SHUFFLE ALONG

A musical mélange

Book by
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Music and lyrics by
Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake

Critical edition
edited by
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and Constance Valis Hill

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by Rosalyn P. Schenbeck
Jim Williams: Proprietor of Jimtown Hotel.
Jessie Williams: His daughter.
Ruth Little: Her chum.
Harry Walton: Candidate for Mayor.
Board of Aldermen:
Grocery Clerk:
Mrs. Sam Peck: Suffragette.
Tom Sharper: Political boss.
Steve Jenkins: Candidate for Mayor
Sam Peck: Another candidate for Mayor.
Jack Penrose: Detective.
Rufus Loose: War relic.
Strutt: Jimtown Swell.
Mayor's doorman:
Uncle Tom:
Uncle Ned:
Old Black Joe:
Secretary to Mayor:
Four Harmony Kings:
The Porter:
Chorus: Dancing and singing chorus are referred to as "Jazz Jasmines;"
"Happy Honeysuckles" and "Syncopating Sunflowers."

Scene

Jimtown in Dixieland.

Time

Election Day.

Synopsis of Scenes

Act I

Scene 1: Exterior of Jimtown Hotel.
Scene 2: Possum Lane.
Scene 3: Jenkins' and Peck's Grocery store.

Act II

Scene 1: Calico Corners
Scene 2: Possum Lane
Scene 3: The Mayor's Office
Scene 4: Spencer's Lane
Scene 5: Ballroom of Jimtown's Hotel
Act I Scene 1

SETTING: Exterior of Jimtown Hotel.

"OPENING CHORUS"

ELECTION DAY, ELECTION DAY,
THAT'S THE DAY WHEN EVERYBODY'S HAPPY,
ELECTION DAY, ELECTION DAY,
THAT'S THE DAY WHEN EVERYBODY'S GLAD,
ELECTION DAY, ELECTION DAY,
THAT'S THE DAY WHEN YOU FORGET,
ALL THE ACHES AND PAINS YOU HAVE HAD,
YOU GATHER AT THE ELECTION POLLS, AND THERE YOU STAND IN LINE,
ALTHOUGH THE DAY BE DARK AND COLD STILL YOU NEVER MIND,
YOU ARE THINKING OF THE POLITICIANS WHOM LAST YEAR YOU TRUSTED
AND WHEN THEY GOT INTO POSITIONS, PROMISES THEY BUSTED,
YOU WILL TRY NOT MAKE THE SAME MISTAKE-- THIS ELECTION DAY,
HOORAY! HOORAY! HOORAY! HOORAY!

(Looking to right stage. Enter SUPPORTERS of STEVE JENKINS-- right.)

WE STAND FOR EVERYTHING THAT WE CAN GET,
OUR MAN IS FOR THE COUNTRY GOING WET.
WE'LL BRING BACK THE WHISKEY, BEER AND GIN,
WE KNOW THAT STEVE JENKINS WILL WIN.

(CHORUS and SUPPORTERS together)

CHORUS
THE GANG OF STEVE JENKINS, A LAME AND HUNGRY BUNCH,
THEY'RE GOING TO BRING BACK THE FIVE-CENT BEER END LUNCH,
IF HE'S ELECTED IT SURE WILL BE A SIN,
WE HOPE THAT HE'LL NEVER, NEVER WIN,

(Following them as they exit right. Looking towards left.)

HOORAY! HOORAY!
WHAT CROWD IS THIS A-COMING?
HOORAY! HOORAY! WITH WHISTLING FIFE AND DRUMMING.
LET'S CLEAR THE WAY FOR A GREAT BIG DEMONSTRATION
THEY WILL CARRY THE DAY WITH A RIOTOUS CONSTERNATION
(Enter left MRS. PECK and MR. PECK's SUPPORTERS. ONIONS is one supporter and carries a drum.)

ME, HIM AND SHE, SHE, HIM, AND ME.
WE'RE THE ONES, WHO WILL ELECT,
FOR OUR MAYOR, WE WILL HAVE SAM PECK,
YOU WILL AGREE, THAT ME, HIM, AND SHE,
WILL TAKE 'EM, MAKE 'EM, SHAKE 'EM, BREAK 'EM,
JUST WE THREE.

CHORUS
GEE, BUT THEY ARE FUNNY, SHE, HIM AND ME,
IT'S WORTH LOTS OF MONEY SUCH A SIGHT TO SEE,
POOR COX'S ARMY AIN'T, ONE, TWO, THREE,
WITH A BUNCH OF HECKS LIKE OLD SAM PECK'S ME, HIM AND SHE.

(Both repeat and MRS. PECK and SUPPORTERS exit. Enter HARRY WALTON's SUPPORTERS right.)

WE'RE FOR HARRY WALTON, HERE WE COME,
WE'LL VOTE FOR HARRY WALTON, OUR FAVORITE SON,
AND WITH BANNERS BLOWING, WE WILL SOON BE SHOWING,
IF WE KEEP STEP WITH THE HEP HEP AND RATTLE OF THE DRUM,
HONOR IS OUR MOTTO, BRIGHT AND GRAND,
JUSTICE IS THE PLATFORM ON WHICH WE STAND,
AND SINCE WE ARE IN IT, WE ARE GOING TO WIN IT,
HARRY WALTON IS THE MAN,
(Repeat once)
HE IS THE MAN FOR WHOM WE ALL WILL STAND.

(MR. WILLIAMS appears on hotel step.)

CHORUS
(Addressing MR. WILLIAMS)
Speech! Speech!

WILLIAMS
Friends and citizens of Jimtown-- It is useless for me to attempt to tell you what kind of a man Harry Walton is and that he is the right man for the Mayor, for no doubt, you all know him as well as I. In fact, we have watched him grow from boyhood.

CHORUS
(Interrupting)
He is the man.
WILLIAMS
(Continuing)
His honesty, integrity and efficiency make him the logical man for the office and it is the solemn duty of each and every citizen of Jimtown to vote for him for he's all right.

CITIZEN
What's the matter with Harry Walton?

CHORUS
He's all right.

WILLIAMS
Who's all right?

CHORUS
Harry Walton's all right. Hooray! Hooray! Hooray!

"SONG, DANCE AND EXIT OF CHORUS"

WE'RE FOR HARRY WALTON, HERE WE COME,
WE'LL VOTE FOR HARRY WALTON, OUR FAVORITE SON,
AND WITH BANNERS BLOWING, WE WILL SOON BE SHOWING,
IF WE KEEP STEP WITH THE HEP HEP AND RATTLE OF THE DRUM,
HONOR IS OUR MOTTO, BRIGHT AND BRAND,
JUSTICE IS THE PLATFORM ON WHICH WE STAND,
AND SINCE WE ARE IN IT, WE ARE GOING TO WIN IT,
HARRY WALTON IS THE MAN.

JESSIE
(Following father to center of stage)
Father, your speech was brief but to the point and you are right. Harry is the man.

WILLIAMS
Well daughter, no doubt some may say that my efforts in his behalf are prompted by the fact that he is to become my son-in-law. But my only motive is to see the right man in the right place.

JESSIE
And Harry is the right man.

WILLIAMS
Well . . .

(Laugh)
I trust my daughter is looking at it through unbiased eyes and not because she is to become the future are. Harry Walton.

([said as]MISS LITTLE approaches.)

JESSIE
(Exclamation of rebuke)
Oh, Father!

WILLIAMS
Oh, did I tell on you?

([WILLIAMS]makes slow exit into hotel.)

RUTH
Oh, I see after Harry is elected there seems to be a certainty that there is going to be a little wedding.

JESSIE
Oh, no Ruth.

RUTH
Oh, that's all right. I have known it right along. But--
(very independently)
none of that wedding stuff for me, kid.

JESSIE
Why not, Ruth?

RUTH
Because I'm simply too full of jazz.

(Jessie follows father into the hotel.)

"I'M SIMPLY FULL OF JAZZ" 

(MISS RUTH LITTLE sings. JAZZ JASMINES enter and assist in song and dance.)

RUTH
EVERYBODY THINKS I'M CRAZY.
THEY SAY I'VE GONE PLUM MAD.
EVERYBODY THINKS I'M CRAZY,
LOST ALL THE SENSE I EVER HAD.
WHEN THEY SEE ME SHAKE, IT MAKES THEM SHIVER,
WHEN I DO A BREAK IT MAKES THEM QUIVER,
RUTH (cont.)

BUT I'M NOT INSANE. I'M NOT TO BLAME,
THE CAUSE OF IT ALL ISN'T IN MY BRAIN.

CHORUS

JUST BECAUSE I LIKE TO DO A WIGGLE,
IN A REGULAR SALOME STYLE,
JUST BECAUSE I LIKE TO DO A LI’L WRIGGLE,
LIKE ON THE HAWAIIAN ISLE,
’CAUSE I KICK LIKE A DONKEY, JUMP WAY BACK,
’CAUSE I ACT LIKE A MONEY, AND BALL THE JACK,
AND LIKE MISS MINNIE, I DO THE SHIMMIE,
KEEP MY SHOULDERS SHAKING UNTIL YOU HEAR, THEM CRACK,
JUST ’CAUSE YOU SEE MY FEET A' SHUFFLIN'
JUST BECAUSE I ACT LIKE A RAZZ,
CAUSE I SEEM A LITTLE HAZY,
I AIN'T CRAZY. I'M JUST FULL OF JAZZ, JAZZ, JAZZ,
SIMPLY FULL OF JAZZ.

(Enter right-- HARRY WALTON--
followed by ONIONS. MR. WILLIAMS
appears on hotel step.)

ONIONS

I want to see you.

HARRY

What do you want?
(Stopping short in center of stage)

ONIONS

What I want to explain to you is-- that simply because I
happen to be working for Jenkins and Peck in that grocery
store-- ain't no sign that I got to vote for neither of
them.

HARRY

What can I do about that?

WILLIAMS

(Interrupting and coming towards
speakers)

Just a moment, Harry, possibly I can enlighten the
gentleman.

HARRY

I hope you can.

ONIONS

Proceed with the illumination.
WILLIAMS
(Addressing ONIONS)
A vote my friend is every citizen's sacred right and should be cast conscientiously using of course, your best judgment as to the man who stands for the best principle.

HARRY
Exactly.

ONIONS
And for the one that we feels is to benefit us the most.

WILLIAMS
Why certainly.

ONIONS
(To HARRY) There you is, I knows you heard dat.\(^8\)

HARRY
Why of course I heard that.

ONIONS
Well I figgers that for $5.00 you is the best man.

HARRY
(Perplexed)
What do you mean?

ONIONS
Well to make it plain, if you give me $5.00 I knows you is the best man; therefore I votes for you. You can't beat that.

HARRY
I don't care for your kind of a vote. Thank you.

ONIONS
(picking up basket and making hasty exit to hotel)
I done asked that man for too much money. I can see dat right now.

(meets JESSIE on step)

WILLIAMS
Harry, how is the election coming along?

HARRY
Glad to say it is coming along quite well.
WILLIAMS
That's fine and dandy. My boy it behooves you to win for if you are beaten by either of those ignoramuses Steve Jenkins or Sam Peck who would run our town just as they run their grocery store, I shall never consent to you becoming my son-in-law.

(JESSIE listening)

HARRY
(Reproachfully)
Why, Mr. Williams.

WILLIAMS
(Walking to hotel)
That's final.
(Goes into hotel)

JESSIE
(making sure father has gone and then coming over to HARRY)
Harry, you can't lose. Jenkins or Peck beating you, why the idea is absurd.

HARRY
(Down-heartedly)
I know Jessie, -but suppose.

"LOVE WILL FIND A WAY"9

JESSIE
COME, DEAR AND DON'T LET OUR FAITH WEAKEN,
LET'S KEEP OUR LOVE FIRES BURNING BRIGHT.

HARRY
YOUR LOVE FOR ME IS HEAV'NLY BEACON,
GUIDING ME THROUGH LOVE'S DARKEST NIGHT.

JESSIE
DON'T START MINDING OR FAULT FINDING,
NO MATTER HOW DARK ONE'S PATH MAY GROW.

HARRY
FATE WON'T HURRY, WELL DON'T WORRY,
WE'LL JUST KEEP OUR HEARTS AGLOW.

(Chorus sung by HARRY and JESSIE)

LOVE WILL FIND A WAY, THOUGH SKIES NOW ARE GRAY,
LOVE LIKE OURS CAN NEVER BE RULED,
HARRY and JESSIE (cont.)

CUPID'S NOT SCHOoled THAT WAY,
DRy EACH TEAR-DIMMED EYE, CLOUDS WILL SOON ROLL BY,
THOUGH FATE MAY LEAD US ASTRAY,
MY DEARIE, MARK WHAT I SAY,
LOVE WILL FIND A WAY.

(Repeat Chorus - featuring words.
Exit right. Enter on right MRS.
PECK and TOM SHARPER.10)

TOM

Good morning Mrs. Peck.

MRS. PECK

Good morning.

TOM

Have you any influence over your husband at all?

MRS. PECK

Why of course. I am his wife.

TOM

Why don't you get him to withdraw from this race then?

MRS. PECK

I will have him withdraw only on one condition.

TOM

And what's that?

MRS. PECK

And that is if Steve Jenkins does.

TOM

(Annoyed and excited)
Now ain't that ridiculous? Steve Jenkins was nominated by the political machine and your husband Sam Peck is running on an independent ticket. Can you beat that? An independent ticket.

MRS. PECK

Oh. Well my husband was always independent.

TOM

Well, I know, but it looks to me that he would help Steve Jenkins to win in as much as they are partners in Jimtown's most prosperous store.
MRS. PECK
No, jest store. Not prosperous.

TOM
(Pleading)
Well can't you see he is only splitting the ticket, and he hasn't got a chance to win so why don't you get him to give up.

MRS. PECK
I don't want him to give up.

TOM
And why not?

MRS. PECK
(Proudly)
Because if he is elected then I would be the first lady of the town.

TOM
Oh, I thought there was a catch to it.
(Said loudly)
Well don't worry he will never be elected.

And why not?

MRS. PECK
Because Tom Sharper is the political boss of Jimtown and MY candidate Steve Jenkins will be the next mayor.

MRS. PECK
(Emphatically)
Never. You have asked me two or three times to have my husband withdraw but I'll wager you never asked Mr. Walton to do so.

TOM
Oh that love-sick bird he is the least of my worries.

I suppose so.

MRS. PECK

UNCLE NED
(UNCLE NED emerges from hotel.)
Good morning Sister Peck.

MRS. PECK
Good morning Uncle Ned.
UNCLE NED
You sure looks like a flapper this morning.

(MRS. PECK snickers and exits right.)

TOM
Good morning Uncle Ned. How are you feeling this morning?

UNCLE NED
Oh, jes' tol'ble, jes' tol'ble.

TOM
I'm glad to hear that. How are you figuring on voting?

UNCLE NED
Well not for Steve Jenkins or Sam Peck.

TOM
Sam Peck is out of the question but why not for Steve Jenkins?

UNCLE NED
Cos' everytime I goes into dat grocery store one of dem low-lifted rascals tries to rob me. Dey ain't got no chance of gitting elected no how. No more chance den a one-legged man has in a kicking match and someone done stole bof' his crutches.

TOM
Well, now Uncle Ned, I am really sorry to hear you say that because I figured that an old village patriot of your standing, your vote would be worth just a brand new $10 bill.

(showing money)

UNCLE NED
Oh, dat's diff'rent -- dat's diff'rent.

(taking bill)

TOM
That's what I thought.

UNCLE NED
Whyn't you axe me dat at first?

(walks away)

TOM
Don't forget now. Steve Jenkins to win.
UNCLE NED

Fergit?  
(looking at money)
How's I'm gwine to fergit son?  
(pauses--and turns back)
Look here Tom.

