

# Race Active In Amusements, Theatricals and Movies

## "Breaking In"

Tony Langston was born, reared and educated in Detroit, Mich. Tony was a member of a class of mischievous boys, bright as polished silver, taught by the present editor of The Monitor in St. Matthew's Sunday School. He worked on the Detroit Plaindealer, Cleveland Gazette, Cleveland Journal, Philadelphia Tribune and has been with The Chicago Defender for ten years. Tony is the most widely read dramatic writer and best paid in history of Race Journals.



TONY LANGSTON

By Tony Langston.  
Dramatic Editor of Chicago Defender.

Hardly a week passes over our hard head but brings at least a dozen letters from folks all over the country who desire to "break in" the show business in one branch or another. Some of them want to be dramatic actors, some vaudeville or musical comedy stars and others express a desire to make it into the movies. We even get letters from people who call themselves "scenarists," who would be willing to leave home and lend their services to any producing company which might appreciate their writings to the extent of turning their stories into celluloid productions. Some of those who write in send stamps for reply and at times these letters arrive in such numbers that it would require the services of a couple of stenogs to clear up our correspondence. We have been considering having a stock



FANNY WISE

letter printed to cover this condition but that would hardly do, inasmuch as there is something in each communication which requires individual attention.

### Hard Game.

The show game is a hard one at best. So few individuals make the top that they could easily be counted upon the fingers of our bread hooks. There are whole seasons during which no special noise is made along the line of a rise. Some individual worker may attract something more than passing attention but a slant over the list of "stars" season after season is a fine indication of the "hard roe to hoe." This does not apply to any particular line of the business, either. It is the same in drama as it is in vaudeville and musical comedy and as far as the movies are concerned the field is so limited that it is not to be considered, both as regards the performer and the writer of scenarios. It is a fact that there is less than half a dozen companies producing "Racial" features and some of them make about one production a year. The Reel Productions Corp., The Micheaux Film Co., and the Lincoln Motion Picture Co., are the only ones showing any present day activity. This being the case, it is easy to understand why there is no demand whatever for talent. The above named use a limited number of performers of experience and are not known to play folks of unknown ability. The stories used are either gleaned from the work of standard authors or are written by the producers of some of their stuff. The writer has the first time yet to hear of anyone getting a dollar for a story from the producers of "Racial" features. This would indicate then that it is a matter of labor lost. Writers should not lose track of the fact that if they have the ability to write scenarios of merit their chances for remuneration are better with the big "white" producing companies than they are with our own. Some of the scenarios submitted to the writer are fair while others have absolutely no merit.

### Other Lines.

Musical Comedy is probably the most open field in the show game. The smallest companies require from ten to fifteen people while the larger productions use as many as thirty-five or forty. Season after season new faces appear in this line of the business. Both men and women of real ability are sought. Some of the producers make a practice of taking "green" material and developing it.

This has been a feature of Billy King's success. Good voices and pleasing appearances are required, however, and the beginners are always started in the chorus. Bull heads and "saps" are quickly weeded out and it is a known fact that the producer named has had trouble getting a company of twenty choristers out of a bunch of over a hundred aspirants. "Stock Companies" on the smaller circuits are not so particular but many of these used by them wouldn't stand any more chance in select show circles than a bow-legged gal would of getting married in the town she was raised in. Many who have done well have entered the business through watching the advertisements in the pages edited by the Old Roll Top Desk Man. In "organizing times" letters always get prompt replies from the producers.

### In Vaudeville.

Vaudeville is the branch to which most performers aspire and it is in this line where real ability is most needed. There is no chance for a faker in vaudeville. You either deliver the goods or you "beat it" and members of the Race who have and are making good on the better class circuits deserve ten times as much credit for being on a bill as does any "white" act in the same line-up, for if they were not ready they wouldn't be there. You can bet the baby's teething ring on that point. That some of the turns work the year 'round shows that they are "there" with the candy. Acts like that of Moss & Frye, Lulu Coates & Crackerjacks, Tabor & Green, Old Time Doodles Quartette, Four Harmony Kings, Glenn & Jenkins, Howard & Craddock, and others, drawing big, fat salaries and headlining big time programs, did not gain the pinnacle in one season. They had their struggles alright, alright. But what of "singles" which are doing the same thing? There is Dancing Dotson, who travels over the Orpheum and big Keith Circuit all by his lonesome; Bojangle Bill Robinson, one of the best singles in all vaudeville; Go Get 'Em Rogers, a recognized "scream"; and the present day sensation, Maxie McCree, who is not a smoked Irishman, but an unbleached, clever American. They all have their wares and know how to sell them. No two ways about it. But they all came up from somewhere.

