

# Stereotyping of minorities on broadway theatre essay



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The crowd gaped as the vermilion curtains ascended and unveiled salutation, non from the beautiful Ziegfeld miss common to the twenty-four hours, but from a chorus of perspiration, laboring inkiness intoning, "Negros all work on the Mississippi, Negros all work while the white folks drama" (Kern and Hammerstein II). In the 1900s, a moving ridge of artistic duty ushered in a displacement of Broadway musical subjects. Alternatively of composing blithe comedy, composers such as Kern, Rodgers, Gershwin and Hammerstein crafted serious pieces that reflected upon issues in society such as inequality. Musicals such as Show Boat, West Side Story, Porgy and Bess, Finian's Rainbow and South Pacific entertained both the stereotyped images of non-Anglo-Saxons and the thought of assimilation. Although much contention surrounded the portraiture of people of different races on Broadway, the lives of composers, the content of musicals, and chances for minority creative persons illustrate that the chief end of musicals was non to derogatorily label different races, but to show truth and promote credence.

A survey of the lives of composers such as George Gershwin, Richard Rodgers, Jerome Kern and Oscar Hammerstein II demonstrates that musical pieces were written to show grasp or blessing of assimilation and of minority civilization. George Gershwin, for one, was born in New York (Levert 118-20 asdf 13) to immigrant Russian-Jewish parents, Rose and Morris Gershvin (Mitchell 9 asd 15). Rose and Morris raised their second-generation American kids among Italian, Irish, Polish and Judaic neighbours (Mitchell 12 asd 15). This multiethnic upbringing built the foundation of George Gershwin's credence of different races. Gershwin's tolerance of different ethnicities is farther highlighted through histories of a immature George

basking ragtime, a fluctuation of black dance music, played by Mississippi "raggers" such as black musician Jim Reese Europe ( Mitchell 12 asdf 16, a ) .

As clip went on, Gershwin created a new sound by blending his acquired classical preparation with the ragtime he heard from in earlier years ( Mitchell 24- 5, 37 asdf 17, 14 ) . This was utilized in his 1922 show, Blue Monday ( B ) . Although Blue Monday garnered few favourable reappraisals because it held a tragic stoping and told of the black community ( Vernon 13 asdf 22 ) , George Gershwin had opened new frontiers to which other creative persons like Jerome Kern followed. Gershwin ' s creative activity of American music that encouraged racial credence subsequently encouraged his ain household to absorb and go more Americanized, altering their name from " Gershvin " to " Gershwin " ( Mitchell 29- 30 asdf 19 ) .

Despite Blue Monday ' s deficiency of success, Gershwin was still unfastened to composing Porgy and Bess, a musical centered on African-Americans. This showed his desire for people to understand those of different races. Although it took him seven old ages, Gershwin obtained rights to Heyward ' s novel, Porgy and Bess, in 1933 ( San Francisco Opera asdf 11 ) . In order to accurately portray Afro-american civilization to Anglo-Saxons, Gershwin traveled to Folly Island and stayed with the Geechees, whose ascendants had been slaves ( Mitchell 44-6 and Swain 57 asdf 21, 20 ) . Gershwin absorbed Geechee music and motion through detecting Island worship rites which included intonation, shouting, clapping, tapping, rocking, praying and forming of spiritual circles ( Mitchell 44-6 and Swain 57 asdf 21 and 20 ) .

Gershwin ' s positive relationship with these inkinesss can be seen through his engagement in their rites. One history relates that Gershwin was so  
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accepted by the Geechees that he joined in executing spiritual rites, even pulling off to obtain the centre topographic point in a spiritual circle, which was normally reserved for the Geechee leaders ( Mitchell 44-46 ). Such good dealings with inkiness provided inducement for Gershwin to try to convey the demand for alteration, credence of races, and integrity for America in his version of Porgy and Bess. American manager Francesca Zambello radius of Porgy and Bess, stating that " It ' s about category, race, economic disadvantage, all these things that separate people from one another and prevent us from holding a harmonious society " ( San Francisco Opera ) .