TOM

What's the matter now?

UNCLE NED

Take dis here money right straight back boy. I never sold a vote in my life, I come up in dem good old bandana days when honesty was the best policy.

TOM

Bandana days?

UNCLE NED

Dat's what I said.

"BANDANA DAYS"¹¹

UNCLE NED & TOM

WHY THE DEAREST DAYS OF MY LIFE, WERE BANDANA DAYS, BANDANA DAYS THOUGH FILLED WITH TURMOIL, TROUBLE AND STRIFE, DEAREST MEM'RIES WILL LIVE ALWAYS.

CHORUS¹²

IN THOSE DEAR OLD BANDANA DAYS, CANE AND COTTON NE'ER FORGOTTEN, BANDANA DAYS, AND IN THOSE QUAIN'T OLD BANDANA WAYS, WHEN OUR DADS WERE COURTING OUR DEAR MAMMIES, THEY WERE SURE SOME BASHFUL SAMMIES. AND IN ALL THEIR BANDANA PLAYS, BANJOS STRUMMIN', THEY'D BE HUMMIN' BANDANA LAYS AND IN THE PALE MOONLIGHT, THEY'D SWING LEFT AND RIGHT IN THOSE DEAR OLD BANDANA DAYS,

(ENCORE)

(Enter SAM PECK and STEVE JENKINS from right having heavy argument. SAM carries a soap-box.)

SAM

I don't want to hear dat now.
STEVE
I'm a man what knows everything. You ain't got no business being no mayor and you knows you ain't, what you talking about being mayors--

SAM
(Interrupting)
I got jest as much right to be mayors of Jimtown as you is--and--mucher fers that's recerned. What you talkin' 'bout I ain't got no right to be mayors of Jimtown.

STEVE
(Loudly)
It takes brains to be a mayor. You ain't got brains enough to have a decent headache. You jest runnin' against me cost you jealous of me--dat's all you is. Me en' you runnin' a grocery store togeder too. Minute you think I got a chance of gitting elected, you splits the ticket, Dat's what I git fer taking you in the grocery store as my partner. Ought never to have taken you in der in the first place.

(walks to left stage)

SAM
(Following)
Now here listen. Wait a minute. Lemme git you straightened out about dat der grocery store. I put jest as much money in dat store as you did and maybe a lil' more. I dunno.

STEVE
You ain't put no more into it.

SAM
Well I mout a good deal more.

STEVE
No you ain't out.

SAM
Yes, I mout.

(loudly)
Don't tell me I moun't. But when it comes to politics that's where the friendship ceases right der and den. And den here's another thing. I ain't gwine to let you run for mayors of Jimtown and I bees the common folks. So git dat right out of yo' haid while you is at it.

(Walks to right stage)
STEVE
(Following)
There you goes talkin' like dat. I tol' you when I first started runnin'--I sez--Sam if I gits elected mayors of Jimtown I'm gwine to make you the vice mayor.

SAM
(With surprise)
The vice Mayor?

STEVE
Sure, it's a good job for you.

SAM
Why don't you offer me a job that amounts to something? The Governor of the County or something like dat. What kin I do with the vice Mayor's job?

STEVE
To show you dat you ain't got no business bein' nothing you ain't even voted for yourself yet.

SAM
I can't vote for myself.

STEVE
Anybody what's runnin' for de office kin vote for derself.

SAM
No day can't.

STEVE
Don't tell me dey can't--for I done voted for myself fo' times dis mornin'.

SAM
Yeh, but I is placed in a ver' recular reditio. I is a republican runnin' on de independent ticket and I ain't gwine vote aginst the old party.

(Enter on right TOM SHARPER followed by CITIZENS.)

TOM
Steve, I've been looking all over town for you to make a speech. You need every vote you can get so make a good one.

STEVE
Go ahead, Tom, reduce me. Reduce me.
TOM
(Standing in centre of stage
beside STEVE)
Fellow citizens, I take great pleasure in introducing to
you Mr. Steve Jenkins, the people's candidate for mayor.
Hear Ye Him!

SAM
(Standing on soap box at right of
crowd and STEVE)
And Hear Ye Me. I is runnin' jest as well as he is and I
is the bes' man.

CITIZEN
(Civil war veteran)
That's right. That's right.

SAM
(Continuing)
Here we is. Take your choice.

STEVE
(Hat in hand and with the
characteristic pose of a
politician, in all seriousness)
Ladies--Gentlemenses--Peopleses--and Folkses . . .

SAM
You ain't left out nobody. I'll give you credit for dat.

TOM
Go ahead Steve don't pay any attention to him.

STEVE
As I stand befo' you gazin' into each and everyone of yo'
eyes, the question that rizes in my mind IS what do you
think of me?

SAM
Don't tell him.

CHORUS
Don't tell him?

SAM
No, don't tell him.

TOM
Can you imagine that guy disturbing this crowd?
(then to ban)
This is my candidate.
TOM (cont.)

(to STEVE)
This is your crowd--not his.

SAM
Oh, this is anybody's crowd. Go lay down.

STEVE
(Resuming posture)
I may not be bedecked with jewels and diamonds rare--

UNCLE NED
You is not.

STEVE
(continuing)
I may not wear watches and chains--but I have worn--

BALLS AND CHAINS.

(SAM looks around for a brick.)

UNCLE NED
(Claim yourself son. Claim yourself.

STEVE
Ladies, Gentlemenses, folkuses and peopleses--When I first entered this race for mayors of Jimtown I had not the least redea--

UNCLE NED
That's language.

STEVE
--that there was a dark horse in the race.

(CHORUS snickers. SAM looks around for a brick.)

STEVE
Surprised I was, I must say ver' much heap surprised I was when I found dat dat dark horse was my own business parter.

TOM
(To SAM)
Now say something.
SAM
Well, I might be de dark horse but you
(pointing to STEVE)
ain't gwine never be no black mayor.

STEVE
(Peeved and loudly)
Listing to me folkses. Listing to me. We will pay no more
attention to my reponent, we will "ignose" him and talk on
matters of heap much more reportance.

TOM
Get down to the point Steve.

STEVE
Frinstance, look at the redition of your city today. I say
look at the redition of Jimtown today. We have no lextrive
lights here,

CITIZEN
You said it Steve.

STEVE
Statistics--
(At this UNCLE NED has a stroke
of apoplexy and TOM is finally
able to bring him to.)
--will show you dat dey ain't been no lextrive lights in
Jimtown not--since--before--

SAM
(Disgustedly)
0 dey ain't been never none here.

STEVE
And dey wahn't any here befo' den neither. What we need is
lextrive lights.

CITIZEN
Plenty of them.

STEVE
Look how dark it is here of night?
(Looking at SAM)

CHORUS
Who?—Oh.

SAM
What you all looking at me for?
STEVE
So dark here of nights that if you light one match you got
to light another one to see if the first one lit. Make me
your mayor--

TOM
How about it boys?

STEVE
I'll see dat everybody in Jimtown gits lit up. I'll do
more den dat -- I'll see dats you all gits 'lectrocuted.

(WAITER enters with tray of food
and stops in front of SAM. SAM
takes some and makes hasty exit
attracting the attention of
STEVE, who follows.)

TOM
What's the matter now. Don't pay any attention to Sam.
Let him go.

STEVE
You make the speech Tom.

TOM
Oh, I can't make--

(Entire crowd leaves on right.)

SONG AND DANCE
"UNCLE TOM & OLD BLACK JOE"

I'M UNCLE TOM AND I'M OLD BLACK JOE,
I CAME UP FROM THE TIME LONG AGO,
MY NAME'S IN HISTORY, EVERYONE SINGS OF ME,
THOUGH THREE SCORE AND TWENTY. WE HAVE PEP APLENTY,
NOW WE ARE GOING RIGHT DOWN TO THE SQUARE,
AND WE WILL BE SHOWING THE MAYOR,
THERE HE SHALL START TO BUILD A CITY HALL
AND TELL HIM WHEN WE'RE COMING TO CALL.

CHORUS
WE ARE ELECTIONEERS, JIMTOWN ELECTIONEERS,
AND SINCE '61,
OLD BLACK JOE AND UNCLE TOM,
AT ELECTION TIME, WHETHER RAIN OR SHINE,
WE'RE DOWN AT THE POLLS WHEN THEY CALL THE ROLL,
WE HAVE ELECTED EVERY PRESIDENT SINCE '63,
THE LAST ONE THAT WE ELECTED WAS OLD BOOKER T.
IF YOU WANT TO KNOW, WHO MAKES JIMTOWN GO,
ITS UNCLE TOM AND OLD BLACK JOE.
(Exit left)

(Enter from right STEVE, dejected looking, followed by TOM.)

TOM
Ain't you a fine candidate for mayor? I spend one half the
morning trying to get that crowd together and the other
half walking them up one street and down the other to find
you to make a speech and when you get to the most important
part of it, you do a bonehead trick like that.

STEVE
Looka here, Tom, I wonder if dat was baked or fricaseed
chicken what he had on dat tray. Did you notice?

TOM
Listen here Steve, do you know this is Election Day and you
are running for mayor. Do you realize that?

STEVE
'Course I know. What you always asking me dat for?

TOM
Because at the last minute you followed a tray full of food
round here and lose those votes when I told you, you needed
them.

STEVE
Looka here Tom. Ain't Sam runnin' for mayor same as I is?
Didn't he follow dat man same as I did? What you talking
about?

TOM
I know, but you can't compare yourself to Sam.

STEVE
How come I can't? We're partners runnin' a grocery store
together ain't we?

TOM
I know but Sam is spending twice as much money in this
election as you.

STEVE
Spending twice as much money?
TOM
--Yes, and he's away ahead of you.

STEVE
(questioningly)
I wonder where he's gittin' the money from?

TOM
Didn't you just say that you and Sam were partners in the same grocery store.

STEVE
(pondering)
Yes, and that's jest what I am thinking bout too, we're partners.

TOM
And your profits are the same?

STEVE
Well dey ought to be. Mebbe dey ain't.

TOM
Yet you wonder why he's got twice as much money to spend as you?

STEVE
See here, Tom, you don't mean Sam is stealing from me. Do you?

TOM
Yes. That's just what he is doing and he has been stealing from you ever since you have been in business with him.

STEVE
What am I gwine to do about it?
(rather puzzled)

TOM
I have taken matters in my own hand.

STEVE
(rejoicing)
Well I'm glad of dat cos' you kin catch him. I can't. You is slicker den I is.

TOM
Quite right. I have sent to New York for Keeneye, that great colored detective. You jes' leave Sam to me. I'll fix him.
STEVE
(disappointedly)
No, No. If you done sent for a retective you is gwine to fix me. Dat's what you're gwine to do.

TOM
(impatiently)
Listen Steve, you don't understand.

STEVE
I understands better 'n you do. You is the man what don't understand. I understands flooencly myself.

TOM
Ain't there stealing going on in the store?

STEVE
(Drawling it out)
Y-e-s. And he'll come down here and catch the wrong stealer. That man ain't gwine to come down here and jest watch Sam. He is gwine to look up the first man he catches stealin'.

TOM
Why, of course.

STEVE
Well, I can't take no chances like dat, Tom.

You can't?

TOM
No, No, No.

STEVE
Say, listen Steve, I am hiring this detective to watch Sam, not to watch you.

STEVE
(rejoicing)
Oh, he is gwine to watch the man what you wants him to watch.

TOM
Why of course, ain't he our detective. But listen it's going to take plenty of money to do this thing.
STEVE
Well, if he comes down here and watches Sam and keeps his eyes off me, you can have all the money you want.

(Three groups of two BOYS each, enter from alternate sides; meet and listen to the remaining conversation.)

TOM
Fine. That's all I want to hear you say.

STEVE
All I want you to do is to git me elected and if you do I'm gwine to dance at your wedding.

TOM
And there's going to be a wedding Just as soon as you are elected.

STEVE
(Surprised)
Looka here, Tom. Who are you gwine to marry?

TOM
Why Emalaine?

STEVE
Who's she?

TOM
Why Emalaine?

STEVE
Who's she?

(The six BOYS come and half stand on one side of STEVE and the other beside TOM.)

"In Honeysuckle Time"¹⁴

TOM SHARPER AND CHORUS

EVERYBODY LOVES EMALINE,
SHE'S THE GAL THAT ALL THE FELLOWS HANG AROUND,
EVERYBODY KNOWS EMALINE,
WHY SHE'S THE PAL OF EV'RY OTHER GAL IN TOWN,
BUT EV'RY PAL AND GAL WILL SOON BE SINGING THE BLUES,
WHEN THEY HEAR THE LATEST NEWS.

CHORUS
IN HONEYSUCKLE TIMES SWEET EMALINE,
SAID SHE'D BE MINE, AND IN THE WEDDING LINE
THERE'LL BE NO HESITATING
FOR THE PREACHER WILL BE WAITING,
WHEN THE KNOT AM TIED, WITH "EMMY" BY MY SIDE
ALL THE FELLOWS WILL BE JEALOUS,
AND FEELING KIND-A-ROUGH,
WHEN I COME ALONG WITH EMALINE A STRUTTIN' MY STUFF,
HOT DOG, MY SOUL, GOIN-A-KNOCK-'EM COLD,
I'LL BE WORTH MY WEIGHT IN GOLD,
IN HONEYSUCKLE TIME, WHEN EMALINE SAID SHE'D BE MINE.

CURTAIN
Act I Scene 2

SETTING: Possum Lane

AT RISE: (Enter MRS. PECK and MR. PECK arguing, right.)

MRS. PECK
How dare you give me an argument?

SAM [MR. PECK]
(Following wife to center of stage)
Now honey listen. I knows what I'm doing.

MRS. PECK
Never mind, I don't want you to stand around talking to these girls.

MR. PECK
I got to talk to the women folk'ses in order to get their votes. Ain't I?

MRS. PECK
I'll solicit the women's votes. You get the men's.

MR. PECK
Not, if I can't talk to de women folkees den I'se sorry that I'se runnin' for de office.

MRS. PECK
Well, I'm not. Because if you are elected then I can run the town.

MR. PECK
(Surprised)
If I'm elected you kin run the town?

MRS. PECK
Of course ain't you my husband?

Yeh, I'm your husband.

MR. PECK
Well ain't I yo' boss?

MRS. PECK
MY BOSS?
MRS. PECK (making a motion towards him)

Ain't I? Ain't I?

MR. PECK (Running away)

Yeh!

MRS. PECK

Well, if you run the city and I run you, don't that make me run everything?

MR. PECK

Den all de power that I gits, dat jes' adds to yo' power.

MRS. PECK

Imagine me the leading light of the city running things to suit myself. Why the first law I'll pass will be to close up Jim Green's-Bevo parlour.

MR. PECK (Reprovingly)

For what'? The man ain't done nothing to you.

MRS. PECK

Oh, he's making too much money and his wife is wearing such fine clothes, why she's snubbing everybody. But you 'wait, my time is coming. I'll show her. I'll fix her. I’ll SHOW her.

MR. PECK

Yeh, but I ain't elected yet-- and Steve, he's gittin' jes' as many votes as I is.

MRS. PECK

Well, you know why. 'Cause he's buying them and you know where he's getting the money from. Right out of the cash register in your store.

MR. PECK

Out of the cash register?

MRS. PECK

Why, of course.

MR. PECK

You mean he's stealin' the money.

MRS. PECK

He has been stealing from you ever since you have been in business with him--
MR. PECK
(Tremendous surprise)
Is that so?

MRS. PECK
Yes. But he is through stealing now.

When did he die?

MR. PECK
Sam--

MRS. PECK
Yeh--

MR. PECK
I forgot to tell you.

MRS. PECK
Yeh go ahead--

MR. PECK
I sent to New York for that great colored detective.

