

## Casting Shadows: Integration on the American Stage

January 16-April 18  
Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

Many of the productions that we now consider highlights in the history of African Americans on the stage—*Shuffle Along* (1921), *The Green Pastures* (1930), *Porgy and Bess* (1935)—were performed by entirely African American casts. This exhibition features productions and performers that attempted to bridge racial divisions through integrated casting.

Initially viewed as a novelty, as when Sam Lucas became the first African American man to play the lead in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in 1878, crossing the color line on stage would soon be held up as a triumph in the multi-pronged fight against Jim Crow. By the middle of the 20th century, commentators embraced the appearance of black and white actors onstage together as a symbol of progressive civil rights. Later playwrights, however, most notably August Wilson, questioned the validity of integration as a worthy goal in itself, advocating instead the celebration of African American life on the stage.

**External link:** <http://web.library.yale.edu/news/2015/01/casting-shadows-integration-american-st...> [1]

---

**Source URL:** <https://web.library.yale.edu/news/2015/01/casting-shadows-integration-american-stage?page=2>

### Links

[1] <http://web.library.yale.edu/news/2015/01/casting-shadows-integration-american-stage>