Although many African Americans such as Duke Ellington, Ralph Matthews, and Hall Johnson felt that Gershwin ' s Porgy and Bess was extremely stereotyped ( Swain 57 asdf 21, 45 ) , Gershwin denied that his purpose in making Porgy and Bess was to set down the Afro-american race ; alternatively, he shared, Porgy and Bess was written to show an accurate image of the race as he saw it ( Henderson and Bowers 99 ) . In order to keep true to Afro-american civilization, Gershwin incorporated spirituals and outstanding Afro-american music signifiers in Porgy and Bess as Kern had in Show Boat ( Bering 68-9 asdf 46 ) . Gershwin ' s brother, Ira, who collaborated with George on Porgy and Bess, besides attempted to retain the black spirit through utilizing idiom ( Bering 68-9 asdf 46 ) and non-standard grammar. Apart from trying to show the truth and promote assimilation of inkiness, Gershwin ' s bosom for the promotion of African-Americans is shown through the fact that the show had an all-black dramatis personae despite the prominence of Jim Crow Torahs. Gershwin insisted on holding an all-black dramatis personae and even refused to join forces with the

Metropolitan Opera because he knew that to make so would intend engaging white histrions in blackface ( San Francisco Opera ) .

Following Gershwin ' s lead in composing racially themed musicals, Oscar Hammerstein II decided to work with Jerome Kern in accommodating Edna Ferber ' s novel, Show Boat, into a musical. Although Kern was born to immigrant Jewish- German parents, Kern was non strongly encouraged to encompass his ethnicity. His parents supported Americanization and attempted to understate their cultural difference, so Kern ' s Jewish- German side did non hold a large influence on his composition ( Zollo ) . However, Kern ' s openness to assimilation is seen through his end of continuing Edna Ferber ' s original purpose with Show Boat ( Green 319 asdf 36 ) despite the fact that the message was controversial at the clip. For illustration, Kern wrote " Ol ' Man River, " " a vocal of surrender with an implied protest " ( Hammerstein qtd. in Zollo asdf 36 ) which was sung by an Afro-american. Like Gershwin, Kern fused Afro-american music with classical music to retain a black ambiance and to pass on the message of the piece- that inkinesss were enduring unjustly- across to the audience. This is shown through Kern ' s use of traditional black music when composing " Ca n't Help Lovin ' Dat Man " ( Bering 54-5 asdf 60 ) . Aside from his written work, Kern hired black histrions for Show Boat, besides showing his understanding with assimilation.

Oscar Hammerstein II, who collaborated on Show Boat with Kern, was a third-generation Prussian Jew. Originally named Oscar Greeley- Clendenning Hammerstein in award of Horace Greeley ( Wickware 107 ) , Hammerstein carried on the work of his namesake in promoting the assimilation of

inkinesss. Through the usage of idioms in his wordss, he preserved the black  
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spirit and tradition so that white audiences could break understand inkiness.

Apart from Gershwin, Kern and Hammerstein, 2nd coevals American Richard Rodgers besides explored racial subjects in his composings ( Zollo ) .

Originally named Richard Rogazinsky, Rodger ' s household strayed from their Russian-Jewish roots and became more Americanized by absorbing and altering the household name to Rodgers ( Zollo ) . Although Rodgers, like Kern, did non detect Judaic impost, his work with Oscar Hammerstein II produced musicals such as Flower Drum Song and South Pacific, which explored assimilation and subjects like love exceeding racial barriers ( Henderson and Bowers 148-51 ) . Although Asians were frequently segregated in that epoch ( as seen in the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was repealed subsequently in 1943 ) , Rodgers decided to engage a few Asiatic histrions such as Pat Suzuki for Flower Drum Song ( Gottfried 195 ) .

Furthermore, Richard Rodger ' s household was the first to hear Gershwin ' s Porgy and Bess, and despite the fact that the musical was extremely race oriented, Rodgers expressed his grasp by crying " That was a Christmas Eve we shall ne'er bury " ( Mitchell 50 ) . His household background, reaction to Porgy and Bess and his coactions with Hammerstein II all support guess that Rodgers, excessively, felt the demand to promote credence of race through his art.

Despite demoing outstanding favoritism, the musical content, secret plans and wordss of some musicals during the clip period besides exhibited strong thoughts reflecting integrating or the demand for positive intervention of non-Anglo-Saxons. In Loving v. Commonwealth of Virginia, Loving, a white  
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adult male, moves to Washington, D. C. with his Afro-american bride after menaces of captivity due to miscegenation Torahs. They finally appealed to the Supreme Court, which granted them permission for their interracial matrimony. However, this instance did non happen until 1967 ( Cruz and Berson ) , 40 old ages after Broadway ' s Show Boat touched on the unfairness of criminalizing interracial matrimony.

