

# The Black Crook



Thomas Baker  
Transformation polka. From The Black Crook.  
New York: Wm. A. Pond & Co., 1867.  
The Black Crook, the first American blockbuster musical,  
was a four hour extravaganza, born of the combination of a  
stranded French ballet company with a gothic melodrama.  
Color lithograph of Mlle. Bonfanti by Major & Knapp, New York.

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# Smithsonian displays the American musical

By **CARL HARTMAN**

*Associated Press*@ WASHINGTON - Take the oompah of a German beer-hall band, the rhythm of African drums, the warble of Italian opera, the shuffle of an Irish clog dance, a twitter from England's Gilbert and Sullivan.

Throw them all into the melting pot and you get an American musical.

Two museums of the Smithsonian Institution have put them all together. They came up with "Red, Hot & Blue" - a show of some 400 videos, nickelodeons, sheet music by George and Ira Gershwin and Irving Berlin, and Judy Garland's red velvet dress from "Meet Me in St. Louis."

"When I went through it, I felt as if I were drowning - my whole life passed before my eyes," said Kitty Carlisle Hart, 82, actress, operetta singer, television star and two-term chairman of the New York State Council on the Arts.

She appeared at a news conference Tuesday to launch the show, which opens Friday at the National Portrait Gallery. It takes its title from a Cole Porter hit of 1936.

Dwight Blocker Bowers, co-curator of the exhibit from the National Museum of American History, said the American musical goes back long before that - to the day in 1866 when the New York Academy of Music burned down.

The 100 dancers of the Great Parisian Ballet Troupe had no place to perform. The manager of Niblo's Garden, a New York theater, was persuaded to incorporate them into "The Black Crook," a not-very-good drama adapted from a German opera.

"It was a great success," Bowers said in an interview. "The dancers didn't have anything to do with the play, but they wore flesh-colored tights and looked as if they were naked."

Or as the New York Tribune reported at the time:

"Though we cannot say that anything was done for the dramatic art we can heartily testify that Scenic Art has never, within our knowledge, been so amply and splendidly exemplified."

Bowers sees the seed of the American musical in the diverse waves of 19th century immigration that centered in New York, which was also a center of musical life.

After them came such names as Lillian Russell, George M. Cohan, Jerome Kern, Oscar Hammerstein, George Kaufman, Alan Jay Lerner, Frederick Loewe, Kurt Weill, Richard Rodgers and Moss Hart - Kitty Carlisle's late husband. The exhibit has something about all of them.

Bowers pointed out that international diversity still goes into the art. The current winner of the Pulitzer Prize on Broadway is the rock musical "Rent" by Jonathan Larson. It's an adaptation of "La Boheme," an Italian opera based on a French novel.

"Red, Hot & Blue" is part of the 150th anniversary celebration of the Smithsonian Institution. The exhibit will be open until July 6, 1997. Admission is free. It is not scheduled to travel. A parallel show is being put on at London's Drury Lane Theater, where many American musicals have played.

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*Call #* \*MGZFD Bla 1  
*Title* **Black Crook waltzes.**  
*Imprint* New York, Bufford Bros., 1867.

LOCATION	CALL #	STATUS
	*MGZFD Bla 1	

*Descript* Colored lithograph, 30.5 x 23 cm.

*Note* Unsigned lithograph, depicting the grotto of Talacta, queen of the golden realm, Act II, sc. 4 of The Black Crook, during which was performed the ballet "The Revel of the Sirens."

An overgrown bank on the edge of a grotto; a woman standing at center, surrounded by five female attendants; a couple, engaged in conversation, reclining foreground left.

Included are six pages of music: "The Black Crook Waltzes, adapted from the ballet music of the Black Crook performed at Niblo's."

*Subject* New York (City). Niblo's Garden.

*Local subj* Musical comedies. Black crook.

Ballet -- United States -- 19th century.

Prints (Graphic arts) -- Ballet -- 19th century.

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*Books Cataloged Before 1968*[Browse the Shelf](#)**The black crook, a most wonderful history.**


Philadelphia, Barclay &amp; co. [c1866]

1 p. l., 29-148 p. 4 col. plates. 24 cm.