MRS. PECK
(walking away slowly)
No, No honey.

MR. PECK
Yes dear, Keeneye is his name and he's wonderful. He's wonderful dear.

MRS. PECK
No. We don't need no detective hanging' round dat store.

MR. PECK
He's stealing from you. Ain't he?

MRS. PECK
Dat's all right. I'll catch him.

MRS. PECK
Well shouldn't he be watched?

MR. PECK
Honey, let the man stay in New York. Now I knows what I'm talkin' 'bout.
MRS. PECK
Oh, well now never mind. I have sent for him and he'll be here today, so you keep a look-out for him and for heavens sakes keep your mouth shut.

(JESSIE and RUTH enter right. SAM walks toward them smilingly. MRS. PECK spies them.)

MRS. PECK
Say, Sam, Come on down here to the corner where there are a lot of men. We can get some votes down there.

MR. PECK
(To girls whispering)
I'll be with you all in jes' a minute.
(To wife who is walking to right stage)
You go on down there honey and get them all together and I'll be there in jes' a minute.
(Walks back to girls)

MRS. PECK
(Following him)
Is that so? I think you'll go this minute. Sam! Sam!

MR. PECK
Yes, yes, I'se comin'--

(Exit together on left.)

"GYPSY BLUES"

(JESSIE & RUTH assisted by HARRY WALTON in second chorus.)

JESSIE
I WAS TALKING TO A GYPSY,

RUTH
AND WHAT DID SHE HAVE TO TELL YOU?

JESSIE
WHEN MY PALM SHE READ,
I ASKED HER WHEN I WOULD WED,
AND SHE SHOOK HER HEAD,

RUTH
AND THEN WHAT DID SHE SAY?

JESSIE
I DON'T KNOW BECAUSE I RAN AWAY.

(CHORUS)

JESSIE

NOW I'VE GOT THE GYPSY BLUES,

RUTH

AND YOU'RE SORRY THAT YOU DID REFUSE,

JESSIE

TO WAIT AND LISTEN TO HER GYPSY NEWS,

RUTH

MAYBE SHE WAS JUST IN DOUBT,

JESSIE

AN SOME LINE WAS TRYING TO FIGURE OUT,

RUTH

AND TRYIN' TO FIND, WHAT IT WAS ABOUT,

JESSIE

I WOULD GIVE ALL MY WEIGHT IN GOLD,

TO KNOW WHAT SHE WAS ABOUT TO TELL ME,

RUTH

BUT IF SHE HAD-A-SAID THAT YOUR SWEETIE YOU'D LOSE,

THEY'D HAD TO BURY YOU,

JESSIE

RATHER THAN TO START A RUSE,

RUTH

WHY YOU RAN AWAY AND YOU GOT YOUR DUES,

BOTH

THAT'S WHY (YOU-I) GOT THOSE IPSY GYPSY BLUES,

GYPSY BLUES.
Act I Scene 3

Setting: JENKINS’S and PECK’s grocery store.\(^\text{16}\)

At Rise: ONIONS is dozing on flour barrel with duster in hand. SAM enters.

Good morning Onions.

ONIONS

(waking up)
Yes. Yessir. Good morning. Yessir-- Well I see you is late again as usual.

SAM

(removing coat)
Yes, but dat ain't none of your business. You ain't no time keeper here. You is the porter in dis store.

ONIONS

Yessir. You is right.

SAM

You learn dat and don't tell me about me bein' late no more.

ONIONS

Yessir, rescuse me.

SAM

Never mind the rescusing. Jes' don't done it no more.
(Opens cash register just as STEVE enters)

STEVE

Ahem!

(SAM quickly takes chair and lights pipe.)

STEVE

(watching eccentric dusting by ONIONS)\(^\text{17}\)
Dey ain't no use of you dustin'. You ain't swept up here dis monin'.

ONIONS

I jes’ got here.
STEVE
You didn't reliver them goods to Miss Jones neither did you?

ONIONS
I ain't had my breakfast yet.

STEVE
You ain't carried dat barrell down stairs neither is you?

ONIONS
I was out voting.

STEVE
You gwine to keep on working like dat until one of dese days the police is gwine to come in here and arrest you for vagrancy. Go on carry dat barrel down stairs and hurry up. You is lazy dat's what's the matter wid you. The more we pay you the less you work. Got to quit paying you and you'll work better.

(ONIONS goes out and a CUSTOMER enters.)

Never see the man what was as lazy as you is.

CUSTOMER
I am in a hurry. I would like to get waited on.

STEVE
Sam, there's a customer.

SAM
Well wait on him.

STEVE
I waited on the last customer what come in here.

SAM
I waited on the last customer myself.

STEVE
Don't tell me. I waited on the last customer.

(Meanwhile CUSTOMER growing more impatient.)

SAM
I knows who I waits on and whose I don't. What's the matter wid you? You must be losing your mind ain't you? What do you think I am in de store for if I don't knows who
SAM (cont.)

I waits on. You make a man mad wid arguing like dat. What was the last thing what was sold in here anyhow?

STEVE

Huh!

SAM

I say, What was the last thing that was sold in here?

STEVE

Dat shows what you know about it. We didn't have the last thing what was sold in here.

SAM

Well I jes’ lit my pipe and I ain't gwine to quit smoking to wait on nobody.

STEVE

I jest got here and I'm tired. Look here, what do you want anyhow, Mr.?

CUSTOMER

I want five pounds of meal.

STEVE

You want what?

CUSTOMER

Five pounds of meal.

STEVE

Go on behind dat counter there.

CUSTOMER walks to opposite counter.

_AUTHORIZER_

(pointing)

Nothing gwine to hurt you. Gwine back der. Look in the third barrell marked "lime". Git yourself a sack and scoop and git five pounds of meal. Man wants meal git meal. Come in here arguing 'bout dat old five pounds of meal.

CUSTOMER stoops to get meal.

SAM

Yes,--and a man what comes in here and wants all the waiting on he wants ought to come in when we're standing up.

STEVE

(looking at man who is still scooping meal)

Heah, Heah, Mr, Straighten up der sometime. What's the
STEVE (cont.)

matter wid you? Man sends you in der for five pounds of meal and you gits five tons of it. Come on round from der anyhow. Where you git dat? Come in here and take all the meal we got.

(CUSTOMER approaches with a tremendous bag of flour. STEVE eyes it.)

Sam, do you think he got five pounds all right.

SAM
(looking at bag)
Well he ain't missed it much.

STEVE

You better weigh dat meal Mr. You'll find de scales over der,

(CUSTOMER goes in wrong direction.)

--I SAID DE SCALES are over DER. NO, Not up der. You is the dummest customer ever I saw in my life.

(CUSTOMER finds scales and weighs meal)

I ain't never seen the man as dum as what you is.¹⁹

CUSTOMER

Five pounds exactly.

STEVE

Well all you got to do is pay for it.

CUSTOMER

Well I was going to pay for it.

STEVE

If you take it out of here you gwine to pay for it.

CUSTOMER

Very well. Here is your money.

What you got?

STEVE

Dollar Bill.

Dollar Bill?

CUSTOMER

Yessir.
Ain't you got no change?

No.

No change at all?

No.

Say bring that cash register over here.

(indignant)

What do you think I am?

You want to pay for it don't you?

Yes, but I'm not the porter 'round here.

Sam, keep down the argument. Make change for the gentleman.

Come here son. -- What'd you git?

Five pounds of meal.

(has legs crossed; uncrosses them and recrosses them other way)

Ahem! Five pounds of meal. Hit 20¢ on the register. Git out your change. Got it? Now leave your name and address in case the register is short when we checks up tonight.

(CUSTOMER meets LADY as he leaves.)

These customers are getting as lazy as they kin be.

(spies LADY and jumps up)

Jes' don't pay any attention to them.
(SAM spies LADY and also jumps up.)

STEVE
Right here lady, right here. Now sit down Sam you wanted to smoke.

SAM
Now you jes' got through waiting on the last customer what come in here.

STEVE
At's all right, I kin wait on 'em all.

SAM
O you can't wait on 'em all.

STEVE
How come I can't? It is as much my store as it is yours.

SAM
Heh, it's as much my store as it is yourn too.

What'll you have lady?

BOTH
A large sack of flour.

CUSTOMER
Onions. Bring a basket. We'll give her the best meal in the house.

(Each places one bag of flour in basket.)

Here you is. Right here now. Do you want to take them with you or shall . . .

SAM
Don't result the customer like dat. We'll reliver the goods.

(puts on coat)

STEVE
Yeh, we'll reliver the goods.

CUSTOMER
Can't you send it C.O.D.?

STEVE
Send it who?
CUSTOMER
C.O.D.?

STEVE
Oh, he ain't working here no more. I'll take it up der myself if you say so.

CUSTOMER
Very well here's my card. Take it to this address.

STEVE
I'll be right there lady, jes' as quick as I can.

STEVE
(as ONIONS picks up basket)
Put the basket down.

SAM
Onions.

ONIONS
Ain't I working here no more?

STEVE
Yeh, you is working here.

ONIONS
That's what I thought.

STEVE
Yeh, but you go down cellar and bring up a barrel of molasses.

(To SAM)
What's the matter wid you?

(SAM and STEVE grab basket and are leaving when TOM SHARPER enters.)

TOM
Just a minute Steve. What are you going to do now?

STEVE
A lady jes' came in here and bought this flour and I'm gwine to take it up to de house.

TOM
(Angry)
You are going to take it up?
STEVE
I ain't gwine to let him take it up.
(both tugging at basket)

TOM
Can you beat that? You the candidate for mayor to be seen on election day with a basket in your hand.

STEVE
Yeh, but you ain't seen the lady.

TOM
(Disgustedly)
What's that got to do with it? Leave that to common folks and errand boys not for big men like you.

STEVE
(Conceitedly)
Say, I is a big man, ain't I?
(to SAM)
Go on take it up der.

SAM
I could have been up der wid it while you is arguin'.
(MRS. PECK enters and SAM immediately drops basket.)

ONIONS-- ONIONS.

ONIONS
(rushing in)
You called me. I knows dat.

SAM
Yeh. Reliver the goods to the lady. Hurry up she is waiting for dem.

ONIONS
(Puzzled)
Look here. The goods you jes' told me to put down there.

SAM
(Angry)
Yeh, Yeh. Will you reliver dem goods or will you won't?
(ONIONS leaves with basket. To WIFE.)
I'll be with you in jes' a minute honey.

TOM
(Standing with STEVE at right.)
Has Keeneye arrived yet?
STEVE
No. That detective hasn't come here yet and you said he was gwine to be here dis morning.

TOM
Positively said he would be here today. Say I got to have some more money.

STEVE
I can't git to it right now.

TOM
Ain't this your store?

(MRS. PECK asks husband for money. SAM opens register and gives money to her.)

STEVE
He lives in that cash register.
(Referring to SAM)

MRS. PECK
Has Keeneye arrived yet?

MR. PECK
No, he hasn't 'rived as yet.

MRS. PECK
Well keep a look-out for him. He will be here within the hour.

MR. PECK
Oh, if he gits here I'll see him.

MRS. PECK
(Going to door)
I'm going down town to do a little shopping. Be home early won't you dear.

MR. PECK
(escorting her to door)
Yeh, honey.
(waves goodbye, returns and goes right to telephone)
Hello! -- Hello!

(TOM and STEVE go to cash register. TOM stands at counter and STEVE opens register with which TOM throws can of baking
powder to floor and SAM looks around for cause of the confusion. STEVE passes money to TOM.)

STEVE
Say, I want you to buy some votes with dat money. Do you hear?

TOM
You don't doubt me? Do you?

STEVE
Well I can't say that I doubts you; but as much money as I done give you, I ought to be elected four times before now.

TOM
Now listen here Steve. To prove to you that I'm on the level I am going to take you right around the corner and let you see me spend every cent of this money in your interest. Now you can't beat that. Can you?

STEVE
And to shows you that I trusts you--

All right.

(walks to door)

STEVE
--I'm gwine wid you.-- Sam I'm gwine 'round the polls here wid Tom.

SAM
Go ahead.

STEVE
When I gits back I wants to find some of the store here, I know I ain't gwine to find it all but be as easy wid me as you kin. You know jes' leave 'nough 'round here so as I'll know where de place was anyhow.

SAM
And while you is out, better go 'round to the telephone people here. I couldn't git dis last number. I expects we owe dem a little something.

STEVE
You carried the last money 'round der yourself. Didn't you?
Sure.

STEVE
Well I knows we owes 'em don.
(goes out with TOM)

(Detective enters and addresses SAM who is sitting on left stage.)

MR. PENROSE
Good morning.

SAM
Good morning.

MR. PENROSE
Whom have I the pleasure of addressing?

SAM
Well you is talking to Sam Peck one of the owners of the store here and I am also runnin' for de mayor of de town. What kin I do for you?

MR. PENROSE
My card.
(presents card)

SAM
(After studying it)
Oh yes. You is the renettecive that my wife sent for?

MR. PENROSE
Yes. I received Mrs. Peck's letter so here I am on de grounds ready fer business.

SAM
And you is on the right grounds; cost all de stealin' dat is gwine on, is gwine on right here and what me and my wife wants you to do is to jes' catch my partner stealin'. Catch him wid de goods on him so that I kin rescuse him.

MR. PENROSE
I suppose he is in your way.

SAM
Well relittically speakin' yes.
MR. PENROSE
You know, Mr. Peck, it is always customary to pay something—in advance—in all professional engagement of this kind.

SAM
Yes, naturally I knows dat. Now, how much does you want for dis case.

MR. PENROSE
As this is a very important case I should judge about $100 ought to take care of it.

SAM
(Surprised)
$100 ought to take care of you and de case.

MR. PENROSE
Well that is very reasonable sir.

SAM
Yes you is right. And it is worth every penny of it if you catch my partner stealin'.

MR. PENROSE
Worth every penny of it.

SAM
(going to safe)
Money gwine out of here and don't nobody knows where it is gwine.

MR. PENROSE
It must be stopped.

SAM
It's got to be stopped. Man can't run no business like dat.

(opens safe)
Any time a man gits to runnin' business--$100 was it'?

MR. PENROSE
$100. Sir.

(SAM gives money to DETECTIVE and puts rest in his own pocket.)

SAM
Here you is now you understands everything, so jes' go ahead and catch my partner.
MR. PENROSE
(Putting hand over pocket where
SAM has just put money)
Oh, I got you old boy.

SAM
(with a look of scorn)
No, not me. Catch my partner. I knows I'm stealin'. I
didn't send for you to tell me dat.

(STEVE enters.)

STEVE
Sam, I stopped next door over to the telephone company--

SAM
(Jumping up and going to telephone)
Good now I kin get dat number.

STEVE
Yeh--and dey tol' me to tell you dat before you tries to
call up to call 'round,

(SAM bangs up receiver and
returns to chair at right of
stage.)

MR. PENROSE
Good morning. Mr. Jenkins I presume.

STEVE
Yes, Jenkins is my name.

MR. PENROSE
I was telling your partner that I represent the Cashmere
people in Chicago.

STEVE
Is dat so? I'm sure glad to hear dat.

MR. PENROSE
I am expecting a consignment of goods in a few days and
hope to do business with you.

STEVE
Sure bring your goods up here and lemme look at dem.

SAM
(Taking coat)
I'm gwine round to de post office here. I'll be right back.
(Goes out)
STEVE

(Delighted)
Yes. Stay as long as you like Sam. Wait for de last mail while you is at it.
(to DETECTIVE)
Say, rescuse me jes' a minute.

Steve
(Runs to door to see that SAM is safely gone then to cash register and gets some money. MR. PENROSE follows STEVE to the door and to the register. STEVE is just putting roll of bills in pocket.)

