

Broadway Puts Taboo on Show Boasting Hot House Artists

"Fast and Furious" Had Many Stars Trained in Best Schools, but Failed

Experimentation Costly in Show Business, Both White and Colored Producers Agree.

Has Broadway put its taboo on hot-house performers? This theory was proved by the sudden demise of "Fast and Furious," which folded in less than a week although it boasted of a host of clever actresses fresh from the best conservatories.

In the cast we find such brilliant college trained artists as Etta Moten, a June graduate from the University of Kansas; Edna Guy, a pupil of Ruth St. Denis; Ruby Elzy, a graduate of Rust College and the Ohio State University, and a number of others. On the writing end it had both songs and sketches by the promising young writer, Zora Neal Hurston, a Howard University product.

The show even went high brow and among other things had satire on the classics, one of which was Shakespeare's "Macbeth," or at least as it would have been interpreted by a backwoods dramatic club.

It is interesting to note that these decided innovations into sepia revues were for the most part well received. Broadway even accepted the playing of Antonia Machin's Havana Orchestra, which served Cuban rhumbas instead of the hot jungle music usually associated with colored shows.

Experiments Costly

The failure may not be attributed to new stars as much as to new material. Lew Leslie also attempted to experiment with something new in show business, but his "Rhapsody in Black" was a failure on Broadway although it is going strong in Boston. There is little doubt that the colored revue has reached its peak and that there has been too much sameness in the shows to date. A new pattern is needed if our performers are to continue to hold their own on the big street.

"Singing the Blues" is a new experiment, in the fact that it attempts to mix melodrama with musical comedy. So far it is holding on although a drastic cut in salaries has been reported.

Until recently anyone on Broadway who doubted that the "tired business man," after a big dinner, wanted anything else than music, a comedian to laugh at, a lot of wisecracks and a chorus of pretty girls prancing around in expensive costumes, but the less the costume the better, was considered crazy. A few years ago Arthur Hammerstein, white, cleared three million dollars profit out of the musical, "Rose-Marie," yet only a few weeks ago he declared himself a bankrupt. Mr. Hammerstein says:

"I still know how to make money in musicals. Make your audiences laugh all you can but send them out crying. The trouble with me is that I did some experimenting, and experimenting is no good in show business."

Leslie attempted to experiment when he put on his "International Revue," with an all-white cast after making a success with "Blackbirds." He also lost a small fortune in the venture and was forced to return to his first love.

Rose From the Ranks

It is interesting to note that most of the real successful shows that have made good on Broadway were those headed by performers who rose from the ranks on pure ability alone. In this group we find the late Florence Mills, Adelaide Hall, Bill Robinson, Valaida Snow, Miller and Lyles and Sissie and Blake. Some of these are college trained it is true, but only long years of stage experience brought them into their own.

Richard B. Harrison may be pointed out as one who made good upon his first Broadway venture, without previous professional stage experience, but Harrison was by no means a novice when he accepted the role of "de Lawd" in "The Green Pastures." He was by far one of the best fitted dramatic readers and interpreters of the race, and his own barnstorming days served him in good stead on Broadway.

They Came Up from the Ranks



Miss Adelaide Hall (upper left), who made a hit in "Blackbirds of 1928," only after she had enjoyed many years of experience over the T.O.B.A. and with shows under the wing of Irvin C. Miller; (lower left) Ethel Waters, seen here in a pensive mood, also had considerable experience in our own theatres before she made a bid for the plaudits of Broadway in "Africana." (Above) Miss Hilda Rogers, recently returned to America after a successful European tour. Miss Rogers also tasted lean days as a chorus girl on the T.O.B.A. before she became a European sensation.

THE SINGING FULLBACK

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He dressed mechanically and went out into the darkness. A figure followed him out of the door. He turned. It was Hart.

"Well," he said, with a sort of sneer, "how's the rich man this evening, huh?"

"What do you mean?" Barney was puzzled.

"A thousand bucks ain't a little money."

"What?"

"I mean, it's no wonder that kick was so terrible."

"I don't get you."

Silently Hart pulled a scrap of paper from his shirt pocket. "You dropped it," he explained, "on the gym floor. Nobody else has seen it—yet."

Barney took the paper into the light and read it.

"Barney"—It was Ellie's note—"The offer still stands, if you want to take me up on it. One thousand berries for you, if Lincoln wins."

(To be continued)

AFRICANS SAY:

"Africans have much in common with us as wit and wisdom expressed in their proverbs show. It is time for us to get away from the notion that they are in an inferior and barbaric state. In more than one sense, we Americans are less civilized and more barbaric than they."—C. J. BENDER.

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