

# Brilliance In The Theatre



The most popular theatrical team at the turn of the century was that of Williams & Walker pictured in photo. As stars of the 1902 hit show "In Dahomey" they received such acclaim that when the show played London the following year the royal family ordered a command performance at Buckingham Palace... After 10 years of joint stardom George Walker died and Bert Williams (left) continued as a featured performer in otherwise all-white Broadway musicals. In 1910 he signed a long-term contract with Flo Ziegfield and toured America for ten years as a star in the various editions of the famed Ziegfield Follies.

Musical Comedy star Florence Mills (in right photo above) was the rage of the Broadway stage in 1925 when she became an internationally known star in Lew Leslie's fabulous hit "Blackbirds" after many years in vaudeville... When Florence Mills died in 1927 at only 32, she was mourned by the world. Pictures of her mile-long funeral cortege proceeding down the Broadway she had captivated were shown in national magazines. Her grieving, but theatrical-minded producer had hundreds of blackbirds released from a plane above as she passed for the last time by the theater where she was the reigning queen.

Negro participation in the professional musical theatre began as early as 1865 when Charles Hicks organized the Georgia Minstrels which later went to Europe as Haverly's European Minstrels.

As early as 1855 the name of Richard Milburn, a Philadelphia Negro barber, appeared as composer on the title page of "Listen to the Mocking Bird"... James A. Bland, who composed "Carry Me Back to Old Virginy," "In the Evening by the Moonlight," and "Oh, Dem Golden Slippers," was one of America's most prolific song-writers.

Will Marion Cook was one of the earlier composers who gained recognition as was Alex Rogers, Tim Bryan, Tom Lemonier and Gussie L. Davis.

## CONGRATULATIONS

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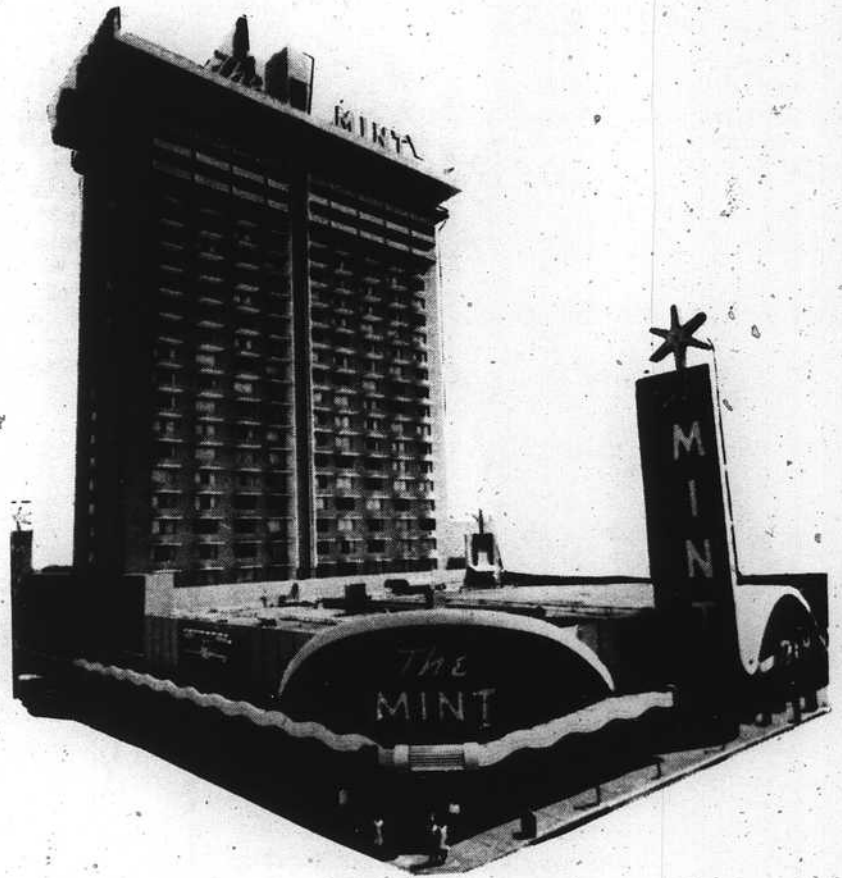
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