[1] Unfortunately, even though many of the Still's arrangements for Whiteman can be located in the Paul Whiteman Collection at Williams College, only two known recordings survive. For examples of how Still's arrangements sounded, "Coquette" (1755-D) and "After You've Gone," (2098-D) were recorded on the Columbia label and are still available commercially.[2] During the late 1920s, while writing popular music for Whiteman, William Grant Still began work on his first successful classical piece, *Afro-American Symphony* (1930).

The relationship with Paul Whiteman provided William Grant Still an important networking opportunity that eventually allowed his concert music to be heard by large audiences. Whiteman commissioned at least four pieces from Still: *A Deserted Plantation*, *Ebon Chronicle*, *Beyond Tomorrow*, and *The Black Man Dances* (which later became *Four Negro Dances*).[3] *A Deserted Plantation* was featured on December 15, 1933 in

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[1] Don Rayno, *Paul Whiteman: Pioneer in American Music* (Lanham MD: Scarecrow Press, 2003), 223-244. Paul Whiteman was a white bandleader who commissioned George Gershwin's *Rhapsody in Blue* (1924). He is often criticized for his idea of "symphonic jazz" which introduced jazz to mainstream audiences but was performed by white orchestras.

[2] Rayno, *Paul Whiteman*, 224, 661, 674, Bing Crosby, "Coquette," by Irving Berlin, arranged by William Grant Still, recorded February 28, 1929, Columbia 1755-D, rereleased on *The Chronological Bing Crosby*, Jonzo JZ CD-6, compact disc and Bing Crosby, "After You've Gone," by Henry Creamer and Turner Layton, arranged by William Grant Still, recorded October 18, 1929, Columbia 2098-D, rereleased on *The Chronological Bing Crosby*, Jonzo JZ CD-7, 1999, compact disc.

Whiteman's Sixth Experiment in Modern Music concert at the Metropolitan Opera House.[4] This is just one example of how William Grant Still used his early 1920s experiences of balancing popular culture, audience demand, and the ideology of racial uplift to advance in his career as a serious composer. By the late 1920s, Still was well-aware of how to market himself and, whether or not he agreed with Paul Whiteman's style of jazz, Whiteman became an important catalyst to further his classical music aspirations. He was able to break through to a larger audience and have his serious music heard by both white and black audiences at Whiteman's Modern Music concerts.

The extent of Still's compositional output in 1920s New York should be further explored. A more careful study of racial relationships and behaviors in New York during this time will also provide more insight into the reception of Still's music after he began composing classical music in the mid-1920s. Musical analysis and an understanding of Still's surviving popular music arrangements will help to show how his arrangements are reflected in some of his concert compositions. This research will generate more questions relating to the ways in which William Grant Still attempted to balance his careers in popular and classical music. However, to look at Still's work without understanding his background in 1920s popular African American entertainment, is to deny the issues of race and class that all African Americans faced at the turn of the twentieth century. Racial uplift, heavily ingrained African American stereotypes, and class struggle were all prominent social themes that had a direct impact on William Grant Still. It is important to

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[3] Still, *My Life, My Words*, 135-139. For a detailed chronology on when these pieces were completed and accepted by Whiteman, as well as publishers and program notes for each, see Robert Bartlett Haas, ed., *William Grant Still and the Fusion of Cultures in American Music* (Los Angeles CA: Black Sparrow Press, 1972), 148.

[4] Joshua Berrett, *Louis Armstrong & Paul Whiteman: Two Kings of Jazz* (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 98, and Smith, *William Grant Still*, 339.

continue to question how these themes played out in his compositional life and further study and analysis of his works and the social context in which they were created will enhance our understanding of his later work.

> [Still] sought to break down race-based limitations on the mixing of African American and European techniques, forms, and styles through the use of blues-based harmonic progressions, melodic turns, forms, and sometimes rhythms in his symphonic music as well as to blur class-based boundaries between the "popular" and the "serious."[5]

It was the social and cultural "school of experience" in early 1920s New York that taught William Grant Still how to balance and mix popular and serious, African American and European, and stereotypes and racial uplift ideology, and this understanding provided some of the underlying techniques and styles that pervade his later compositions.

[5] Catherine Parsons Smith, "'Harlem Renaissance Man' Revisited: The Politics of Race and Class in William Grant Still's Late Career," *American Music* 15, no. 3 (1997), 381.

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Appendix A: Publication Copyrights Secured by Pace & Handy 1913-1921

Information taken from Elliott S. Hurwitt's, "W.C. Handy as Music Publisher: Career and Reputation." PhD diss., The City University of New York, 2000: 527-536.