Now Mr, Cashmere I can talk wid you about dam goods coo I heard dat you all had come very good goods.

MR. PENROSE
(Presenting card)
My card.

(STEVE takes off hat, puts money back; fans head, walks away.)

Quite warm--

STEVE
I hope it gits no warmer.
(MR. PENROSE shuts register and STEVE hearing bang turns around.)
Say you didn't see Sam come back in here did you?

MR. PENROSE
No. I didn't.

STEVE
You ain't wid de Cashmere people of Chicago like you said, is you?

MR. PENROSE
No, I just said that to throw your partner off,

STEVE
(rejoicing)
I'm sure glad he don't know who you is cost you never would catch him if he did. You know he is kind of sly.

MR. PENROSE
I received Tom Sharper's letter so here I am on the grounds ready for business.
STEVE
All I want you to do is to stop all money from gwine out of here dat I don't carry wid me.

MR. PENROSE
You will have to pay something in advance in this case.

STEVE
I knows dat was coming. Now how much do you want in dis case.

MR. PENROSE
Well $50 to start with.

STEVE
$50 to start with? HOW much is it gwine to stop you? Dat's what I want to know.
(Goes to safe)
'Course you see where I'm gitting this money from?

MR. PENROSE
I'm looking at you.

STEVE
(Covering combination with hat)
But that ain't none of your business. You are not here to watch me. You are here to watch my partner. $50 did you say?

MR. PENROSE
$50. Sir.

STEVE
Well here's two brand new $25 bills.²¹ All I want you to do is to catch my partner stealing.

MR. PENROSE
I'll catch him. I never failed.

SAM
(Returning)
Got almost down there to dat post office and clear forgot my letter.
(Opens register and takes money)

STEVE
(as SAM reaches door)
SAM -- SAM. Is dat where you keep your mail all de time now?
SAM
Dat was a ver' reportant letter and I thought I would leave it in a safe place.

STEVE
Yeh, but dat letter was so reportant dat it done turn to dollars since you put it in der.

SAM
(Looking in pocket)
Turn to dollars? What you talkin, 'bout?
(discovers money, laughs)

STEVE
Is I right or wrong? Dat's all I want to know?

SAM
You is right. Reachin' in der right quick I thought I had the letter.
(Puts money back)

STEVE
Yeh, Yeh.
(SAM removes coat and sits down.)
Now you ain't got no place to go. Is you?

MR. PENROSE
Well gentlemen you will have to excuse me. I am going down to see about that consignment of goods.

SAM
Yes. Yes, don't be gone long.

Steve
(As ONIONS enters)
Sam, I am gwine to tell you something. You better learn one thing and learn it quick.
(ONIONS opens register and begins to dust counter vigorously knocking box to floor. SAM and stove go after box. ONIONS opens register again. STEVE goes over to register as ONIONS dusts safe.)²²
This here cash register is beginning to be a regular main thoroughfare. I'm gwine to pass some laws 'round here -
(ONIONS opens safe)
- O-N-I-O-N-S come away from dat safe.

ONIONS
I was just dusting it off, sir.
STEVE

Doing what?

ONIONS

D-u-s-t-i-n-g it off.

STEVE

You'll be dustin' it out in a minute. Come 'way from der anyhow.

(ONIONS comes over to left to STEVE.)

There's gwine to be passed some now laws 'round here. From now on anybody what gits anything in here day got to pay cash for it.

ONIONS

From now on?

STEVE

That goes for everybody. If Sam's wife gits anything here--she got to pay cash for it--

ONIONS

(snickering)

From now on?

STEVE

Yeh, and dem l'il things you been carryin' out of here you leave some change here for dem. Do you hear? If I catch you letting anybody take anything out of here on credicks--Out you go.

ONIONS

From now on?

SAM

No you is gwine den.

(ONIONS begins to dust behind counter.)

STEVE

Sam, I was down to the polls and Harry Walton ain't got a chance in the world to win dis election.

SAM

O, I knows dat.

STEVE

Either me or you is sure gwine to win--
Course we is.

And I was thinkin' if I wins I'm gwine to make you the Chief of police; dat's providing you wins it you gwine to make me the Chief of Police.

You can resider yourself 'pinted.

What you talkin' 'bout?

(ONIONS opens resister.)

Onions

(angry)

from now on, don't you dust anything but dem scales over der.--I'm the man what's gwine to win dis election.

What will you bet?

If you wins I'll ride you all over town on my back like any other horse.

If you mine, I'll ride you all over town on mine.

(rising)

Is dat a bet?

Sure is.

Come on. Let's shake hands, cost I se sure -gwine to win.

(MRS. PECK enters and approaches ONIONS.)

Onions, I want a large box of baking powder.

(looking on shelf)

A large box of baking powder, now let me see. A small box wouldn't do?
MRS. PECK
   (impatiently)
No. I want a large box.
   (pointing to box on counter)
Here it is. Here it is.

ONIONS
Oh, yes, der you is. Now wrap it right up.

MRS. PECK
Why don't you wrap it up? Do you expect me to go through
the streets?

ONIONS
Help yourself Madam.
   (MRS. PECK wrapping it up and
going to door. ONIONS stops her.)

ONIONS
Wait a minute. Jes' a moment.

MRS. PECK
   (Puzzled)
What IS the matter with you?

ONIONS
I must have the money for the baking powder.

MRS. PECK
Why the perfect idea? You surely don't know who I am?

ONIONS
I don't care who you is.

MRS. PECK
This is exasperating.
   (Walks to husband)
I shall tell my husband about this, Sam, I have been
grossly insulted by Onions.

SAM
   (Surprised)
Do tell.

MRS. PECK
He wants me to pay for this baking powder.

SAM
Oh, well honey. Der has been some new rules passed since
you been in here.
MRS. PECK
Yes, but ain't this your store?

STEVE
(sitting placidly at opposite side of room)
No mam, this is OUR store.

MRS. PECK
Say, Sam I haven't any money.

SAM
(Rising and going to register to get money.)
Whyn't you say dat when you first come in here.
(gives her money. SAM expresses independence but STEVE is alert to every bang of the register.)
There you is. Go on and pay for de goods. Do business right.

MRS. PECK
(After giving money to ONIONS)
Well?

ONIONS
(Misconstruing question)
Yes, pretty well thank you.

MRS. PECK
My change please?

ONIONS
(Flabbergasted)
How much did you give me?

MRS. PECK
I gave you $10.

ONIONS
(Looks in pocket)
$10.?
(discovers mistake)
You is right. You is right.
(presses register vigorously a number of times.)

STEVE
Onions, Onions, dat ain't no typewriter.
(MRS. PECK drops bill as she leaves. ONIONS picks it up and SAM takes it from him. STEVE jumps up and opens register and takes roll of money. SAM spies him and does likewise to safe, They both leave the receptacles open. STEVE stops short in door.)

STEVE (cont.)
Sam! Sam! Put dat back.

SAM
Well put dat back,

STEVE
Got to putting.

(BOTH put money back and crowd enters including JESSIE, HARRY, TOM, UNCLE NED and RUTH LITTLE congratulate STEVE.)

TOM
Steve, old boy, the next mayor of Jimtown.

STEVE
(Proudly)
I knows I was gwine to git elected, I knowd it. I knowd it.

HARRY
Accept my congratulations old boy.

STEVE
Sorry you lost Harry. Glad I won. Come on Sam, ride me all over town on your back.

(SAM and STEVE go out followed by TOM. Enter MR. WILLIAMS hastily seeking for someone and finally locating MR. WALTON.)

"RECITATIVE"

MR. WILLIAMS
YOUNG MAN, I'M SORRY TO INFORM YOU THAT YOU CANNOT CLAIM MY DAUGHTER'S HAND. BUT DON'T BE DEGECTED SINCE YOU ARE NOT ELECTED, BUT BY MY WORD, I'M BOUND TO STAND.
CHORUS
JIM WILLIAMS IS A MAN,
WHO ALWAYS BY HIS WORD MUST STAND.

RUTH
BUT WHY MAKE THEM BOTH UNHAPPY,
WHEN THEY LOVE EACH OTHER TENDERLY.

WILLIAMS
(Rather peevishly)
MY WORD, I HAVE PLEDGED,
I WILL NEVER HEDGE,
COME JESSIE--COME WITH ME,

CHORUS
HIS WORD IS PLEDGED, HE'LL NEVER HEDGE
BUT WITH HIM WE ALL DO NOT AGREE.

CITIZEN
(interrupting MR. WILLIAMS in his
endeavor to secure JESSIE)
JUST SUPPOSE THAT YOU WERE A LAD ONCE AGAIN,

CHORUS
ONCE AGAIN.

2ND CITIZEN
(interrupting likewise)
AND YOU WERE DISPOSED OF BY YOUR SWEETHEART'S DAD,
WELL WHAT THEN?

CHORUS
WELL WHAT THEN?

WILLIAMS
IT IS TRUE WHAT YOU SAY, BUT MY WORD IT MUST STAY,
COME JESSIE, BID MR. WALTON, GOOD DAY.

JESSIE
(To HARRY)
HARRY, MY HEART IS WITH YOU,
PLEASE DO NOT GIVE UP IN DESPAIR.

HARRY
ALL HOPE SEEMS TO BE IN VAIN DEAR,

CHORUS
TRY TO WIN YOUR LADY FAIR,
TRUE LOVE WILL ALWAYS FIND A WAY,
RUTH
(consoling JESSIE)
THE DARKEST HOUR IS BEFORE THE DAWNING
WHERE THERE IS A WILL, THERE IS A WAY,

JESSIE
LISTEN TO YOUR HEART'S TRIO WARNING,
LISTEN AND YOU WILL HEAR IT SAY.

"LOVE WILL FIND A WAY"
ENTIRE COMPANY

LOVE WILL FIND A WAY, THOUGH SKIES NOW ARE GRAY,
LOVE LIKE OURS CAN NEVER BE RULED,
CUPID'S NOT SCHOOLED THAT WAY.
DRY EACH TEAR-DIMMED EYE,
CLOUDS WILL SOON ROLL BY,
THOUGH FATE MAY LEAD US ASTRAY
MY DEARIE MARK WHAT I SAY,
LOVE WILL FIND A WAY.

- - - - - - - - - - - - - - - -

(This is the finale of Act I.)

CURTAIN
Act II Scene 1

SETTING: Calico Corners

AT RISE: TRAFFIC OFFICER in center of stage working a semaphore. CIVIL WAR VETERAN enters left with GIRL.

No use talking—

GIRL
Why didn't you start dancing with me?

WAR RELIC
Because I told you to shimmy, you turned around and did the cootie.

(Exit right)

UNCLE NED
(Enters on right. Walks around semaphore.)
Good morning, officer. When did you get out of jail? Say look here. How much you gets a week for dis job? Dat's what I would like to know.

OFFICER
(Impatiently)
Shuffle Along.

(UNCLE NED exits right.)

“SHUFFLE ALONG”

TRAFFIC OFFICER & CHORUS
EVERYONE IN TOWN IS ALWAYS SINGING THIS SONG, SHUFFLE ALONG—SHUFFLE ALONG, DOCTORS, BAKERS, UNDERTAKERS, DO A STEP, THAT'S FULL OF PEP AND SYNCOPATION.

CHORUS
SHUFFLE ALONG, OH. SHUFFLE ALONG, WHY, LIFE'S BUT A CHANCE AND WHEN TIMES COMES TO CHOOSE,
CHORUS (cont.)
IF YOU LOSE, DON'T START ASINGING THE BLUES,
BUT JUST YOU SHUFFLE ALONG, AND WHISTLE A SONG,
WHY SOMETIMES A SMILE, WILL RIGHT EVERY WRONG,
KEEP SMILING AND SHUFFLE ALONG.

(JESSIE enters left. TOM enters right, meets JESSIE in centre of stage.)

TOM
Well, Miss Williams, tomorrow Steve Jenkins takes his chair as the mayor of Jimtown. My candidate. Oh, but by the way, I heard that your father objected to your marrying Harry inasmuch as he lost in the election; and I am truly sorry for that indeed.

JESSIE
(Independently)
Well, that will never make any difference with Harry and me.

And I hope not.

JESSIE
Never in the least.

TOM
That's fine.

"I'm Just Wild About Harry"²⁵

JESSIE
THERE'S JUST ONE FELLOW FOR ME IN THIS WORLD,
HARRY'S HIS NAME, THAT'S WHAT I CLAIM,
WHY FOR EV'RY FELLOW THERE MUST BE A GIRL,
I'VE FOUND MY MATE, BY KINDNESS OF FATE.

CHORUS
I'M JUST WILD ABOUT HARRY,
AND HARRY'S WILD ABOUT ME,
THE HEAV'NLY BLISSES, OF HIS KISSES,
FILL ME WITH ECSTACY,
HE'S SWEET JUST LIKE CHOCOLATE CANDY,
CHORUS (cont.)
AND JUST LIKE HONEY FROM THE BEE,
OH, I'M JUST WILD ABOUT HARRY,
AND LIE'S JUST WILD ABOUT, CANNOT DO WITHOUT,
HE'S JUST WILD ABOUT ME.

STEVE
(Enters right followed by three
CITIZENS.)
Here's what I wants to know? Who got elected Mayor, me or
you all?

CITIZEN
You got elected, of course; but we elected you.

STEVE
(Boastingly)
And I'm going to run the town too. I don't care who
elected me. I ain't been augmented yet. Wait until I take
my seat tomorrow. I'm gwine to show you how to run the
town.

1ST CITIZEN
Don't forget your promises.

STEVE
What did I promise you?

1ST CITIZEN
You promised to make me the Tax Collector.

STEVE
Who?

LST CITIZEN
The Tax Collector?

STEVE
What's dat? Dat's the man what handles all de money, ain't
it?

LST CITIZEN
Of course.
STEVE
Well, there ain't nobody gwine to handle money in dis town from now on, but me?

LST CITIZEN
How come?

STEVE
I'm the Mayor. I handles all de money.

2ND CITIZEN
Look here, Steve, What you figgers on making me?

STEVE
Since when?

2ND CITIZEN
What you figgers on makin' me?

STEVE
Just what you is--nothing.

3RD CITIZEN
Steve, I want a job keeping the streets clean.

STEVE
Want a job doing what?

3RD CITIZEN
Keeping the streets clean.

STEVE
(Sarcastically)
Well, stay off of dem, then.

(SAM enters on right followed by the TRAINER. Runs around the stage with boxing gloves on.)

STEVE
Wait a minute Sam.

(Stopping him)
What do you mean runnin' up and down the street like dat? Ain't you got no sense at all?
SAM
I'm trainin' for the Chief of Police,

STEVE
(questioningly)

Who?

SAM
The Chief of Police.

STEVE
Where?

SAM
Here in Jimtown.

STEVE
Whose gwine to appoint you?

SAM
You is.

STEVE
Is I?

(Chuckles)

SAM
(Explaining)
Now wait a minute. Don't you remember der in the grocery store jes' before the election, you said if you was elected Mayor you was gwine to appoint me the Chief of Police? Don't you remember dat?

STEVE
Oh, I said dat before I was elected.

SAM
Der you is.

STEVE
If you ain't got no better sense den to pay any attention to dem election promises you ain't got sense enough to be no Chief of Police. I'll tell you now.
SAM
So that be's the case?

STEVE
Dat am the case. You ain't gwine to be nothing here in Jimtown.

SAM
(To trainer)
Is I fit?

TRAINER
You bet your life you're fit.

SAM
Can I whip anybody here?

TRAINER
You can beat anybody in the bunch.

SAM
No one is respeted,

TRAINER
You can lick anyone that's over there.

SAM
Give him dem gloves.
(referring to STEVE)

CITIZEN
I'm gwine to leave here

2ND CITIZEN
Oh, stick around--

STEVE
(Putting on gloves TRAINER has given him)
You is gwine to fight me for the job, is dat it?