### The Drama.

The drama is practically a new field. It has developed some real performers, however. Andrew Bishop, Ida Anderson, Cleo Desmond, Inez Clough, Babe Townsend, A. B. de Comathiere, Sid Kirkpatrick, Laura Bowman, Clarence Muse and many others, have attracted a whole lot of attention through their ability to make a fella sit tight in his seat. And then there is Charles S. Gilpin, the most talked-of actor in the world; Charles has had his ins and outs, his ups and downs and his bumps. He had the ability, however, and today is the wearer of the Springarn Medal, being



CLEO DESMOND

the only one so honored, by the N. A. A. C. P., without a protest from some quarter. He has been presented with a Ford full of loving cups and the people abroad have read as much of him that it is on the books that he will soon cross the briny. The Minstrel field, of course, is a limited one. Season after season sees the same faces making the same old route with once in a while a "Chick" Beaman developing.

### Final Weep.

So from all the above it can be seen that it is more than a notion to "break in" to the show business. Many a fine pot-wrestler, suds-buster and hoister have mistaken their avocation and butted into the game, but they don't last long. Just because an individual can put on the "Blues" is no sign that he or she can do a Gerty Saunders and the fact that a gazook can clean up "The Face on the Bar Room Floor" doesn't indicate that he is a second Henri Strange. However, nothing beats a trial but a failure and it would be a tragedy indeed to let a world of real talent sweat around a kitchen or livery stable when all that stands between it and fame and fortune is a failure to seek a chance to peddle the wares. "Break in" but for the love of Mike don't use Poor Tony for a jimmy.

In a Class by Himself.  
Miss Passay—"My fiance is so different from other men." Miss Pert—"Of course he is, since he has proposed to you."—Boston Transcript.

### "BY RIGHT OF BIRTH."

New Lincoln Motion Picture Co.'s Offering Pleases Public.

One of the greatest motion pictures ever shown in Oakland was shown at the Lincoln Theatre last Monday and Tuesday evening, starring Anita Thompson, Clarence Brooks and Webb King. It was indeed a gripping drama of racial lights and shadows. The players played their parts so well that the audience held its breath while the thrilling chase and automobile wreck was on, and every participant played like professionals. The race can feel indeed proud of having produced such a wonderful cast of players whose work stands out in such bold relief. Thousands of our people were in attendance, evidencing the real interest manifested by the race in its own. The Voice carried the message that brought thousands to this, U.S. race's greatest photoplay.—Editorial, Calif. Voice, Oakland, Cal., July 2, 1921.



E. C. BROWN  
President of Quality Amusement Co.



THE BLACK DINTY.

Ernest Morrison, better known as "Sunshine Sammy," is probably the best known child in the movies. Starting several years ago opposite Baby Marie Osborne in two and five reel dramas; Sammy is now a fixture in all leading theatres using the Pathe service and the famous Snub Pollard comedies. It is claimed that Sammy, who is 8 years old, draws a weekly salary in excess of \$175 per week under a 3-year contract.



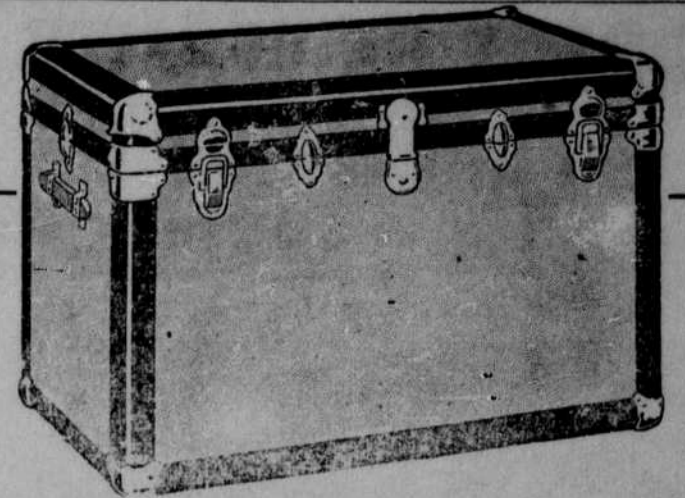
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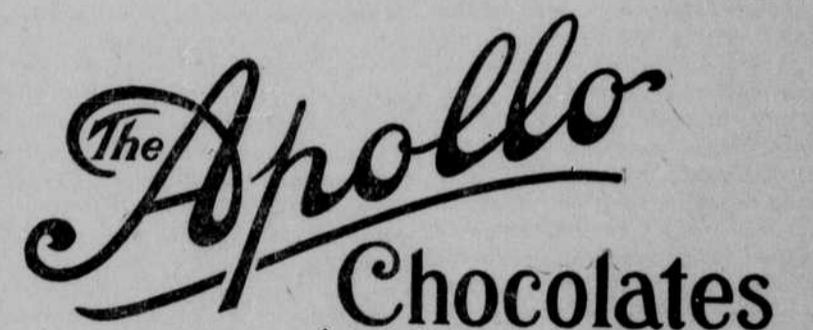
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