

Guide to The Green Pastures, 3 Is A Family, and Tobacco Road souvenir programs C0427

The Green Pastures, 3 Is A Family, and Tobacco Road souvenir programs
circa 1934-1944

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Abstract

Souvenir programs for The Green Pastures, 3 Is A Family, and Tobacco Road.

Creator

George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

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George Mason University. Libraries. Special Collections Research Center

Administrative Information

Access Restrictions

There are no access restrictions.

Use Restrictions

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Biographical and Historical Information

The Green Pastures was written in 1930 by Marc Connelly and adapted from Roark Bradford's 1928 collection of stories *Ol' Man Adam an' His Chillun*. The play presents stories from the Old Testament as envisioned through the eyes of a young African American child in the Great Depression-era South using terms and references familiar to them. The play won the Pulitzer Prize for Drama in 1930 and featured the first all-Black cast on Broadway. While hailed by white critics, Black critics and academics have been more critical of Connelly's claims to be presenting an authentic view of Black religious thought.

3 Is A Family (also spelled *Three Is A Family* and *Three's A Family*) was written in 1943 by Henry and Phoebe Ephron. The comedic play focuses on the chaos that ensues when extended members of the family of Sam and Frances Whitaker come to live in their crowded New York City apartment. The American Negro Theatre production transferred to Broadway's Longacre Theatre in April 1944. Formed in Harlem, New York in 1940 by Abram Hill, Frederick O'Neal, and other actors, the American Negro Theatre (ANT) grew out of the Federal Theatre Project's Negro Unit. For its first five years (1940-1945) the ANT was housed in the basement of the New York Public Library's Harlem Branch in a specially renovated space known as the Harlem Library Little Theatre. In 1945, ANT was forced to move, relocating to the Elks Lodge, known as the American Negro Theatre Playhouse, on West 126th Street, and then relocated again in 1950 to a loft on West 125th Street. The ANT would continue to operate until the mid-1950s.

Tobacco Road was written in 1933 by Jack Kirkland, based on Erskine Caldwell's 1932 novel of the same name. The play tells the story of the Lester family, a former sharecropping family now struggling to survive and cope in Georgia's poverty-stricken farm country. The play ran on Broadway for 3,182 performances to become the longest running show in Broadway history at the time. As of March 2024, it is still the 20th longest running show on Broadway, as well as the 2nd longest running non-musical.

James Edward Barton (also known as John Barton) was born in Gloucester, New Jersey on November 1, 1890 into a multigenerational family of performers and entertainers. A critically acclaimed dancer, comedic and dramatic actor, and singer, Barton's career saw success in nearly every performance genre from the late 19th through mid-20th century, including vaudeville, burlesque, Broadway, radio, film, and television. His most defining role came in 1933 when he assumed the part of Jeeter Lester in *Tobacco Road*, his first dramatic performance and one which would help him establish the drunken, comedic character he would be typecast as for the rest of his career. In total, he performed the role of Jeeter Lester on Broadway 1,899 times between 1933-1941. Barton passed away on February 19, 1962.

Scope and Content

Souvenir programs for *The Green Pastures* from circa 1932, American Negro Theatre Broadway transfer production of *3 Is A Family* from April 17, 1944, and *Tobacco Road* from circa 1938. The *Tobacco Road* program includes several signatures of members of the cast on the first page and a signed insert photograph

of actor John Barton.

Related Materials

The Special Collections Research Center holds other souvenir and theatrical program collections, such as the Charles Rodrigues playbill collection, and the Mary Lavigne programs collection, as well other performing arts collections, including the Federal Theatre Project collection.

The New York Public Library Archives and Manuscripts holds both the James Barton papers and the American Negro Theatre records.

Keywords

Performing arts

Theater

Theater programs

Theater -- United States

Memorabilia

American Negro Theatre

Barton, James, 1890-1962

Connelly, Marc (Marcus Cook), 1890-1980

Ephron, Henry, 1912-1992

Ephron, Phoebe, 1914-1971

Kirkland, Jack, 1902-1969

Bibliography

Hill, Anthony Duane. 2008. "American Negro Theatre (1940-ca. 1955)." BlackPast (blog). February 6, 2008. <https://www.blackpast.org/african-american-history/american-negro-theatre/>.

Moses, Victoria. n.d. "James Barton: The Complete Performer." American Vaudeville (blog). Accessed March 12, 2024. <https://vaudeville.sites.arizona.edu/2023/03/28/james-barton-the-complete-performer-by-victoria-moses/>.

"The Green Pastures." 2024. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=The_Green_Pastures&oldid=1206517456.

"Three Is a Family." 2024. In Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Three_Is_a_Family&oldid=1198948702.

"Tobacco Road (Play)." 2024. In Wikipedia. [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tobacco_Road_\(play\)&oldid=1198255251](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tobacco_Road_(play)&oldid=1198255251).

Arrangement

This is a single folder collection.