

"Minstrelsy on Record, 1890s-1920s"

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Society for American Music Conference, March 2011

Example #1:

IMPERIAL MINSTRELS WITH ORCHESTRA: "The Laughing Song" (c.1895-97)

Len Spencer, Billy Williams, George W. Johnson. poss. Dan W. Quinn
New Jersey Brown Wax Cylinder,

Interlocutor: The Imperial Minstrels, introducing their original minstrel first part. Be seated, gentlemen. (Music)

Interlocutor: Introductory overture. (Orchestra plays, followed by enthusiastic clapping & whistling. Following is in broad, "darker" dialect.)

Endman (Len): Well, Billy...

Endman (Billy): What issit, Leonard?

Len: Thas'a, thas'a very ferocious necktie that yo' got on there.

Billy: Tha's one hand...

Len: I-I-I bet I know where you got it...

Billy: Where, where, where?

Len: 'Round your neck! (great laughter)

Len: Hey, Billy...

Billy: What issit, Leonard?

Len: You'se very much intellectuality, can you tell me what it is that makes a, a coon dog spotted?

Billy: No, Leonard, I say, what makes a coon dog spotted?

Len: Why, his spots! (great laughter)

Billy: Hey, Leonard...

Len: What is it Billy?

Billy: How far this 'lectuality must go on... Did you ever notice down in a yard they's certain dogs that run around in the street?

Len: Yeah.

Billy: Did you ever notice how fast dey run when dey go 'cross?

Len: I do, certainly.

Billy: What makes dem do that?

Len: 'Deed I don't know, Billy, what makes dem dere dogs go so fast?

Billy: Why dey's in a hurry to get on the other side! (laughter)

Interlocutor: Mr. George W. Johnson in his great "Laughing Song" ...
(GWJ sings two verses and choruses)

(see other side...)

Example #2:

IMPERIAL MINSTRELS WITH ORCHESTRA: "The Laughing Song" (c.1904)

Len Spencer, Henry Spencer, George W. Johnson, others

Columbia 13004 Black wax cylinder

Interlocutor (Henry): Gentlemen, be seated! (Orchestra plays, clapping)

Endman (Len): I say, Mr. Henry, money is mighty cheap nowadays.

Henry: Money cheap, Leonard? Ha! I fail to get any of it.

Len: Why, you can get silver dollars for forty-five and fifty-five cents.

Henry: Why, that's absurd, nonsense.

Len: Everybody knows that forty-five cents and fifty-five cents makes a hundred cents, and you can get a dollar anywhere for that!

(laughter, whistles)

Len: Tell me, sir, why are the stars and stripes like the stars in the heavens?

Henry: Well, Leonard, why are the stars and stripes like the stars in the heavens?

Len (with great drama): Because, sir, it's beyond the power of any nation on earth to ever pull them down.

(cheers)

Len: George W. Johnson in his great "Laughing Song"...

(GWJ sings one verse and chorus)