

CELEBRATE



In Dahomey
(1903)

The first all-Black musical to play on a Broadway stage. *In Dahomey* was created by Bert Williams and George Walker, with music and lyrics by Will Marion Cook and Paul Laurence Dunbar.



Shuffle Along
(1921)

A breakthrough, smash hit on Broadway featuring an all-Black cast, creative team, and a score of syncopated jazz music, *Shuffle Along* became a major influence on future Broadway shows of its era. Stars born out of this production included Josephine Baker, William Grant Still, and Paul Robeson.



Porgy and Bess
(1935)

This American opera by George Gershwin was comprised of an all-Black cast of classically trained singers.

Harry Belafonte
(*John Murray Anderson's Almanac*, 1953)

Belafonte was the first African American man to win a Tony Award for his performance in *John Murray Anderson's Almanac*.

Clorindy: The Origin of the Cakewalk
(1898)

Premiering atop the Casino Rooftop Garden in New York City, *Clorindy* was a one-act musical that served as an extended post-show performance following the main show inside. Written by Will Marion Cook & Paul Laurence Dunbar, *Clorindy* is regarded as one of the first all-Black musicals.

Bert Williams
(*Ziegfeld Follies*, 1910)

When invited by Florenz Ziegfeld to be a headliner in the *Follies*, Williams became the first Black performer to appear on stage with the all-white cast.



The Chip Woman's Fortune
(1923)

Written by Willis Richardson, *The Chip Woman's Fortune* was the first play produced on Broadway written by a Black playwright.

Juanita Hall
(*South Pacific*, 1949)

Hall became the first African American to win a Tony Award for her performance in *South Pacific*.



BLACK HISTORY



Hello, Dolly!
(1967)

The all-Black revival starring Pearl Bailey won her a Special Tony Award in 1968.



The Wiz
(1975)

The Wiz won multiple Tony Awards including Best Musical and Best Direction by Geoffrey Holder.



Dreamgirls
(1981)

Comprised of a mostly African American cast, *Dreamgirls* became a smash hit, winning Tony Awards for Jennifer Holliday, Ben Harney, and Cleavant Derricks.

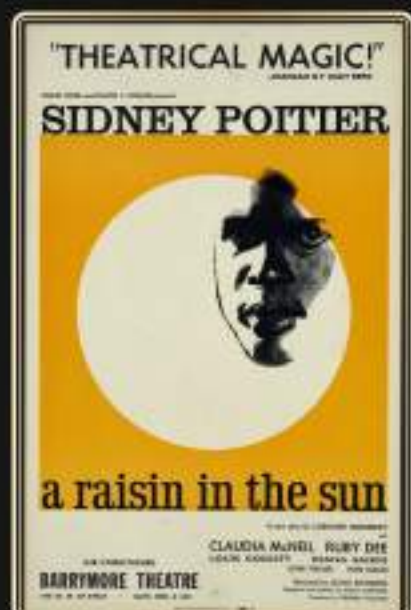


Jelly's Last Jam
(1992)

Jelly's Last Jam was George C. Wolfe's first show to premiere on Broadway. Wolfe has become a renowned playwright and director in the industry and is the most Tony Award-nominated Black theater artist.

A Raisin in the Sun
(1959)

A Raisin in the Sun by Lorraine Hansberry was the first play on Broadway to be written by a Black woman.



Ain't Supposed to Die a Natural Death
(1971)

This experimental musical, with book, music, and lyrics written by Martin Van Peebles, offered a realistic and accurate depiction of urban Black life and issues. Peebles marketed the show to Black churches, civic groups, and even persuaded a handful of Black stars of the time to make cameos in support.

For Colored Girls...
(1976)

This choreopoem by Ntozake Shange, premiered on Broadway and was nominated for the Tony Award for Best Play.



The Pittsburgh Cycle
(1982–2005) by August Wilson

The Pittsburgh Cycle was a series of 10 plays that chronicle the African American experience spanning each decade of the 20th century. These plays include *Fences*, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, and *The Piano Lesson*.



The 2016 Tony Awards

The 2016 Tony Awards set a milestone when all 4 musical acting categories were won by Black actors: Renée Elise Goldsberry, Leslie Odom Jr., Daveed Diggs, and Cynthia Erivo.

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Whoopi Goldberg

Goldberg became the first African American woman to achieve EGOT status in 2002 when she won the Tony for Best Musical as a producer of *Thoroughly Modern Millie*. The prestigious EGOT refers to individuals who have won an Emmy, Grammy, Oscar, and Tony Award.



Audra McDonald

The acclaimed actress won her sixth Tony Award for her performance in *Lady Day at Emerson's Bar & Grill* (2014). McDonald is the first person ever to win a Tony Award in all four acting categories.



Suzan-Lori Parks

Parks became the first African American woman to win the Pulitzer Prize for Drama with her work *Topdog/Underdog* (2001).