Show Boat, 1927, examined the unfairnesss of the Jim Crow Torahs through the narrative of Julie, a assorted Creole performing artist who keeps her heritage a secret because she is married to Steve, a white adult male ( Henderson and Bowers 240 asdf 59 ) . Due to her mulatto heritage, Julie knew vocals that “ merely coloured folks knew ” ( Green 60 asdf 62 ex. Encyclopedia MT ) , and as a consequence of her vocalizing “ Ca n't Help Lovin ' Dat Man, ” constabulary approached to look into whether or non Julie had black blood ( Rudinger 53-4 asdf 55 ) in order to make up one's mind if she was guilty of crossbreeding. To protect Julie, Steve drank a bead of her blood, portraying the absurdness of the “ one bead regulation ” ( AHHHH FIND THIS ) . Harmonizing to Booker T Washington, the “ one bead regulation ” stated that the sum of black blood did non affair in sorting a individual because even a individual bead of black blood made an single ' black ' ( Cruz and Berson asdf 37. ) The fact that Julie ' s black heritage was ab initio kept a secret allowed clip for the white audience to determine a positive position of her. Her close relationship with her hubby Steve and her friend Magnolia, both white, farther emphasized the point that whites and inkinesss are non, in kernel, really different. ( FIND SHOW BOAT Aer ) The show held a strong

undertone that alternatively of segregating, people of different races should incorporate.

Apart from adverting crossbreeding, Show Boat besides cultivated compassion from Whites through exemplifying the difficult lives that black labourers led. The gap figure, " The Levee at Natchez on the Mississippi " included Afro-american histrions singing about unending laboring for inkinesss. The same melody is repeated subsequently on in " Ol ' Man River " as Joe and the chorus sings wistfully about how free the river is, stating

He do n't works potatos, he do n't works cotton, an dem digital audiotape workss em ' is shortly disregarded, but ol ' adult male river, he jes ' supports rollin a long You an me, we sweat an strain, organic structure all ach-in an racked wid hurting. Tote dat flatboat! Lift dat bale! a^!| rotter weary an sick of tryin, I ' m tired of livin, an skeered of dyin, but ol ' adult male rier, he jes supports rollin along... Do n't look up an ' do n't look down, youi do n't dast do de white boss scowl ; bend yo articulatio genuss an bow yo caput, an pull digital audiotape rope until yore dead. ( Kern and Hammerstein II 47-55 asdf 61 )

While Gershwin ' s Blue Monday had explored racial issues and portrayed Afro-american calamity, the show had non garnered much celebrity, so white audiences of Show Boat ' s clip still associated Broadway with carefreeness and comedy. As a consequence, Show Boat ' s usage of strong words like " Niggers " ( Bering 53-4 ) and its geographic expedition of racial issues in society ab initio shocked many ( Ms Fariss ' s showboattt ) . However, Show Boat ' s influential value and deep message shortly captured white



audiences, and it earned the rubric of " an American chef-d'oeuvre " from the New York Times ( New York Times qtd. in Zollo ) . The vivid images and strong wordss in Show Boat allowed white audience members to step into the places of black labourers and farther understand inkinesss through sing Afro-american suffering. Other pieces such as " Queenie ' s Ballyhoo " ( MISS FARIS VID ) stayed true to black civilization ( Ganzl 193 ) and gave the white audience a gustatory sensation of black spirit. Through appealing to single Whites, Show Boat encouraged apprehension and better intervention of inkinesss.

Show Boat provided the case in point for Burton Lane and E. Y. Harburg ' s Finian ' s Rainbow, a narrative portraying the value of trust ( Green 126-7 asdf 9 ) . Apart from showing the importance of trust, Harburg and Lane associated evil with racism through doing their scoundrel racist.

Harmonizing to the secret plan, due to the evil senator ' s racism, he tries to queer the success of non Anglo-Saxon husbandmans. This cholers Og, a leprechaun, who turns the senator black ( Hilgart ) . After going black, the once racist senator becomes more unfastened minded and even forms a four with three other inkinesss ( Druxman 124 ) . In " The Begat, " the figure after the senator ' s transmutation, the senator sings about the beginning of different races get downing from Adam and Eve. He expresses that, " The white begat, the ruddy begata^; the Greeks begat, the Swedes begat a^;starting from Genesis, they begata^;so bless them alla^; " ( Lane and Harburg ) , demoing his willingness to acknowledge that all races are equal.

Apart from deterring favoritism of inkinesss, favoritism against Irish people was besides mentioned in Finian ' s Rainbow. Due to the widely expressed <https://assignbuster.com/stereotyping-of-minorities-on-broadway-theatre-essay/>

racialist point of views of influential persons such as President Roosevelt, European immigrants from the early 1900s were besides discriminated against by Whites ( Cruz and Berson adsf 26 ) . Finian ' s Rainbow countered the moving ridge of favoritism through Numberss like, " When the Idle Poor go the Idle Rich " . In this vocal the Irish supporter, Finian, dreams of a hereafter where there is no favoritism and sings " a^!No one will see the Irish or the Slav in youa^!This favoritism will no longer be " ( Lane and Harburg 85-98 asdf 9 ) .