Language	Call Number	LCCN	Dewey Decimal	ISBN/ISSN
English (eng)	PZ3 .B5653	06013835	-	-

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*Books Cataloged Before 1968*

[Browse the Shelf](#)

**The black crook: an original magical and spectacular drama in four acts.**

Chicago, Rounds & James, printers, 1867.

44 p. 19 cm.

Search for other works by:

[Barras, Charles M., 1826-1873.](#)

Language	Call Number	LCCN	Dewey Decimal	ISBN/ISSN
English (eng)	PS1074.B15 B6	52056159	-	-

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*Books Cataloged Before 1968*[Browse the Shelf](#)**"The naked truth!" An inside history of the Black crook,**

[Philadelphia, H. W. Shaw co., c1897]

32 p. 20 cm.

**Subjects:**[Barras, Charles M.,--1826-1873.](#)[Theater--New York \(City\)](#)**Search for other works by:**[Whitton, Joseph.](#)

Language	Call Number	LCCN	Dewey Decimal	ISBN/ISSN
English (eng)	PN2256 .W5	11019310	-	-

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Balanchine, 'B.O.' in *Balanchine's New Complete Stories of the Great Ballets* (Garden City, N.Y., 1968).

**Birth of the Royal Ballet.** Ballet-Play in 2 parts. Written by P. Brinson, produced by A. Grant. Prod. 13 Oct. 1972, B. for All, Spa Pavilion, Felixstowe. The play retraces the story of Britain's top comp. from its early days in 1930 to its Cov. Gdn. début with *Sleeping Beauty* in 1946, through excerpts from its repertory during these years.

**Bischoff, Egon** (b. Gotha, 10 June 1934). Ger. dancer and b. director. Studied at the Dresden Palucca school and at the Leningrad Choreographic Institute; then became a member of the East Berlin G. J. State Op., of which he has been b. director since 1974.

**Bix Pieces, The.** Three dance pieces by Tharp; mus. songs from the 1920s and Haydn. Prod. 7 Sep. 1972, T. Tharp and Dancers, Delacorte Dance Festival, New York, with Tharp, Sara Rudner, Rose Marie Wright, Isabel Garcia-Lorca, and Kenneth Rinkler. Referring to the Bix Beiderbecke era, the ch. evokes memories of ballroom dances, chorus-girl routines, baton-twirling parades, and tap dancing. An earlier version under the title of *True Confessions* was premiered on 9 Nov. 1971 at the Th. de la Cité Internationale, Paris.

**Bizet, Georges** (b. Paris, 25 Oct. 1938, d. Bougival, 3 June 1975). Fr. composer. Composed no specific b. mus., apart from individual dances for his ops. Arrangements of his mus. for \**Carmen* have often been used for b. purposes - in 1931 for K. Goleizovsky's *Carmen*, by Jerome Moross for Page's *Guns and Castanets* (Chicago, 1939), anon. for Petit's *Carmen* (London, 1969), R. Shchedrin for Alb. Alonso's *Carmen Suite* (Moscow, 1967), and W. Fortner and W. Steinbrenner for Cranko's *Carmen* (Stuttgart, 1971). Among the various choreographic versions of his *Jeux d'enfants*, Massine's of 1932 is the most famous. His *Symphony in C* major served both Howard for her *Assembly Ball* (London, 1946) and Balanchine for his *Palais de cristal* or *Symphony in C* (Paris, 1957). In 1974 the Bs. de Marseille presented an *Hommage à B.*, with G. Vantaggio's

*Bizet'sme* (from *Jolie Fille de Perth*) and Petit's *Jeux d'enfants*, *L'Arlésienne*, and *Carmen*.

**Björn, Dinna** (Orig. D.B. Larsen; b. Copenhagen, 14 Feb. 1947). Dan. dancer. The daughter of Niels B. Larsen. Studied at Royal Dan. B. School and with Besobrasova, M. Surowiak, Hightower, Golovine, and Pereyaslawec. Since 1966 she has been a member of the Royal Dan. B., where she made her début in Robbins' *Afternoon of a Faun*. Apart from appearing in the bs. of the repertory has danced at the Tivoli Pantomime Th. where she created von Rosen's *Mam-zelle Nitouche* (1970). Has also choreographed individual bs. Bronze Medal (Varna, 1968).

