Williams, Bert

(b. c. 1876, New Providence, Bahamas--d. March 4, 1922, New York City), American comedian who portrayed the slow-witted, shuffling black man that was then a standard role in vaudeville.

As a child Williams went to California with his family and worked in the mining and lumber camps of the West. In 1895 his partnership with George W. Walker began. They became one of the most successful comedy teams of their era; within a year they were appearing in New York City, where their song "Good Morning Carrie" became famous. In 1903 the partnership had graduated to full-scale musical comedy. The all-black show *In Dahomey* was a Broadway success and in London the following year played a command performance at Buckingham Palace. Other successes followed, notably *Abyssinia* (1906), *Bandanna Land* (1908), and *Mr. Lode of Koal* (1909). After Walker's death in 1909, Williams became a regular comic in the shows of Florenz Ziegfeld, starring in the *Follies* from 1910 through 1919 and writing much of his own material. Of his many musical compositions, "Nobody" (1905), with its wry, fatalistic lyric, is probably the best example of his work.

**BIBLIOGRAPHY.**