Two old ages after Finian ' s Rainbow, South Pacific graced the Broadway phase. Set in the Pacific, the narrative revolves around the relationships of two interracial twosomes. Nellie Forbush falls for Emile de Becque, a fly-by-night Frenchman who had committed slaying at a immature age. Although Nellie is willing to ignore Emile ' s dark yesteryear, her Anglo-saxon upbringing complicates her feelings towards Emile ' s French- island-dweller assorted kids. Her confusion and racist position put a barrier in her relationship with Emile, and the two separate. Joe Cable, like Nellie, is diffident how to move sing his feelings for Liat, an island-dweller, because of his racist upbringing ( Ganzl 277 asdf 64 ) . He expresses his background in " You ' ve Got to be Carefully Taught, " saying that, " You ' ve got to be taught to be afraid of people whose eyes are curiously made, and people whose tegument is a different shadiness " ( Henderson and Bowers. ) Like Nellie, Joe ' s racism finally breaks his relationship with Liat. Although Joe and Liat do non acquire back together, Nellie realizes that love transcends race and manages to salve her relationship with Emile. Performed to an audience full of Whites who had been brought up in the same manner Joe and Nellie

had, South Pacific spread the message that love is greater than race ( Ganzl 176-7 asdf 66 ) . Like Show Boat, its jubilation of interracial matrimony broke century old barriers and challenged Whites to oppugn the decency of Jim Crow Torahs.

Following Show Boat and South Pacific, West Side Story explored the thought of love being greater than race through reciting the narrative of Romeo and Juliet, replacing racial feuds for kin dissensions. The secret plan Tells of an American, Tony, who falls in love with Maria, a Puerto Rican immigrant. Due to play down and racial differences, their relationship is disapproved of by their friends and households. In one scene, Anita, Maria ' s sister-in-law, overtly speaks against interracial relationships, warning Maria to " Stick to your ain sort " ( Bernstein and Sondheim 180-90 ) . Maria though, answers in the same vocal that " a^!my bosom knows they ' re wronga^!I do n't care what he is " ( Bernstein and Sondheim 180-90 ) . In the terminal, Tony gets involved in halting a battle between the Puerto Ricans and the Americans ( Green 441-2 asdf 75 ) . He dies in the procedure, and the packs lay down their weaponries in the realisation that feuding between races has gone excessively far ( FIND THIS FIND THIS AHHH ) . This realisation reveals West Side Story ' s subject: that there should be interracial harmoniousness alternatively of destructive racial dissensions.

Aside from promoting assimilation through racially themed musicals, Broadway set an illustration for America in giving minority creative persons chances and acknowledgment. The Wiz, for illustration, presented the Wizard of Oz with an all black ensemble in a ghetto scene ( Henderson and Bowers 219 asdf 2 ) . Apart from The Wiz, shows like Flower Drum Song besides <https://assignbuster.com/stereotyping-of-minorities-on-broadway-theatre-essay/>

provided minority histrions with an chance to work at a professional degree. Employment of minority histrions in the early to mid 1900s is important because creative persons in some other art signifiers like concert dance and classical music found trouble in obtaining the right to execute their art professionally. Arthur Mitchell explained that as a black terpsichorean, he had to outshine his white rivals ( Cummings asdf 9 ) . Although some may reason that manufacturers and managers in the theater concern frequently lost chances to Whites in the same manner black performing artists in other concerns did, Broadway set a case in point because it hired non- white histrions for their ethnicity.

While some may reason that black histrions and actresses were employed in the movie industry every bit early as the 1920s, movie histrions frequently played comedic characters that were stereotyped as opposed to the more serious characters seen in Show Boat and Porgy and Bess. Others may reason that Jazz music had good known performing artists like Louis Armstrong. However, Jazz, unlike Broadway, was targeted at a preponderantly black audience.

Minority creative persons like Paul Robeson used their chances to voice equality through art. Paul Robeson, boy of a slave, lived during an age when racial segregation was important. In add-on to his household background, Robeson learned about favoritism himself through firsthand experience, being discriminated against and exploited because he was black. As a consequence, he had great apprehension of the damaging affects of favoritism. This prompted him to take a base for equality, as seen through the fact that he would merely execute for assorted audiences ( Clarke asdf <https://assignbuster.com/stereotyping-of-minorities-on-broadway-theatre-essay/>

42 ) . Aside from taking a base through action, Paul Robeson expressed disapproval for unfair force against inkinesss through giving addresss ( Clarke asdf 41 ) . His influential position as a well-known black performing artist drew attending to his belief that all should be equal. However, Robeson remarked that while he enjoyed success, many other inkinesss did non even have basic rights. ( Clarke asd 42 ) . Paul Robeson encouraged Whites to accept inkinesss and let them to “ hold nice places, nice occupations, and the self-respect that belongs to every human being! ” ( Robeson qtd. in Clarke asdf 42 ) .