**Björnsson, Fredbjørn** (b. Copenhagen, 10 Sep. 1926). Dan. dancer and teacher. Entered Royal Dan. B. School in 1935, becoming a member of the comp. in 1945, appointed solo-dancer in 1949. An excellent character dancer, particularly admired for his interpretations of Bournonville roles. Has choreographed smaller pieces at various times and is now much in demand as a teacher. Was married to the dancer Kirsten Ralov. Knight of the Order of Dannebrog (1961). Bibl.: S. Kragh-Jacobsen, 'F.B.' in *20 Solo-dancers of The Royal Danish Ballet* (Copenhagen, 1965). *LC19.98*

**Blache, Jean-Baptiste** (b. Berlin, 17 May 1765, d. Toulouse, 24 Jan. 1834). Fr. dancer and choreographer. Studied in Berlin and from 1776 with Deshayes in Paris. Dancer at the Paris Opéra 1781-6, after which he made a very successful career as choreographer in Montpellier, Marseilles, Lyons, Bordeaux (where he succeeded Dauberval), and elsewhere; *Daphnis*, *La Noce villageoise*, *La Fête indienne*, *La Folle par amour*, and *La Famille fugitive* ou *La Laitière polonaise* were his most popular bs. Together with Duport he created for the Paris Opéra *Le Barbier de Séville* (1806) and *Les Filets de Vulcain* ou *Mars et Vénus* (mus. Schneitzhöffer, 1820). After choreographing the very successful *Almaviva* ou *Rosine* for Lyons, he retired in 1830. His 1st son Frédéric Auguste (b. Marseille, 1791, d. ?) was b. master at the Paris Th. de la Porte-Saint-Martin, where he produced in 1825 *Jocko* ou

*le Singe du Brésil*; his 2nd son Alexis Scipion (b. Marseilles, 1792, d. Bordeaux, 1852) became a much respected b. master in Bordeaux, Paris, Marseilles, and St. Petersburg, where *Malek Adel* ou *Les Croisés*, *Don Juan*, *Gustave Vasa*, *Amadis de Gaule*, and *La Tarentule* were among his bs.

**Blacher, Boris** (b. Newchwang, China, 6 Jan. 1903, d. Berlin, 30 Jan. 1975). One of the most successful Ger. b. composers. Wrote the mus. for *Hamlet* (ch. V. Gsovsky, Munich, 1950), *Chiarina* (ch. J. Keith, Berlin, 1950), *The First Ball* (ch. Charrat, Berlin, 1950), *Lysistrata* (ch. Blank, Berlin, 1951), the b. op. *Prussian Fairy-Tale* (ch. Blank, Berlin, 1952), *The Moor of Venice* (ch. Hanka, Vienna, 1955), *Demeter* (ch. Georgi, Schwetzingen, 1964), and *Tristan* (ch. T. Gsovsky, Berlin, 1965). Several choreographers have set bs. to his *Paganini Variations*, among them Bolender (Cologne, 1963) and Urbani (Florence, 1969).

**Black Crook, The.** Amer. extravaganza. Prod. 12 Sep. 1866, Niblo's Garden, New York. One of the biggest hit-prods. of the Amer. th., it is considered the main source of later developments in the Amer. music hall, variety th., vaudeville, and musical th. A Great Parisienne Ballet Troupe from the Grand Opéra, Paris, participated under the direction of David Costa with M. Bonfanti and R. Sangalli as premiers danseurs. During its almost uninterrupted run in New York and on tour until 1909, hundreds of dancers appeared in this show, thus introducing large numbers of Amer. citizens to the art of b. Bibl.: G. Frealey, 'The B.C. and The White Fawn', *Dance Index* IV, 1.

**Black, Maggie** (b. c. 1930). Amer. dancer and teacher. Studied with Tudor and others. Danced with Met. Op. B., Amer. B. Th., and other comps. Taught at Juilliard School. Opened her own New York studio in the late 1960s; soon became one of the city's most sought-after teachers.

**Black Swan.** The grand pas de deux from the 3rd act of \**Swan Lake*, where Odile (as the black reflection of the white swan princess Odette) tries to seduce prince Siegfried and thus to make him forget his vow that he will never be unfaithful to Odette.

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