Charles Sidney Gilpin

(1878–1930)

An actor, singer, and dancer, Gilpin was one of the most successful African American stage actors of the early 20th century. In 1921, he became the first Black actor to win the Drama League Award as one of the 10 most influential people in American theater.



Fredi Washington

(1903–1994)

Washington was one of the earliest Black stars to receive widespread acclaim on stage and screen. After her last film role in 1937, she dedicated her time to both theater and civil rights activism. Among many other efforts, she was also the founder of The Negro Actors Guild of America.



Paul Robeson

(1898–1976)

The New Jersey native was famous for his portrayal of Joe in the West End production of *Show Boat*, which featured the song "Ol' Man River." A theater and film actor, singer, athlete, and social activist, Robeson advocated for human rights around the world.

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Donald McKayle

(1930–2018)

A dancer, choreographer, and director, McKayle was the first Black man to choreograph and direct major Broadway productions, including *Raisin* (1973), which won the Tony Award for Best Musical. Beyond theater, McKayle was among the few to break racial barriers in modern dance, creating socially conscious works on the human condition and the Black experience in America.



Katherine Dunham

(1909–2006)

Among her groundbreaking work in the world of dance, Dunham became the first Black woman to serve as both choreographer and director for a Broadway show in 1955 with a three-act revue performed by her dance company. 67 years later, Camille A. Brown would be the second Black woman to achieve this milestone with her revival of *For Colored Girls* in 2022.



Will Marion Cook

(1869–1944)

Cook was one of the most notable musical comedy composers of the early 20th century and a key figure in pre-Jazz African American music. His successes in musical theater included the groundbreaking all-Black musicals, *Clorindy* (1898) and *In Dahomey* (1903).



J. Rosamond Johnson

(1873–1954)

Johnson was one of a handful of early African American composers who found success on Broadway and in vaudeville. His partnership with Bob Cole and brother James Weldon Johnson would deem the trio a major influence in Black musical theatre. Outside of Broadway, in 1900, Johnson composed the hymn “Lift Every Voice and Sing,” which was later named by the NAACP as “the Black national anthem.”



Adrienne Kennedy

A contemporary voice in the male-dominated Black Arts Movement, Kennedy made space for Black female playwrights to share their experiences on stage. With her unique use of surrealism and poetic storytelling, her play *Funnyhouse of a Negro* shared the Obie award with Amiri Baraka's *Dutchman* for Distinguished Play. In 2022, at the age of 91, Kennedy made her Broadway debut with her play, *Ohio State Murders*, starring Audra McDonald.



Bob Cole

(1868–1911)

Among a generation of overlooked pioneers, Cole served as playwright, composer, and director for a number of early Broadway successes. In partnership with the Johnson brothers, his works included *The Shoo-Fly Regiment* (1907) and *The Red Moon* (1909).

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The Frogs
(1908–1920s)
Founded in Harlem, NY, The Frogs was a Black theater organization that served as a support group, network, and archive for Black theater professionals. The 11 founders of the organization included George Walker, Bert Williams, and Sam Corker.



The Negro Actors Guild of America
(1937–1970s)
Created with the objective of combatting Black stereotypes in the theater and film industries, The Negro Actors Guild of America served as one of the primary financial resources for Black performers and provided healthcare, transportation, and housing accommodations.

Guild officers included Ethel Waters, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, and Marian Anderson.



Karamu House
(1915–Present)
Founded in Cleveland, OH, this is the oldest producing African American theater in the nation.



American Negro Theatre
(1940–1951)
Following the footsteps of the Federal Theatre Project, this Harlem theater company became a pillar in the industry for the advancement of Black theater and served as a training ground for artists such as Sidney Poitier, Ruby Dee, Ossie Davis, and Alice Childress.

The Lafayette Players
(1915–1932)
Founded by Anita Bush, this Harlem-based stock company of African American actors gained national acclaim for providing Black performers with challenging, dramatic roles in straight plays.

Black Arts Movement
(1965–1975)
A pro-Black arts collective consisting of poets, playwrights, authors, etc., was spearheaded by Amiri Baraka with the creation of the Black Arts Repertory Theatre. Originating in the New York & Newark, NJ area, the movement eventually grew to have artist groups in every major city in the country.

The Negro Ensemble Company
(1967–Present)
This NYC-based theater established by Douglas Turner Ward, produces original Black theatrical works and has become the creative grounds for hundreds of Black playwrights and actors.

Crossroads Theatre Company
(1978–Present)
Established in New Brunswick, NJ, this African American theater has premiered works by renowned playwrights, including August Wilson, George C. Wolfe, and Ntozake Shange, and was the recipient of the 1999 Regional Tony Award.



Federal Theatre Project
(1935–1939)
This nationwide government-funded program provided employment and apprenticeships to hundreds of Black performers, playwrights, directors, and stage crew members during The Great Depression.