Along with the employment of minority histrions, Broadway started accepting plants by black composers. Shuffle Along was written by an Afro-american composer, Eubie Blake, in the 1920s. This show was believed to hold launched the Harlem Renaissance, which enhanced the rights of black creative persons. The fact that the Truman run utilized a vocal from Shuffle Along made the show better known ( Tanner ) and besides shows the power of musical theater in promoting assimilation and credence because a black musical spoke out to a white presidential campaigner in a clip when segregation was outstanding. Other shows composed by black creative persons like Runnin ‘ Wild, 1923, popularized black dance ( Tanner ) . Audiences seeing shows like Runnin ‘ Wild accepted black civilization through accepting their dance and music because it was so incorporate in the amusement. Later on, A Raisin in the Sun written by a black composer, Lorraine Hansberry, ( DO I NEED TO MENTION THIS? ) really received Tony award nominations in 1960 despite the fact that segregation still existed during the civil rights motion ( FINDD ) . While movie actress Hattie McDaniel

had received an Academy award in 1939, she received the nomination for playing a stereotypic black amah. The Academy did non nominate black written screenplays until 1972, 12asdf old ages after A Raisin in the Sun.

The hiring of minority histrions encouraged formation of all-black groups like the Negro Ensemble Company. These groups frequently put on musicals focused on black life, such as Ceremonies in Dark Old Men and The River Niger. The latter ran on Broadway for eight months ( Cummings asdf 35 ) . The addition of histrion groups dedicated to black rights demonstrated the fact that minority histrions understood the importance of utilizing art to promote audiences to farther understand black civilization or accept inkinesss as peers. Broadway ' s acceptance of black groups seting on black shows increased openness and willingness to allow inkinesss utilize the phase as a platform for proclaiming assimilation.

A rush of black creative persons and musicals attracted black audiences to take part in art. Judith Cummings said of The Wiz that:

For the first clip in the memory of most black theater perceivers, black peoplea^|find themselves with a pick among Broadway shows that offer them something to place witha^|nearly a twelve others from this season, use black artistic endowment or offer a glance of black lifea^| ( Cummings asdf 71 ) .

The fact that inkinesss sat in audiences shows an utmost growing from black rights of the earlier 1900s because seeing musicals meant disbursement money and holding clip for leisure activities, a luxury inkinesss did non hold in earlier clip periods. Besides, the fact that inkinesss, excessively, enjoyed musicals showed the white audiences that inkinesss were non, basically, <https://assignbuster.com/stereotyping-of-minorities-on-broadway-theatre-essay/>

really different from Whites, fostering the purpose of assimilation. Blacks excessively, could hold been emboldened through realisation that as a race, they had succeeded in their purpose to derive some acknowledgment since the early 1900s. This assurance could hold encouraged them to buttonhole for even more rights.

In kernel, the lives of composers such as Kern, Rodgers, Gershwin and Hammerstein reflected the fact that they accepted or encouraged assimilation and wrote musicals in support of their positions. Plot and wordss from musicals such as Show Boat, South Pacific, West Side Story and Finian ' s Rainbow besides either encouraged credence through reflecting the thought of get the better ofing racial barriers or discouraged segregation through showing the harmful qualities of racial favoritism. Hiring minority histrions gave inkinesss a platform to voice the unfairness of segregation. Actors like Paul Robeson and those in the Negro Ensemble Company were able to publically show hope for assimilation. Black centered musicals like A Raisin in the Sun encouraged apprehension of inkinesss and attracted black audiences. Today, Broadway has carried on its bequest through musicals like Wicked, which explored involuntariness to accept those with a different tegument colour ( DO I HAVE TO CITE THIS? ) . Asiatic actors like Filipina Lea Salonga have besides played functions written for white histrions such as Eponine in Les Miserables and Cinderella in Cinderella. A 2002 film version of Gershwin ' s Cinderella featured a dramatis personae with an Asiatic prince, white stepmother, black queen, black half sisters and a black Cinderella. Projecting without respect to original ethnicity of characters shows credence and rejection of race-based separation, and the racial integrating of today

would not be today without the innovative work of Broadway in the early to mid 1900s.