SAM
Wells if the-job is worth me having, it's worth me fighting for.
STEVE
Well, if you whips me den I'm gwine to make you the Chief of Police.

SAM
(Curtly)
You don't have to worry about dat. If I whips you, I'm gwine to BE the Chief of Police.

STEVE
Well, you better send word home dat you ain't gwine to be der for dinner. I'm gwine to arrange for you to pass right on by yo' door,

SAM
(Practicing)
Wells you knows I'm a man that was born wid boxing gloves on.

TRAINER
That's the boy.

STEVE
And it sure looks like you gwine to DIE dat same way.
Citizen
(At semaphore)
Are you ready?

BOTH SAM & STEVE
Yeh

CITIZEN
Let's go.

"JIMTOWN'S FISTICUFFS"^26

STEVE AND SAM
CURTAIN
Act II Scene 2

SETTING: Possum Lane

"Sing Me To Sleep, Dear Mammy
With a Hush-A-Bye-Pickaninnny Tune"

HARRY WALTON

MAMMY, JIM FEELING TIRED AND WEARY,
MY HEART IN HEAVY LADEN, TOO,
MAMMY, THERE'S ONLY ONE WHO CAN CHEER ME,
AND THAT ONLY ONE IS YOU,

CHORUS

SO WON'T YOU SING ME TO SLEEP, DEAR MAMMY,
WITH A "HUSH-A-BYE, OH, PICKANINNY TUNE"
JUST LIKE YOU DID IN ALABAMY,
MAMMY LET ME HEAR YOU CROON
"GO TO SLEEP, MA HONEY, SANDMAN'S COMING SOON,
HE'S WATCHING YOU UP YONDER IN THE MOON."
THEN WHEN I FALL TO SLEEP IN YOUR DEAR ARMS,
I KNOW I'M SAFE FROM EARTHLY HARMES.
IF YOU WILL SING ME TO SLEEP, DEAR MAMMY,
WITH A "HUSH-A-BYE, OH, PICKANINNY TUNE,"

(MR. WALTON exits left and
re-enters left with a telephone
in his hand. JESSIE enters on
right with telephone also.)

"EVERYTHING REMINDS ME OF YOU"

HARRY
HELLO, DEARIE, I'M FEELING KIND-A BLUE,

JESSIE
HELLO, DEARIE, I'M FEELING LONESOME, TOO,

HARRY
BUT I'M TRYING WITH ALL MY ENERGY,
TO BE THE STRONG-HEARTED BOY, YOU WANT ME TO BE.
JESSIE

BUT DEAR, YOU MUST RESIST, EACH GROWING SENTIMENT,

HARRY

HOW CAN I EXIST AND WITHOUT YOU BE CONTENT?

CHORUS

HARRY

WHEN IN THE BLUES OF THE SKIES,
I SEE THE BLUE OF YOUR EYES,
IN THE TRILLING SONG OF A BIRD,
YOUR VOICE IS HEARD,
IT THRILLS ME, STILLS ME,
WITH LOVE'S ANGUISH FILLS ME.
IN THE WHITE FLEUR-DE-LYS,
AN EMBLEM OF YOUR PURITY,
AND WHEN THE BEE SIPS THE VINE,
I FEEL YOUR LIPS TOUCH MINE,
THE BREATH FROM THE ROSE,
YOUR PERFUMED TRESSES DISCLOSE,
EVERYTHING REMINDS ME OF YOU, YOU,
EVERYTHING REMINDS ME OF YOU,

(In the second chorus JESSIE
sings with HARRY.)
Act II Scene 3

SETTING: Mayor's Office.

AT RISE: Large table in center of room on which there are four typewriters at which four stenographers are working. SECRETARY is opening mail at left of table and OFFICE BOY is dozing at the latter's left. OFFICE BOY wakes up and reads newspaper in his lap.

DOORMAN
(Enters quickly with duster in hand. Approaches OFFICE BOY)
Say, what do you think this is, a reading room? Look at this office.

OFFICE BOY
Well look at it, you ain't blind.

DOORMAN
Now listen. Let me tell you something. You better get to dusting and dusting quick.

OFFICE BOY
Why?

DOORMAN
Because if you don't, when the Mayor arrives I will see that you get your walking papers.

OFFICE BOY
(Independently)
You don't have to tell me when to work, because I knows just when I wants to work.

DOORMAN
Well get to work.

(Gives him duster and exits left. OFFICE BOY does Acrobatic Dance. MR. WILLIAMS and MR. PENROSE enter.)
MR. WILLIAMS
(Adressing MR. PENROSE)
See here young man, do you mean to tell me that this Steve Jenkins is the type of a man that you advocate for the Mayor of Jimtown.

MR. PENROSE
Mr. Williams--

MR. WILLIAMS
Well I'm surprised. A man with your standing.

MR. PENROSE
Now, Mr. Williams--
(endeavoring to pacify MR. WILLIAMS)

MR. WILLIAMS
(Indignantly)
Oh, dry up young man. Dry right up. Don't you try to tell me my business. I'm one of the oldest citizens of Jimtown, a taxpayer, and have a perfect right to know why the City's money is being so foolishly spent. Who in the world ever heard of a city paying for the Mayor's valet? What right have we to pay for these five stenographers; and look at this office. Look at this office.
(Stamps foot impatiently)
Does it look like a Mayor's office? I should say not. It looks like some old woman's home.

MR. PENROSE
But you must admit, Mr. Williams, that the Mayor has some very beautiful stenographers.

MR. WILLIAMS
Beautiful and minus ability. Why everyone of them would have to have their fingers cut off before they could write shorthand.

STEVE
Jenkins, a Mayor. He's no Mayor. He's a nightmare. See here, he hasn't been elected Mayor three days when he's bought an automobile, engaged six chauffeurs, and we, WE, the City have got to pay for it.
MR. PENROSE

I don't blame you, Mr. Williams for thinking that way. The whole election is a fraud. At the right time and at the right place I will prove to the whole of Jimtown that Harry Walton is the rightful mayor.

MR. WILLIAMS

You will prove it, and who are you?

(DETECTIVE shows badge.)

Oh, I see.

MR. PENROSE

My position here is a very peculiar one. Tom Sharper hired me to watch Peck.

SAM

Mrs. Peck hired me to watch Steve Jenkins, and when I got here I found them robbing each other, and worst of all, my best friend Harry Walton being cheated.

MR. WILLIAMS

Cheated?

MR. PENROSE

Yes, cheated. As I said before, at the right time and at the right place I will expose all. For the present we better not be seen together. I would advise that you leave the office at once and leave everything in my hands.

MR. WILLIAMS

I guess you are right, Mr. Penrose, for I don't care to come in contact with Steve Jenkins to begin with.

STEVE

Jenkins, the Mayor of Jimtown. Some joke.

(Exits on left indignantly and banging door)

DETECTIVE

(Addressing SECRETARY)

Good morning Miss Secretary.

SECRETARY

Good morning, sir.
DETECTIVE

Is the Mayor in?

SECRETARY

No, sir, Not yet. May I take your name?

DETECTIVE

No thank you. I'll call later.

SECRETARY

Very well sir,

DETECTIVE

Good morning.

SECRETARY

Good morning.

(DETECTIVE exits on right.)

Doorman
Attention, his honor the Mayor of Jimtown.

Steve
(STEVE enters dressed most flashily followed by ONIONS, who has two pipes in his mouth. STENOGRAPHERS stand and salute MAYOR.)

What you waitin' on?

ONIONS

The hat.

STEVE

Reach up der and get it.

(ONIONS taken hat from MAYOR's head and exits right.)

At ease, ladies, At ease,--Secretary!

SECRETARY

Oh yes sir, your honor.

STEVE

SECRETARY!
SECRETARY
Oh yes sir, your honor.
    (running towards STEVE)

STEVE
Any mail for the Mayor this morning?

SECRETARY
Oh, yes sir, and there's one very important letter this morning.

STEVE
Important letter?

SECRETARY
Oh yes sir, your honor.

STEVE
Who is it from?

SECRETARY
From the President.

STEVE
Who?

SECRETARY
The President.

STEVE
Oh, you mean Warren. Yes, Yes, Yes. What did he have to say?

SECRETARY
He wants to make a speech here one night next week.

STEVE
Wants to make a speech here one night next week?

SECRETARY
Yes, your honor.
STEVE
Now let me see. Next week's my busy week, I can't see him. Any more mail?

SECRETARY
Oh, yes sir. There's a lot of mail this morning.

STEVE
Did you read it yet?

SECRETARY
Not yet sir.

STEVE
That's strange. Take the stenographers to the next office. Have them answer it, The Mayor don't care to be resturbed.

SECRETARY
Attention.

(STENOGRAPHERS stand at attention)
Forward march. Halt. Right flank march.

(STENOGRAPHERS and SECRETARY exit right.)

STEVE
(Walks around office, scratches his head, brings chair to center of room, and then replaces chair.)

ONIONS!

ONIONS
Yes sir.

STEVE
Bring me that chair.

ONIONS
Now you will find the chair right over there.

STEVE
I knows where IT is. I want YOU to got where IT is and bring IT where I is. You understand? Bring the CHAIR here.

(ONIONS brings chair to the center of the room.)
Now be went. Get to wenting.
(ONIONS exits right and STEVE deliberately replaces chair to its first position.)

DOORMAN
Chief of Police to see you sir.

STEVE
(Excitedly)
Huh!

DOORMAN
Chief of Police to see you.

STEVE
Chief of Police to see me?

DOORMAN
Yes sir.

STEVE
Did he have any papers in his hand?

DOORMAN
Yes sir.

STEVE
(Growing more excited)
Did you tell him I was here?

DOORMAN
Yes Sir.

STEVE
What did you want to do that for? You had no business telling that Chief of Police I was here. Why didn't you come in here and axe me if I was here or not? (Walking up and down)
Where is he? Out there at the front door?

DOORMAN
Yes sir.
STEVE
(Frightened)
He's liable to be 'round at the back door now. I don't know how to get out of here. What did you want to tell him I was here for anyhow?

DOORMAN
He said he wanted to see the Mayor.

STEVE
Said he wanted to see who?

DOORMAN
The MAYOR?

STEVE
(Amazedly)
I'm the Mayor, ain't I?

DOORMAN
Yes sir.

STEVE
(Independently)
Tell him to come in here. What do I care anyhow?

DOORMAN
This way officer. His Honor, the Mayor.

SAM
(SAM, as CHIEF OF POLICE, enters.)
Well, well, it dooz me proud, it dooz me proud,

STEVE
Make yourself right at home, Sam.

SAM
(Sitting down)
Now how is you runnin' things on the inside here?

STEVE
(Sitting down)
Oh, man. I'm the mayorest mayor that ever mayored anywhere. Make yourself right at home, Sam. That's all you got to do. Go ahead and make yourself right at home.
SAM
Don't worry about me, I'm all right.

STEVE
Der ain't nothing in here you kin steal. I got these typewriters all counted.
    (He counts the (4) typewriters.)
Yes, there's eight of them. Say look here Sam.

SAM
Yes.

STEVE
Is you arrested anybody yet?

SAM
(Slowly)
Now that's what I come down here to see you about.

STEVE
(Frightened)
How come you got to come down here to see me about it?

SAM
Well you will either have to make room in this office for the rest of the prisoners or build me some more rooms to the jail.

STEVE
(Surprised)
Jail all filled up already?

SAM
There ain't room enough down there for another man no matter how small he may be.

STEVE
I didn't know there was dat many criminals in town.

SAM
Well this ain't exactly a matter of criminals. You knows I gits fifty cents a head for every man I locks up.
STEVE
Well, there's one man I will give you fifty dollars if you lock him up--that's that Slippery Jim. He's the worst man in town.

SAM
O, he's a bad character, no doubt.

STEVE
BAD! He's so bad I'm scared to pass a law against him.

SAM
And I made up my mind yesterday to look him up.

STEVE
You made up your mind--

SAM
Yes, Yes.

STEVE
(Continuing)
Dat's 'bout as fer as you got, too, to make up your mind.

SAM
And for three solid hours yesterday I was chasing him.

STEVE
Didn't he catch you?

SAM
I was chasing him.

STEVE
I just wanted to know if you was the party of the first part or not.

SAM
No, I was the recessory after the crime. You see in the first place I chased him everywhere.

STEVE
(Interested)
Chased him everywhere?
SAM
And then I chased him everywhere else. For three solid hours yesterday me and Slippery Jim was just like this here (making motions with hands) all over town.

STEVE
Is dat a fact?

SAM
Yes.

STEVE
What do you know about dat?

SAM
And finally he tripped up and fell right in front of me.

STEVE
(Becoming excited)
Fell in front of you?

SAM
Right in front of me.

STEVE
There was your chance right then. When he fell that was your chance.

SAM
And I knewed it. And I said to myself "I'm gwine to unveil myself of this retunity."

STEVE
Yeh, yeh.

SAM
And just as I reached over der to get him--

STEVE
Just as you were gwine to get him--
SAM
Just as I reached over there to get him a black cat run right twixt us and I had to turn around and come back.

STEVE
(Hitting desk with hand)
I'm gwine to pass a law to get rid of all the black cats right now.

SAM
There you is.

STEVE
Black cats is bad luck anyhow.

SAM
Course they is.

STEVE
Whenever they commence conferring with the law, they got to go. Dat's all.

SAM
There you is.

STEVE
A black cat run right 'twixt you and duty.

SAM
Ain't done nothing else.

STEVE
(Taking pencil into hand)
Here's the first law I'm gwine to pass since I've been the Mayor. "Black cats must go." Black c c c c. Say, look here, Sam, how do you spell cat anyhow?

SAM
What do you mean? One of dem jes' plain everyday walkin' 'round cats?

STEVE
No. Jes' cat. Any kind of a cat. I don't care what kind of a cat it is. Spell the easiest one. You can't pass a law unless you kin spell cat. You know dat don't you?
SAM
(Puzzled)
Lemme see now--cat.

STEVE
Looks like to me anybody ought-to-could spell cat.

SAM
Well, if dey kin spell anything at all, dey kin spell cat.

STEVE
Der ain't but six letters in it.

SAM
Is you sure of dat?

STEVE
Well, I bet my money der ain't over six. I know dat.

SAM
Well, I kin bring dat down to five 'cos I knows the 'l' is silent, so dat leaves you only five letters for to deal wid.

STEVE
Yes, but I got to know what dey is and how to line dem.

SAM
Dat's right too. Well, I've been away from my 'rithmestic so long, I'm a little rusty on it now.

STEVE
Ha! Ha! I got it. You can't stick the Mayor you know.

SAM
Course you can't.

STEVE
(Proudly)
You know what I'm gwine to do?

SAM
What's dat?
STEVE
I'll draw one.

(Draws a cat on the paper.)

STEVE (cont.)
Yes and dat don't look like a cat.

SAM
Well, dat's all right. You kin read your own writin'.

STEVE
No. I guess I better call them stenographers in here and let them write dat law out. I'll let dem go to dinner though first.

SAM
Sure.

STEVE
Stenographers this way.

(STENOGRAPHERS enter)
Now you all been so smart today and to show you that I appreciates it I'm gwine to let you go to dinner.

STENOGS.
(Full of ecstasy)
Oh, that's lovely.

STEVE
I'm gwine to give you five minutes and I want you back in four. So resider yourself rescused.

STENOGRS.
Come on girls.

(STENOGRS start to leave in a hurry.)

STEVE
(Standing up)
Heah, heah, what kind of a way is dat for you all to leave the presence of the Mayor? How often have I told you whenever you leave the mayor's office you wants to slam the Mayor? I'm the Mayor you know. I got to be slammed.

