

GOOD MINSTRELS.

Despite heroic work by the management to keep the didoes a dark secret, some folks learned that the New York Syncopated Orchestra would be in Orchestra hall last night. A good time was had by those who were there; and I believe the hall will be jammed when the orchestra returns—in April, if plans go through. The orchestra is not syncopated, of course: it syncopates as it goes along; and it went along on this occasion with so much unction and zip that those who went were sick with regret that all the seats were not in use.

In makeup, the orchestra is something of a throwback, I infer, to the beginnings of blackface minstrelsy—the days of Dumbledon's Serenaders and the Christy troupes of legend and tradition, if not of history. The entertainment of last night suggested what is still called the "first part," although far less formal than the ordered and balanced crescent staged by the Dockstaders, the Primroses, and other burnt-cork entrepreneurs in memory. Violins, cellos, and basses there were, with banjos, banjos, and banjos, and a little brass; a piano on either flank, and drums with trimmings. Six or eight men were there to sing; and, then, everybody in the orchestra sang. Will Marion Cook conducted; but he was not uppish

about his job, and at times turned it over to others.

What did they play? Well, some Brahms, and some Dvorak, among other things, including Negro, negro-id, and Nigger tunes. A man pumped a sinister sliphorn, and elicited a lovely, warm tone from it. A lady named Mazie Mullins was just as good on a saxophone. Quartets sang: not since the days of Fisk's cantors had I heard anything so good in kind as one quartet in Burleigh's transcription of real camp-meeting tune, "It's Me, O Lord!" Of formal, planned comedy there was little save when the timpany-boy was put to the fore for an exhibition of third-rail jazzbo; and he was a revelation.

The musical quality of the proceedings was distinctly good; the strings were in tune, and of fine tone; Pitch was the middle-name of all who took part; and through it all ran the amazing Negro feeling for rhythm and pulse and life.

A good show, this; and it is a pity that the public was not let in on it:—F. D., Chicago Tribune, Feb. 13, 1919.