Title	Genre	Year	Location	Composer/Arranger
Allies' Triumphal March	Piano	1919	New York	Frederick M. Bryan
Aunt Hagar's Children	Piano	1920	New York	W.C. Handy
Beautiful Land of Dreams	Song	1920	New York	Tom Post Jack Jay
Big Chief Blues	Song	1919	New York	Al Bernard
Blind Man Blues	Song	1920	New York	Music: Billie McLaurin Lyrics: Eddie Green
Bring Back the Joys	Song	1920	New York	Joe Rose
Camomeeting Blues	Foxtrot, Piano	1920	New York	William T. Carroll
The Dancing Deacon	Piano	1919	New York	Frederick M. Bryan
Beale Street	Song	1917	Chicago	W.C. Handy
Bean Soup Blues	Rag, Piano	1918	Chicago	Jess Hatteman
Down By the Chattahoochie River	Song	1916	Memphis	Harry Eastwood
Florida Blues	Song	1917	Chicago	Music: William King Phillips Lyrics: Hezekihiah
Fuzzy Wuzzy Rag	Rag, Piano	1915	Memphis	Al Morton
The Girl You Never Have Met	Song	1913	Memphis	Music: Harry H. Pace Lyrics: W.C. Handy
A Good Man Is Hard To Find	Song	1918	Chicago	Eddie Green
Happy Go Lucky Rag	Rag, Piano	1918	Chicago	John M. Fait
Hooking Cow Blues	Song	1917	Chicago	Music: Douglas Williams & W.C. Handy Lyrics: Douglas Williams
I Like You Because You Have Such Lovin' Ways	Song	1921	New York	Music: William H. Farrell Lyrics: Isaac F. Hatch
I Never Had the Blues Until I Left Old Dixie	Song	1919	New York	Music: Charley Straight Lyrics: Spencer Williams
I Want to Love You All the Time	Song	1918	Chicago	Deecort K. Hammitt
I Won't Stop Loving You Till You Stop the World from Turning	Song	1916	Memphis	Music: Betty Bellin Lyrics: Beth Slater Whitson
I'm Dying With the Worried Blues	Song	1919	New York	W.E. Browning Arr: Dave Payton, Jr.
I'm Goin' Back to my Used to Be	Song	1919	New York	Jimmy Cox

Title	Genre	Year	Location	Composer/Arranger
I'm So Glad My Daddy's Coming Home	Song	1917	Chicago	Music: Arthur Z. Sizemore Lyrics: George Mack
I'm Very Fond of All the Ladies but You're the Only One I Love	Song	1918	Chicago	David S. Jacobs
In the Land Where Cotton Is King	Song	1916	Memphis	W.C. Handy
Insect Ball	Song	1920	New York	Music: H. Qualli Clark Lyrics: Jim Burrie
Joe Turner Blues	Song	1915	Memphis	W.C. Handy
The Jogo Blues	Piano	1913	Memphis	W.C. Handy
Keep the Love Ties Binding	Song	1918	Chicago	J.P. Schofield & W.C. Handy
Lonesome Sal	Song	1917	Chicago	Music: Betty Bellin Lyrics: Charles R. Cox & Haven Gillespie
Long Gone	Song	1920	New York	Music: W.C. Handy Lyrics: Chris Smith
Louisiana Dip	Piano	1920	New York	Bobby Lee
Loveless Love	Song	1921	New York	W.C. Handy
Make That Trombone Laugh	Song	1920	New York	Music: Henry Scharf Lyrics: H. Qualli Clark
Nighty Night	Song	1917	Chicago	Eddie Elliott & N. Max Davis
No Name Waltz	Piano	1918	Chicago	Charles N. Hillman & W.C. Handy
O Death Where Is Thy Sting	Song	1918	Memphis	Clarence A. Stout
O Saroo Saroo	Piano	1919	New York	Music: Annelu Burns & Madalyne Shepard Arr: William G. Still
Oglethorpe Blues	Song	1918	Chicago	Dolly Stark
Ole Miss	Rag, Piano	1916	Memphis	W.C. Handy
Pee Gee's Blues	Song	1920	New York	Music: H. Qualli Clark Lyrics: Alex Rogers
Pickaninny Rose	Song	1920?	New York	Music: Madelyn Sheppard Lyrics: Annelu Burns
Preparedness Blues	Piano	1917	Chicago	Chas. Hillman

Title	Genre	Year	Location	Composer/Arranger
Ringtail Blues	Piano - later vocal	1918	Memphis	J. Russell Robinson & Spencer Williams
Saxophone Blues	Song	1919	New York	Music: Rudy Wiedoeft Lyrics: Al Bernard
Shake, Rattle, & Roll; Who's Got Me	Song	1919	New York	Al Bernard
Sliding Fevers	Piano Rag	1920	New York	Alex M. Valentine
Song the Sunny Southland Sings	Song	1917	Chicago	Harry D. Kerr
The Sphinx	Egyptian Intermezzo	1919	New York	J. Berni Barbour
Strong and Steady, Rough and Ready, Songs of Uncle Sam	Song	1918	Chicago	John N. Bloominger
Suez	Oriental Novelty	1919	New York	Clarence A. Stout
Sweet Child	Song	1918	Memphis	Ewing & Stowell
That's the Feller	Song	1919	New York	Al Bernard
Think of Me Little Daddy	Song	1919	New York	Bert Whitman
Thinking of Thee	Song	1917	Memphis	Music: W.C. Handy Lyrics: Harry H. Pace
Though We're Miles and Miles Apart	Song	1919	New York	Music: Charles Hillman Lyrics: J. Russell Robinson
You Can't Keep A Good Girl Down	Song	1921	New York	Music: Eddie Green Lyrics: H. Qualli Clark

Appendix B: Pseudonyms of White Musicians and Singers Used by Black Swan Records

Information taken from Allan Sutton's, *A Guide to Pseudonyms on American Records, 1892-1942*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993).

Black Swan Artists	Pseudonyms
Royal Hawaiian Guitars	Louise & Ferera (white Hawaiian players)
Smith Brothers	Boudini Brothers
Jack Green	Victor Fletcher
Baltimore Blues Orchestra	Bennie Krueger's Orchestra
Johnson's All Star Orchestra	Irving Weiss & his Ritz Carlton Orchestra for "Figaro"
Johnson's All Star Orchestra	Unknown white band for "Song of Love"
Laurel Dance Orchestra	Green Brothers Novelty Band for "Some One Else"
Laurel Dance Orchestra	Bennie Krueger's Orchestra for "Learning"
Buffalo Military Band	Olympic Military Band