(GIRLS salute him.)
SAM
(Rising and turning to instruct GIRLS.)
You might as well learn it now as to learn it later on 'cos you got to do it everyday here. Whenever you all is.

STEVE
Sam.

SAM
(Addressing STEVE)
Wait 'till I git 'em told. Whenever you all is--
(to GIRLS)

STEVE
SAM--
(motioning SAM)
You is the same as dem so come on down wid 'em. Day ain't but one power I'm it. You all kin went now.
(referring to STENOGRS)
You all kin went.

SAM
(Coming over to STEVE and raising BILLIE.)
Now here, lemme tell you something, You got to make some amendments to dat order. The next time dat I slams you, it is gwine to be wid dis. Now don't let dat lil'job git you all recited.
(goes back to chair)

STEVE
I was jes' thinkin' Sam. In gitting rid of dem cats. How we gwine to do it? Shoot 'em?

SAM
Well, dat's 'bout as good a way as any I guess.

STEVE
You'll have to lemme see your gun cos' I got to draw that too.

SAM
(With a sour look at STEVE)
You didn't have to stand no kind of an examination to get dis job. Did you?
STEVE
I got to see your gun anyhow, ain't I? The city furnishes you wid die gun, don't it?

SAM
Yeh.

STEVE
Well, it's the duty of the Mayor to suspect it.

SAM
Oh, de gun's all right.

STEVE
I know. But I got to know it's all right so I kin report to de Board of Aldermen that de gun's all right.

SAM
Jes' go ahead and report to de Board of Aldermen dat Chief of Police's gun's all right.

STEVE
I know Sam. But I got to know it's all right.

SAM
Dat's jes' what I'm telling you. The gun's all right.

STEVE
How do you know it is?

SAM
Well I got $20 on it in pawn.

DOORMAN
Some gentlemen from New York to see you, sir.

STEVE
Some gentlemen from where?

DOORMAN
New York.

STEVE
(Addressing SAM)
Where's dat?
SAM
I dunno. Dat ain't on my beat.

STEVE
Tell them to come on in here.

DOORMAN
This way gentlemen, His Honor, the Mayor.

(Enter 3 HARMONY KINGS followed by a FOURTH.)

FIRST
Now are you, your Honor? We want to see you about a concert in the town hall.

STEVE
Well you see since I've been elected Mayor I've appointed myself the Census Bureau. Therefore I got to know the nature of the entertainment.

FIRST
It is a singing concert.

(Enter FOURTH MAN.)

FOURTH
Your Honor, I used to sing with the gentlemen--

STEVE
Git away?

FOURTH
I assure you we shall be pleased to sing for your approval.

STEVE
(As SAM makes a hasty exit left.)
Go right ahead. I'll be in the next office listening to you.

(exits)
"SELECTIONS"
by FOUR HARMONY KINGS

STEVE
(Coming back into room the same time SAM comes from opposite direction.)
Here Chief, come on and tell dem 'bout old Deacon Birch and dat brown skin vamp down de court de other day. Dey ain't heard no scandal.

"IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN VAMPED BY A BROWN SKIN: YOU'VE NEVER BEEN VAMPED AT ALL"

CHIEF OF POLICE

DEACON BIRCH OF MT. ZION CHURCH, WAS HAILED UP INTO COURT, HE WAS BROUGHT IN BY HIS WIFE, I THINK, AND CHARGED WITH NON-SUPPORT. A SEAL-SKIN BROWN WITH JET BLACK HAIR, CAUSED DEAC' TO LOSE HIS HEAD, AND WHEN THE JUDGE CALLED DEAC' TO SPEAK, DESE AM THE WORDS HE SAID:

CHORUS:
IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN VAMPED BY A BROWN SKIN, YOU'VE NEVER BEEN VAMPED AT ALL. FOR THE VAMPINGEST VAMP IS A BROWN SKIN, BELIEVE ME NOW, THAT AIN'T NO STALL. A HIGH BROWN GAL WILL MAKE YOU BREAK OUT OF JAIL, A CHOC'LATE BROWN WILL MAKE A TADPOLE SMACK A WHALE, BUT A PRETTY SEAL SKIN BROWN, I MEAN ONE LONG AND TALL, WOULD MAKE THE SILENT SPHINX OUT IN THE DESERT BAL1. IF YOU'VE NEVER BEEN VAMPED BY A BROWN SKIN, YOU'VE NEVER BEEN VAMPED AT ALL.
Act II Scene 4

SETTING: Spencer's Lane.

AT RISE: SAM enters from right with lighted lantern in his hand. TOM enters from left.

TOM
Hey, Sam, is that you?
SAM
Yes Tom is that you?
TOM
What are you doing out here this time of night? Are you on the night force now?
SAM
I'm all the force.
TOM
Who are you looking for?
SAM
Slippery Jim.
TOM
(Surprised) Slippery Jim? Is he out already?
SAM
Never been locked up yet.
TOM
I thought that was the first man you looked up when you got the job.
SAM
No, Tom, I wasn't thinking about locking him up.
TOM
(Disgustedly) Ain't we got some fine protection? What's that you got in your hand?
SAM
That's a lamp.

TOM
Next to Aladdin's lamp, that's the oldest looking thing I ever did see.

SAM
Aladdin's lamp? What is Aladdin's lamp?
TOM
(Amazed)
You never heard of Aladdin's lamp.

SAM
No, Tom, I never heard tell of it.

TOM
Well that was the old lamp they found and when they rubbed it, a Genii came up and any question you would ask him, he would answer it and any wish you would make he would grant it. You see if that was Aladdin's lamp and you rubbed it and a Genii would come up and you asked him where Slippery Jim was he would tell you exactly where to find him.

SAM
No. Tom I don't want that--

TOM
Oh, but it was a marvelous lamp.

"ORIENTAL BLUES"

TOM
IF I ONLY HAD AN OIL LAMP LIKE ALADDIN,
WITH ITS MYSTIC POWER FROM ITS MYSTIC BOWER,
I'D CALL OLD GENII TO MY SIDE,
PRECIOUS STONES NOR RICHES, WOULD NOT BE MY WISHES,
BUT ON BENDED KNEE, I WOULD IMPLORE OLD GENII,
TO LET MY CONSCIENCE BE HIS GUIDE.
I'M SO LONELY AND THERE'S ONLY,
ONE PLACE THAT WILL EASE MY MIND,
IT'S THAT LAND WHERE GENTLE, ORIENTAL MAIDENS YOU WILL FIND,
CHORUS
I'VE GOT THOSE ORIENTAL BLUES,
I'VE GOT THOSE ORIENTAL BLUES,
I LIKE TO TAKE A TRIP ACROSS THE CHINA SEA
TO OLD SHANGHAI,
SIP A CUP OF CHINA TEA WITH POOR BUTTERFLY.
THEN SPEND A DAY AT OLD BOMBAY.
WATCHING THOSE HINDOO MAIDENS SWAY,
WITH A NIGHT'S REPOSE,
WHERE GROWS, THE PERSIAN ROSE,
AT DAWN ON AN ARABIAN STEED,
AT AN ARABIAN SPEED,
LET ME WHIRL, WITH A BEDOUIN GIRL,
THEN IN CAIRO TOWN, I'D LIKE TO SETTLE DOWN,
OH, I'VE GOT THOSE MYSTERIOUS, DOGGONE DELIRIOUS,
ORIENTAL BLUES.

(Enter MRS. PECK from right and
MR. PENROSE from left.)

MRS. PECK
Oh, you are just the man I'm looking for.

MR. PENROSE
At your service madam.

MRS. PECK
Mr. Penrose, you've been here a long time and you haven't
reported to me as yet. You were in the store and you must
have found Steve: stealing. That's how he was elected. But
still you haven't caught him.

MR. PENROSE
Oh, I caught him all right.

MRS. PECK
Well, why didn't you report it? He should have been
arrested at once. The idea of him robbing my poor husband.
He's nothing but a common thief. That's what he is.

MR. PENROSE
I caught your husband robbing Steve.
MRS. PECK
(Dumbfounded)
Huh! You caught my husband robbing Steve? Well, now who hired you, me or Steve?

MR. PENROSE
Can you keep a secret?

MRS. PECK
Of course I can. I'm a woman.

MR. PENROSE
Tom Sharper hired me to watch your husband.

MRS. PECK
Well Tom Sharper's too smart.

MR. PENROSE
Not as smart as he thinks he is. When I got here, I found Steve robbing Sam, Sam robbing Steve and Onions robbing the both of them. And I in turn robbed all three of them.

MRS. PECK
Oh this is dreadful.

MR. PENROSE
(Giving her roll of money)
Here is the money. Give it to your husband and Steve and tell them to be in the store tomorrow morning ready to run business on the level.

MRS. PECK
Oh, that's impossible. They have to be at the mayor's office tomorrow morning.

MR. PENROSE
No, not tomorrow morning. Harry Walton shall be at the mayor's office tomorrow morning.

MRS. PECK
(puzzled)
Well, I don't understand this Mr. Penrose.

MR. PENROSE
Well, come with me Madam, and I will explain.
(Walk off stage on left together.)

"I'M CRAVING FOR THAT KIND OF LOVE"
By Miss Little.

RUTH
I'M WISHING, AND FISHING AND WANTING TO HOOK,
A MANKIND LIKE YOU FIND IN A BOOK,
I MEAN A MODERN ROMEO, I DO NOT WANT A PHONEO.
HE MAYBE THE BABY OF SOME VAMP, OH BABE,
AT VAMPIN' AND LAMPIN' I'M THE CHAMP,
AND IF I ONCE GET HIM, I'LL JUST SET HIM,
BENEATH MY PARLOR LAMP. -- AND LET HIM

CHORUS
KISS ME, KISS ME, KISS ME WITH HIS TEMPTING LIPS,
(SWEET AS HONEY DRIPS) PRESS ME, PRESS ME, PRESS ME,
TO HIS LOVING BREAST, WHILE I GENTLY REST,
BREATHE LOVE TENDER SIGHS, WHILE I GAZE INTO HIS EYES
EYES, THAT WILL JUST HYPNOTIZE.
THEN I KNOW HE'LL WHISPER, WHISPER, WHISPER TO ME SOFT AND
LOW,
SOMETHING NICE YOU KNOW. HONEY, HONEY,
WHEN THERE'S NO ONE NEAR, MY BABY DEAR,
WILL HUDDLE ME, CUDDLE ME, SING TO ME, CLING TO ME,
CROON TO ME, SPOON TO ME, SIGH TO ME, CRY TO ME,
I'M CRAVING FOR THAT KIND OF LOVE.
Act II Scene 5

SETTING: Ballroom of Jimtown’s Hotel.

AT RISE: A scene in which various offerings are presented including the following:

“LOW DOWN BLUES”

MY HEART IS ACHIN’, IT’S ‘BOUT TO BREAK IN TWO,
MY HEAD IS REELIN’, AND I AM FEELIN’ BLUE,
I FEEL JUST LIKE A FISH WITHOUT A FIN,
AND FOR THE WANT OF SLEEP, I’M GETTING THIN,
IF YOU DON’T THINK I’M SINKIN’
LOOK WHAT A HOLE I’M IN.

CHORUS
I’VE GOT THE LOW DOWN, THE LOWEST OF THE LOW DOWN BLUES
SEEMS JUST LIKE MY CROWN IS SINKIN’ THROUGH MY SHOES.
IT’S NOT BECAUSE I’M BROKE WITH ALL MY CLOTHES IN PAWN
BUT SINCE THAT MORN’ I WOKE AND FOUND MY SWEETIE GONE,
WITH THAT MOURNFUL NEWS, I GOT THE LOWEST OF THE LOW DOWN BLUES. --
BELIEVE ME NOW THAT FOLLOW NEVER TOLD NO LIE,
WHO SAID YOU’LL NEVER MISS THE WATER ‘TILL THE WELL RUNS DRY,
THE ONE WHO TOOK MY SWEETIE’D BETTER LEAVE THIS SHORE,
OR THERE WILL SURELY BE SOME CREPE AHANGIN’ ON HIS DOOR.
I’VE GOT THE LOW DOWN, THE LOWEST OF THE LOW DOWN BLUES
SEEMS JUST LIKE MY CROWN IS SINKIN’ THROUGH MY SHOES
I LOST MY WEIGHT IN GOLD AND NEVER EVEN SIGHED,
BUT WHEN MY SWEETIE QUIT ME COLD, I NEARLY DIED,
WITH THAT MOURNFUL NEWS,
I GOT THE LOWEST OF THE LOW-DOWN BLUES.

FINALE
“BALTIMORE BUZZ”

THERE HAVE BEEN A THOUSAND RAGGY, DRAGGY DANCES,
THAT ARE DANCED IN EV’RY HALL,
AND THERE HAVE BEEN A THOUSAND RAGGY DRAGGY PRANCES,
THAT ARE PRANCED AT EV’RY BALL,
BUT THE BESTEST ONE THAT "WUZZ"
IS CALLED THE BALTIMORE BUZZ,

CHORUS
FIRST, YOU TAKE YOUR BABE AND GENTLY HOLD HER,
THEN YOU LAY YOUR HEAD UPON HER SHOULDER,
NEXT YOU WALK JUST LIKE YOUR LEGS ARE BREAKING,
DO A FANGO LIKE A TANGO,
THEN YOU START THE SHIMMIE TO SHAKING,
THEN YOU DO A RAGGY, DRAGGY MOTION,
JUST LIKE ANY SHIP UPON THE OCEAN,
SLIDE- - AND THEN YOU HESITATE;
GLIDE - - OH. HONEY, AIN'T IT GREAT!
YOU JUST GO SIMPLY IN A TRANCE,
WITH THAT BALTIMORE BUZZING DANCE.

CURTAIN
NOTES

1 Robert Kimball and William Bolcom, *Reminiscing with Noble Sissle and Eubie Blake* (New York: Cooper Square Press, 2000) 94-95. A playbill from the New York production lists the following cast in order of appearance:

At the piano.........................................................Eubie Blake

**JIM WILLIAMS**, Proprietor of the Jim Town Hotel...................Paul Floyd

**JESSIE WILLIAMS**, His Daughter.................................Lottie Gee

**RUTH LITTLE**, Her Chum..........................Gertrude Saunders (later Florence Mills)

**HARRY WALTON**, Candidate for Mayor............................Roger Matthews

**BOARD OF ALDERMEN**..........................Richard Cooper, Arthur Porter, Arthur Woodson, Snippy Mason

**MRS. SAM PECK**, Suffragette..................................Mattie Wilks

**TOM SHARPER**, Political Boss..........................Noble Sissle

**STEVE JENKINS**, Candidate for Mayor.........................F. E. Miller

**SAM PECK**, Another Candidate for Mayor........................Aubrey Lyles

**JACK PENROSE**, Detective.....................................Lawrence Deas

**RUFUS LOOSE**, War Relic.....................................C. Wesley Hill

**SOAKUM FLAT**, Mayor’s Bodyguard..............................A. E. Baldwin

**STRUTT**, Jim Town Swell.......................................Billy Williams

**UNCLE TOM**..................................................Charles Davis

**OLD BLACK JOE**...............................................Bob Williams

**SECRETARY TO MAYOR**........................................Ina Duncan
JAZZ JASMINES—Misses Golde Ciaco, Mildred Brown, Theresa West, Jennie Day,
Adelaide Hall, Lillian Williams, Beatrice Williams, Evelyn Irving.

HAPPY HONEYSUCKLES—Misses Ruth Seward, Lucia Johnson, Marguerite
Weaver, Bee Freeman, Marion Gee, Mamie Lewis, Marie Roberts.

SYNCOPATING SUNFLOWERS—A. E. Baldwin, Charles Davis, Bernard Johnson,
Robert Lee, Snippy Mason, Miles Williams, Arthur Woodson and
Bob Williams.

MAJESTIC MAGNOLIAS—Misses Edna Battles, Ina Duncan, Lula Wilson, Hazel
Burke and Paula Sullican.

2 The format of the book (libretto) follows the guidelines published by Samuel
French, Inc. Founded in 1930, Samuel French remains the largest publisher of plays and
musicals in the United States and maintains a presence in the United Kingdom through
the London offices of Samuel French, Ltd. (Other publishers also prefer standardized
manuscript format for submissions. While this is arguably the most common, due to the
company’s size and influence, other styles are similar enough to think of all styles as
standard with only minor variations.) The format emulates the earliest versions of
standardized print, in turn followed by typewriters. Maintaining the 12-point Courier or
Courier New font allows columns to align vertically rather than adjusting for character
size on each line. Adding the typeface to a small list of conventions that includes single
spacing within a character’s lines, double spacing between speeches, and standard
indentations for character names or stage directions allows for a consistency of
comparison across eras. Lore in dramatic publishing holds that a savvy editor or
producer could glance at a script and glean a basic understanding of the rhythms
associated with the work and even the potential running time. One rule of thumb suggests that a script will yield a performance time roughly equivalent to one minute per page of text. When considering musicals, adding a bit of time for each musical numbers (an additional 30 seconds per stanza or one minute per song, for example) suggests a formula for musical theatre. Thus, one might a performance expect *Shuffle Along*, at 84 pages of text plus 20 musical compositions in the score, to run approximately 104 minutes. Adding an intermission between acts would further suggest that a performance would end approximately two hours after the opening curtain, making for a lively evening. Additional formatting might also include numbering for each scene to assist in setting timing. For simplicity scene pagination is eliminated here in favor of sequential pagination.

3 Kimball and Bolcom 104-105. The set for the Jimtown Hotel utilized a small unit stage left to represent the hotel. The hotel itself is a relatively modest affair as is the set that represents it. The hotel is a small two-story clapboard building. The front of the building sports a porch with several supports creating another porch or balcony on the second floor. Photographs of the Jimtown Hotel set suggest that it had a combination of two-dimensional and three-dimensional elements. It appears that much of the front wall of the hotel takes advantage of the illusion of scenic painting to suggest door frames, windows, and other architectural features. A small platform created a step up to a porch, complete with supports and railing on the first and second floors. Above the opening for the first floor porch, the second floor railing features a sign identifying the business as “Jimtown Hotel.” These added elements comprising the porch would probably been constructed out of thin, lightweight wood, a common stage practice to save on
construction costs and facilitate scenic changes. Since stage directions call for characters to exit stage and enter the hotel, the façade would likely have been constructed using a collection of flats (muslin or similar cloth stretched over wood frames) rather than a canvas drop. The construction would have been sufficiently rigid to move easily. It might also be easily flown in and out with the porch added during scene changes. Whatever the method of moving the scenery, the solid framework would allow for enough strength to accommodate a door within the construction, making it possible for characters to enter and exit the hotel.

4 The Opening Chorus of this scene introduced the entire cast of *Shuffle Along*, which comprised nineteen principals and twenty-eight choristers (totaling forty-seven actors on stage). Surely, the choreography was designed to followed the entrance of each of the three sparring groups (either marching in parade formation or in unison to a four-square *march*): first the one group of rallyers for Jenkins, then two rival groups of rallyers (Jenkins vs. Peck), then a trio of groupings (Jenkins, Peck, Walton) which either moved in a circle formation or remained stationary. As groups accumulate on stage, so the heated competition between groups escalates, as demonstrated in the call-and-response, back-and-forth bantering of the groups. This noisy, boisterous, drum-beating scene ends with a Song, Dance and Recession of the Chorus, the Walton supporters getting the last word (“We’ll vote for Harry Walton, our favorite son…If we keep step with the hep hep and rattle of the drum”), leaving three characters onstage for the ensuing scene.

5 Standard stage directions, along with some idiosyncratic variations appear throughout the script. Traditionally, stage directions refer to the actor’s perspective when facing the audience. Thus “right” or “stage right” would refer to the actor’s right (left
from the perspective of the audience). Using simply “right” or “left” may refer either to a relative direction or to the respective area of the stage. By contrast “stage right” and “stage left” refer to the third of the stage to either side of center. The use of “right stage” and “left stage” within the stage directions is far less common, and may strike some theatrical ears as the equivalent of “hand right side” instead of “right hand side,” for example. An additional consideration involves “up” and “down” or “upstage” and “downstage.” Such terms are vestiges of Renaissance practice when scenic designers often built so-called raked stages that slanted toward the audience seating. Thus “downstage” represents the portion closest to the audience and “upstage” the distant portion. Imagining a grid of nine sections, not unlike a tic-tac-toe board, provides a guide to regions of the stage designated by combined terms such as “up center” or “down left.”

By referring to a hotel step, the stage directions suggest at least a partial structure to represent the Jimtown Hotel. Thus, as indicated earlier, the opening number would have featured scenic depth beyond that available by two-dimensional backdrops or painted wings alone. This stage direction also suggests that the surviving script is a reflection of the production rather than a blueprint for the desires of the authors. Other stage directions simply indicate an entrance or an exit. By adding left and right to the directions, it appears that these suggest a specific stage environment. Adding the notion of a step up when a step is not necessary for an entrance or exit might further suggest that the company had a clear idea of the materials available to them as well as the possibility that the authors revised the script to reflect what they expected, or knew, to happen in performance. Such revisions would have supplied a common point of reference, thus simplifying cast changes and facilitating the reconstruction of the production for touring.
Jessie Williams (played by Lottie Gee in the original cast) is madly in love with Harry Walton, one of the three mayoral candidates, and wants to marry him, despite her father’s dissuasions. But the more independent and high-spirited girlfriend chum of Jesse, Ruth Little (Gertrude Saunders) will have nothing to do with marrying because, as she sings, “I’m Just Simply Full of Jazz.” This musical number for Ruth Little and the female chorus of Jazz Jasmines is a literal lexicon of jazz moves that set the body into spurts of dynamic movement. “Everybody thinks I’m crazy, They think I’m plum mad…Lost all the sense I ever had,” Ruth sings:

When they see me shake, it makes them shiver
When I do a break it makes them quiver…

The chorus section of the song fully explicated the movement:

Just because I like to do a wiggle,
In a regular Salome style,
Just because I like to do a li’l wriggle,
Like on the Hawaiian isle,
‘Cause I kick like a donkey, jump way back,
‘Cause I act like a monkey, and ball the Jack,
And like Miss Minnie, I do the shimmie,
Keep my shoulders shaking until you hear them crack,
Just ‘cause you see my feet a shuffling…
I ain’t crazy. I’m just full of jazz, jazz, jazz,
Simply full of jazz.
Moves such as shakes, shivers, wiggles, and wriggles in the lyrics are full-bodied dynamic moves that generally fall into the category of Eccentric Dances—highly individualized moves that follow no set pattern but depend on the musicality and ingenuity of the performer to capitalize on physical assets that would set the performer apart from others. Moves such as the shimmie (forward-and-back movement of the shoulders, other body parts, or the full body) demanded that one or more body parts be isolated and moved to the rhythm, often in double time or half-time. Such social dances from the black vernacular as Ballin’ the Jack (the basic step in which hands are placed on bent knees which sway in a crescent path, moving side to side), with added twists and turn of the body) and Boogie Break (“jump way back”) are also referenced in the lyrics, as well as the shuffling of the feet.

The indication of character dialect preserves the dialogue of the original manuscript. To the contemporary sensibility, this speech pattern might conjure up the worst intentions of depictions of the American Negro as a stock character or stereotype. When dealing with dialogue, one must remember that questions of interpretation, intent and audience reception come into play. We cannot analyze the words in isolation. Certainly a skilled actor may render these lines to evoke the worst images of Steppin Fetchit or the cast of Amos and Andy. Evoking one of the most popular, and those who view it as a denigration would claim most negatively stereotyped, radio (and later television) programs represents a deliberate connection. Flournoy Miller served as a principal writer for Amos and Andy during the 1930s with some corresponding assertions that the flavor of a Miller and Lyles sketch might resemble the radio or television dialogue (Kimball and Bolcom 110). However, we must remember that the script
represents the creation of African-Americans and provides a cultural snapshot. While the company would of course want to please white audiences, the majority of the population after all, doing so at the risk of alienating other African-Americans would have been a decidedly short-sighted strategy. (Accounts of the performance history by members of the company suggest popularity among both black and white audiences.) Miller claims to have collected many of the verbal patterns through direct observation in a variety of public venues, particularly where men wanting to elevate the perception of their intelligence and worldliness through grandiose speech might instead mangle the language or slip into a malapropism. Contemporary debates concerning authenticity among African-Americans and the negative perception of “acting white” speak to the continuing importance of dialect as a concern. What, then, are we to make of the rhetorical style? Even the poorest actor might take the direction to read the dialect lines as neutrally as possible. Doing so gives the lines a flavor reminiscent of nuances found in dialects associated with regions, socio-economic groups or those within a given profession. As with any speech pattern, the speaker may emphasize or de-emphasize words and sounds in order to seem angry, more powerful or less intrusive, for example. The same holds with the lines in this work. Taken as a whole it seems highly unlikely that the creators of *Shuffle Along* intended the work as any sort of racial insult or complicity in racial subjugation. Instead, the script offers larger-than-life characters with memorable physical and vocal traits, then plays with various combinations of personalities and mannerisms. The fun draws not so much from parody, but from an exploration of a broad range of individual foibles and quirks producing laughter by revealing and exploiting
traits scattered throughout humanity rather than an indictment of perceived similarities of an entire race or culture.

9 As discussed in the introduction, the performance of a sincere love song by a black couple had the potential to produce scandal. On the page, however, the controversy is not as evident and the lyrics seem benign.

10 Although potentially a minor point in the scheme of the entire performance, the indicated exit and subsequent entrance both occur at stage right. Visually, that means that different groups of characters would pass one another and presumably acknowledge each other in passing. The resulting atmosphere might suggest a small town where all residents know one another coupled with the activity of the town square. One should also note that to this point in the script all indicated entrances and exit involve either the hotel set or stage right. The structure of the set would add significance to the movement and add emphasis to the characters using the doorway. Similarly, action on stage right tends to draw focus for American audiences due to the simple fact that as English speakers we read from left to right and the eye habitually returns to a viewer’s left (or stage right). Another consideration might lie with the positioning of the Jimtown Hotel structure. If the corner or edge of the set required placement in the wings or near a wing drop (also know as a leg or tormentor, terms generally associated with neutral drapes) the company might have discovered very quickly that entrances and exits stage left destroyed the scenic effect by forcing actors to move too close to the painted illusion. The positioning might also have meant that stage left movement proved difficult or impractical.

11 Kimball and Bolcom 100-101. A photograph of “Bandana Days” suggests a costuming concept that might recall burlesque or vaudeville, or even minstrelsy.
Costumes for the principals appear to be inspired by plantation scenes. The Chorus could easily come from the same tradition, here seen in satin or sateen costumes, possibly patriotic in color, with wide-striped pants adorned with rows of buttons. White or light-colored top hats completed the ensemble.

Sung by old Uncle Ned (Arthur Porter in the original cast) in a heavily stylized Negro dialect, and Tom Sharper (Noble Sissle), the political boss of Jimtown), with the chorus of fourteen singer-dancers combined from the Jazz Jasmine and Happy Honeysuckle choruses, “Bandana Days” is a nostalgic memoire of the pastoral Old South, they sing,

When our dads were courting our dear mammies,
They were sure some bashful sammies…
Banjos strummin’, they’d be hummin’ Bandana lays
And in the pale moonlight, They’d swing left and right…

Though the music is notated as a One-Step in 2/4 time signature (suggesting that the dance movement could consist in its simplest form of walking steps, one step to each beat of the bar, making it easy for performers to sing and dance simultaneously), I hear the music beginning in a 4/4 walking tempo, with a middle section of 6/8 time in which there are rhythmic licks similar to the tune, “Swanee River,” and a concluding section in 2/4 time signature. This ABA structure of the tune may have allowed the dancing chorus, especially in the middle section, to perform more sprightly tap dance steps. Photographs of the dancing female chorus in “Bandana Days” certainly suggest a form of unison precision dancing that was rhythmically vibrant. In one photograph, fourteen women in black satin, one-piece suits with a broad (white?) stripe running down the side of the right
leg, stand in line of direction facing audience stage right, with right leg slightly bent (in a
narrow a la second) and the left hand poised at the tip of the brim of the hat. In the
foreground, Arthur Porter in blackface, and wearing a light-colored suit with a straw hat
is lunging forward toward Gertrude Saunders; they extend hands to each other. (RS&B,
100-101)]

Another photograph of “Bandana Days” shows sixteen women standing upright
with their heads turned stage right, torsos facing the audience, and right knees lifted and
bent to a ninety-degree angle to the floor pointing stage left; a beautifully balanced
standing position that requires the head, torso, knees and legs to face in multiple
directions. The photograph depicts the chorus in the middle of a unison kick line: if this
static picture were to come to life, I would guess that the chorus dancers in unison would
drop the standing leg and repeat the kick to the other side of the stage, and perhaps
continue this pattern of stepping and kicking in line. [RS&B 128, top of page]

“Bandanna Days” is mentioned in a review of *Shuffle Along* in the *Boston
Evening Transcript* (31 July 1922) “Bandana Days is mentioned as having “an appealing
air, made doubly fascinating by the infectious voice and loose-jointed dance of the young
woman who joins in the chorus.”

12 In much of the script the appearance of the word “CHORUS” seems to carry
two meanings used interchangeably. The term could refer to the refrain of a song or to
the company of supernumeraries. Contemporary scripts tend to differentiate terminology
to avoid confusion. Frequently the book will feature all lyrics, even repeated stanzas, for
clarity of intent. When space is a consideration some beginning of a line followed by
ellipses may be used or a perhaps a label (Chorus) to confirm repeated text followed later by a stage direction such as [Repeat Chorus]. In many works, the names of the performers featured—for example, MEN, WOMEN, TOWNSPEOPLE, ALL—will appear above the choral lyrics to designate the type of chorus. The authors of Shuffle Along are less clear in their intent, at least if we go by the book alone. The “Opening Chorus” means a group of supporters and townsfolk labeled as a chorus. By contrast, “Love Will Find a Way” includes a chorus (lyric stanza) sung by Harry and Jessie. In “Bandana Days” the designation is less clear and one might rightfully draw either conclusion.

13 According to the Shuffle Along script, this musical commentary on the old black politics of electing Jimtown mayors, and performed by Uncle Tom (Charlie Davis) and Old Black Joe (Bob Williams), is announced as a “Song and Dance.” Since Davis and Williams were both skilled tap dancers, there is little doubt that this Song and Dance was a Soft Shoe dance, an early form of tap dance from the minstrel stage combining clog and shuffling techniques, performed to a slow 2/4 time which allowed for the 6/8 feel of the soft shoe-style jig and clog steps.

14 Kimball and Bolcom 104-105. A production photo labeled “Honeysuckle Time” reflects a tableau of a bride and groom on the step of the Jimtown Hotel, stage left, and eighteen women forming a semi-circle extending the width of the stage. Three of the women are standing to the left of the bridal couple, meaning that they are downstage of the hotel porch railing. The remaining women form two rows to the right of the couple with the downstage row kneeling on one knee and the upstage row standing in profile or three-quarters front. The effect of the choral poses has a fashion model’s “over the
shoulder” quality. The costuming for all of the women is nearly identical, emphasizing the choral nature of the refrain. The Chorus wears modest scooped bodices and three layers of skirt finished in a scalloped edge. Some women have a relatively simple lace head scarf attached which evokes a veil in appearance and effect. Other members of the chorus are wearing headdresses with stiffened fabric, looking somewhat like a cross between a mantilla and a high collar. The bride is wearing a slightly simpler and hence more elegant variation of the dress, fashioned as a true gown rather than bodice and skirt. However, the difference is minor enough that, depending upon interpretation the Chorus might appear to be part of an invasion of brides. Otherwise, in keeping with the wedding theme, the Chorus represents a rather large bridal party with a grand number of bridesmaids. Appropriately, the groom wears a formal with contrasting lapels and a top hat.

This musical number which is specified in the script as being performed by Tom Sharper (Noble Sissle) and members of the all-male Syncopating Sunflowers chorus (A.E. Baldwin, Charles Davis, Bernard Johnson, Robert Lee, Snippy Mason, Miles Williams, Arthur Woodson, and Bob Williams) is listed as a 4/4 Novelty Fox Trot Song. So-called novelty tunes were synonymous with jazz tunes: Father of the Blues, W. C. Handy, who toured widely with his blues bands on the black vaudeville circuit in his early career, recalled that before use of the term “jazz” became common, the music was called “novelty music.” (Handy in William Howland Kenney III, “The Influence of Black Vaudeville on Early Jazz.” The Black Perspective in Music 14,no. 3 (Fall, 1986): 232-248; 234) And the 4/4 Fox-Trot time signature indicates that the music, along with the
fox-trot dance step (which consisted of an odd-numbered sequencing of slow two-beat and quick one-beat walking steps) was syncopated.

In this musical number, Sharper dreams about his marriage to Emalaine that is going to take place after Steve Jenkins (Flournoy Miller) is elected mayor. Within Sharper’s wedding day dream, which is set amongst an idyllic plantation of honeysuckle trees, all four singing-and-dancing choruses of Shuffle Along appear onstage. A photograph of the musical scene (RS&B 104-105) shows Sissle, in top hat and full dress tuxedo, with bride (Allegretta Andrews, who appears with Sissle in a photo but is not listed in the original program of *Shuffle Along*) in a wedding dress with lace headpiece that drapes onto floor-length train, holding a bouquet of flowers. They are framed on the front porch of Jimtown Hotel. Stage right of the couple, standing and sitting, two lines of ladies in frilly skirts, veiled hats make up the wedding party. It is difficult to imagine that there was much dancing in this number, except for Sissle’s promenading before the chorus and back and forth along the stage, with his bride.

15 The setting and structure of the second scene of the show suggests a strategy common for musical theatre throughout much of the twentieth century. Typically, opening scenes capture the attention and imagination of the audience, often with large cast numbers. Scenes then alternate in size and scope (obviously allowing for individual variations in presentation, of course). Playing smaller scenes in a narrow downstage band before a simple backdrop, allows for more elaborate scenic changes to take place upstage or behind the backdrop, and thus out of sight of the audience. In this case the opening musical numbers and songs featuring much of the company give way to an exchange involving only two characters for the majority of the scene. The comedic
jousting in turn yields to a song again featuring only two characters, with some assistance from a third. On burlesque or minstrel circuits, a collection of these brief scenes comprised the middle section of an evening’s entertainment known as the olio. The concept of a variety of brief acts in series provided the model for vaudeville, the common popular entertainment of the late-nineteenth century, particularly the “Gay 90s,” through the early part of the twentieth century. While a complex combination of growing popularity for film, demand for greater spectacle on stage and an overall shift in audience tastes, among other factors, contributed to the death of vaudeville, vestiges of the olio would remain. The term “olio” or “olio scene” sometimes refers to either an interlude between scenes or a short scene, such as this one, that covers for a scene change or provides a transition. Several sources indicate that the term was derived from Spanish, probably "olla" as in olla podrida, meaning hodgepodge, a lineage that would make it appropriate for describing variety acts. The “olio drop” (also sometimes simply “olio”) refers to a class of painted backdrops sufficiently general that they may serve as scenery for a variety of scenes or acts. In technical terms, olio remains an alternate term for a roll drop. Such a scenic device allowed a backdrop on a long roll to unfurl before the audience in order to supply a quick change of scene and a convenient downstage playing space. The fact that the drop could unroll or unfurl from overhead (the bottom of the image would be seen first, then travel to the stage deck followed by the rest of the image) meant that an olio did not require the extra space or architectural complexity of an overhead fly system. A relatively small amount of clearance overhead was needed. Particularly during the vaudeville era, enterprising producers frequently painted olio drops with advertisements from local merchants in order to generate additional income.
Since variety acts required little in terms of a realistic or decorative background, ads were more than sufficient. Olio drops with ads might also appear in book musicals when producers looked to save money, wanted to earn extra money, or favored expedience over artistry. Of course, a company might also play such scenes before a neutral drape or downstage of the main act curtain. Today, a more common terminology, one that appears in at least one review of *Shuffle Along*, is “one” or “in one” referring to the style or amount of space of a solo number.

16 Kimball and Bolcom 110, 112-113. Photographs of the grocery store set suggest a combination of walls and drops painted to indicate age. The counter housing the cash register was placed stage left with sufficient space behind it for actors to retrieve props on a wall of shelves. A similar wall of shelves appears along the stage right wall. Items on the shelves run the gamut, albeit a small gamut, of general store or grocery goods. Cans or boxes are arranged for display. In practical terms, many of these were likely empty containers glued to the surfaces to form single units, thus facilitating set changes. Selected loose items would be placed by stagehands for use by actors during the scene.

17 Experienced actors and directors know that while much of their artistry involves the interpretation of a script, much that happens within performance remains the product of personal invention. What happens between words, phrases and lines determines how an actor approaches pace, rhythm and tone, among other considerations. Frequently the same applies to movement. Actors and directors collaborate to create stage business that contributes to each of the characters, their relationships with each other, and the overall mood of the situation. The reference here to “eccentric dusting”
could mean any number of things and could last for any length of time. Changing the moment on occasion, or even on a nightly basis, remains a possibility. Such moments recall the skill of great silent film comedians, vaudevillians, sketch actors and stand-up comedians, individuals who can take a premise and adjust it to the moment in order to maximize the reaction of the audience.

This scene contains several references to carrying items “downstairs” or going “down to the cellar.” However, the stage directions are not nearly as explicit as those for Act I Scene 1. Thus, when characters exit stage, a number of possibilities exist. In a common stage conceit, walking into the wings might serve for any offstage location not specifically identified by the scenic design. One of the photographs published by Kimball and Bolcom (112-113) is inconclusive about the function of the set. The upstage wall features either three windows or a door flanked by two windows. Actors striking a pose from the Act I finale obscure the view. However, much of the detail appears to be painted rather than practical, particularly when compared with a clearly three-dimensional pair of oil lamps mounted as sconces on either side of the center unit. If the upstage unit contained a working door, then this would have been the logical entrance to the grocery store set. Since a later stage direction indicates a door, one must assume that the unit was a door and that it was operational. Here we are applying the same logic to this set as evidenced in the directions concerning the Jimtown Hotel in the first scene. The door might also have served as the exit to the cellar on the logic that many buildings had external openings for root cellars, storm cellars and similar storage spaces. For the sake of argument, if the upstage unit was not operational, all entrances and exits would have been made via the wings. In this case, a simple convention of selecting one side as
leading to the exterior and the other as leading to the cellar would have sufficed. The conventionalized version of the staging would have resembled a traditional vaudeville scheme since most acts featured such traffic patterns. Another staging technique involves the use of an opening in a traveler (a traversing curtain on an overhead track) or gap in other curtains to create an upstage entry, but this concept is clearly not in play here. In the final analysis it is doubtful that the upstage wall was solely two-dimensional and one may absolutely discount the possibility of stage curtains since surviving documentation suggests nothing of the kind.

19 The difference between life as we know it and life on the stage, particularly a stage influenced by vaudeville sensibilities, shines here. Doubtless most of us would not tolerate such abuse masquerading as service. A staple of comedy, particularly sketch comedy, is an exaggerated response. The victim of a comedic approach endures poor treatment for the sake of repetition, a standard device. As the mistreatment is repeated, the victim would adopt an air of frustration with which the audience could identify or a rising anger often termed a “slow burn,” itself comedic due to its passing resemblance to life, yet with considerable embellishment.

20 Clearly, these grocers find it far more interesting to serve female customers than male customers. In addition to the exaggeration of the moment, the contrast in terms of the extreme shift in attitude and the sudden burst of energy contributes to the comedy.

21 Of course, the irony of the fictional $25 bill coupled with the overall irony of Steve distrusting his partner while he scams Penrose would have been clear to all.
With the earlier set up of the dusting business by Onions, we now arrive at the payoff, both moments would be comedic enough in isolation, but the second iteration carries greater significance since an idiosyncrasy now contributes to a plot point.

Kimball and Bolcom 112-113. When the script indicates that the entire company performs the finale, photographic evidence suggests that at least three dozen performers appeared on stage. A large chorus was not unusual in the 1920s and 1930s, but by early 21st century standards, this is an enormous number of people onstage. Casts for ensemble musicals such as Avenue Q may number fewer than 10 while even a larger endeavor such as Mel Brooks’s musical version of The Producers manages to create several groups of characters with only two dozen performers.

Partly because of the world of Shuffle Along and partly due to the conventions of musical theatre, it is interesting to note the strange confluence of forces in the finale. A love song might logically contain only the lovers, perhaps observed by a supporter or confidante. However, the entire town seems to be a part of this tender moment. Similarly, because it is the act finale, it needs to be big (hence the cast) and in musical theatre even intimate or sincere sentiments can be large enough to bring down the curtain.

The title song, “Shuffle Along,” which opened the Second Act was a song-and-dance number featuring the Jimtown Pedestrians, which consisted of all four choruses of singer-dancers. The Traffic Cop was played by the talented and versatile tap dancer Charlie Davis, who performed a high-speed buck-and-wing dance. The music is identified as a 2/4 One-Step Song, making it suitable for dancer-singers to step to the music while singing. The lyrics to “Shuffle Along” tell much of the dance movement.
Shuffle Along had just about every current dance step—except the waltz. Blake first composed “I’m Just Wild About Harry,” in which Jesse Williams (Lotte Gee) extols her excitement for Harry Walton (Roger Matthews) in the melody of a Viennese waltz. But Gee, rejecting the idea to include a waltz in an all-colored show, insisted that the tune be re-written into an upbeat one-step. (“I’m Just Wild About Harry” was later published by M. Witmark & Sons as a Fox-Trot Novelty Song), thus making it possible for Gee to step on each beat of the bar while singing. Gee was backed in this number by the six-member male chorus of Syncopating Sunflowers. Listening to the music of “I’m Just Wild About Harry” and imagining tap dancers Charlie Davis and Bob Williams in the chorus, I presume that it may have been apropos for the men to perform Time Steps and Over-the Tops—tap dance steps that are named by critics when describing the dancing, but never attributed to specific numbers; the timing and tempo of the music certainly allowed for these demonstration of some of the flashiest of tap steps.

There is yet another dance that may have been performed by the male chorus in “I’m Just Wild About Harry”: Carl Van Vechten, recalling the cakewalk dancing of George Walker in a Williams and Walker show, wrote: “The line, the grace, the assured ecstasy of these dancers who bent over backward until their heads almost touched the floor, a feat demanding an incredible amount of strength, their enthusiastic prancing, almost in slow motion, have never been equaled in this particular revel, let alone surpassed. The cakewalk has been revived by several modern performers and choreographers, but never successfully, except in Shuffle Along (the song was “I’m Just Wild About Harry”), and even then it was only a faint copy of the great Walker’s thrilling performance.” (The Writings of Carl Van Vechten, 5) Cakewalking in “I’m Just Wild
About Harry” is also mentioned in a review of the number in the *Boston Evening Transcript* (31 July 1922): “I’m Just Wild About Harry,” with a joyous swing, gives opportunity to burlesque the darky dandy—he of the proud clothes who struts haughtily in the presence of all but his lady-love, before whose charms he becomes so bashful that he must hide his eyes behind the protecting screen of his hat brim.”

26 Tom Sharper’s crooked manipulations elect his candidate, Steve Jenkins (Aubrey Miller) as Mayor, who thereupon appoints Sam Peck (Aubrey Lyles) to be his Chief of Police. Lyles might have won the election himself, except for the activities of his militant suffragette wife, Mrs. Sam Peck (Mattie Wilkes) who alienates voters. All this builds to a conflict between these two great comics which culminates in their celebrated fight sequence which never failed to stop the show: “Jimtown’s Fisticuffs” is a tap dancing boxing match in which Miller and Lyles, as two would-be mayors swinging and knocking each other down, jumping over each other’s backs, and finishing each round with *buck-and-wing* and *time steps*; this wildly choreographed but perfectly-timed routine, which allowed for section of improvised slapstick and pratfalls, lasted twenty minutes and had musical accompaniment, albeit improvised. A photograph of Miller and Lyles’ classic routine (Alan Woll, *Black Musical Theatre*, 68) shows them in blackface; one is in dark pants and vest, the other in light costume; both wearing long and oversized leather shoes and boxing gloves. Miller is grasping Lyles around his neck in a hold that makes his right fisted arm ready to deliver a blow, as Lyles is squirming to be released.

Another photograph of “Fisticuffs” that appears to be a staged photo shoot (RS&102-103) shows the pair boxing before five posed spectators (Richard Cooper, Arthur Porter, Snippy Mason, C. Wesley Hill, and Arthur Woodson). This time, Miller’s left leg
is raised and ready to deliver a kick to Lyles; but Lyles has caught the leg by the ankle and, holding it waist-high, lifts his arm over his head in defense. It is a wonderfully accurate depiction of the physical comedy the two had mastered by 1921.

27 Evidence exists for a rhythmic routine called “Syncopation Stenos.” This rather long scene takes place in the Mayor’s Office, around a large table in the center of the room on which there are four typewriters, behind which sit four stenographers who are working. An Office Boy (played in latter productions by the tap dancer Tommy Woods) has fallen asleep in a chair, with a newspaper in his lap. He is awakened by a Doorman who gives him a duster and tells him to get back to work. “You don’t have to tell me when to work because I know when I wanst to work,” the Office Boy retorts. Taking the duster in hand, he commences his “dusting,” which takes the form of a in slow motion acrobatic dance that began with time-step variations that included flips that landed right on the beat of the music (Stearns 134).

Steve Jenkins, the new mayor of Jimtown, enters with two pipes in his mouth, and proceeds to order his newly-hired staff of six-beautiful stenographers to take dictation—the only problem is that these beauties do not know how to take stenography. While the music for this scene has not been found, nor is there a place in the script where the number may have taken place. But the comic situation of having a staff of stenographers unable to take dictation by hand, and having only to rely on recording dictation by the syncopations in their (tap-dancing) feet, must have made for a gloriously entertaining tap dance number.

28 This continuing intermezzo features Jimtown Chief of Police (Aubrey Lyles) along with the Mayor’s staff and the Board of Aldermen supplying the modulation into
the raucous “If You’ve Never Been Vamped by a Brownskin, You’ve Never Been Vamped at All,” featuring Miller and Lyles and the chorus. Miller’s mastery of show business devices makes it a hit.

29 The Finale of *Shuffle Along* takes place in the Ballroom of Jimtown’s Hotel, where the entire cast gathers to perform the rhythmically infectious dance instruction song, “The Baltimore Buzz,” sung by Sissle while Blake and the orchestra “played like fury and the girls danced up a storm.” (Sissle in Kimball and Bolcom 93) The Novelty Fox-Trot Song in 4/4 time was the perfect accompaniment to the ragtime social dances (hesitation, drag) and jazz dances (slow drag, shimmie) that the lyrics, from the first word to the last, enumerate.