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PIANO RAGTIME: A MUSICAL AND CULTURAL STUDY

by

EDWARD A. BERLIN

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate  
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1976

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Music in satisfaction of the dissertation requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

PIANO RAGTIME: A MUSICAL AND CULTURAL STUDY

by

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Adviser: Professor H. Wiley Hitchcock

This study establishes an overview of piano ragtime, a perspective within which individual achievements and historical trends can be discerned and evaluated. There are three sections: (1) a survey of commentary from 1886 to 1929 to determine how ragtime was considered by its contemporaries; (2) a musical study tracing ragtime's evolution to 1920; (3) a survey of writings from 1930 to 1975 to discover how modern ideas on ragtime developed.

Part One demonstrates that the term "ragtime" was applied broadly to syncopated popular music (songs and instrumentals) and to dances done to this music; the song was considered the most significant form. Originally, ragtime was identified as black music, but by 1903 it had lost much of its racial restriction and gradually became accepted as America's most representative popular music.

There was no consensus on where ragtime began, but it was generally agreed that black Americans were its originators. Efforts to explain the derivation of the word "ragtime" produced many fanciful theories, but in all likelihood the term developed simply as a description of the uneven, "ragged" effect of the music's syncopated rhythm.

Attitudes expressed about ragtime were vehement, both in opposition and in support. To some, since the American black represented an extension of the African savage, ragtime represented a threat to "good music," to morality, and to civilization. Efforts were made to discourage the music's propagation and to ban it. In contrast, those who favored ragtime argued that it was an innovative force in music, that it captured the American spirit, and that it should be used to create a national style of serious composition.

Piano ragtime, the focus of Part Two, has three basic manifestations: keyboard performances of ragtime songs, "ragging the classics" and other existing music, and piano ragtime composition. The last of these--represented in thousands of existing sheet music publications--is examined in detail, over one thousand compositions being analyzed to determine the evolution of the style. Formal and harmonic conventions stem from the ballroom march of the 1880s and '90s. The characteristic syncopation evolved from ethnic mannerisms used on the minstrel stage and from Negro character pieces.

Two basic types of ragtime syncopation developed: (1) syncopation restricted to each half of a measure; (2) syncopation tied across the center of a measure. The first of these was the dominant type from 1897 to 1901; the second, from 1902 on. A third type of rhythm, known as "secondary ragtime," having an effect of shifting, nonagogic accents, was important from 1907 on. The decline of ragtime, the loss of its distinctiveness, came in the 1910s with the music's acquisition of new rhythmic characteristics--dotted and nonsyncopated rhythms--and the influence of blues; by the end of the decade, ragtime had become known as "jazz."

Part Three surveys commentary from 1930 to 1975 to trace the formation of current ideas on ragtime and to evaluate style classifications developed by modern critics. The movement that initiated the historical concern with piano ragtime (at the same time attributing to the piano style greater importance than to the vocal style), was the "ragtime revival" of the 1940s. Two areas of study that developed from that movement--biographical research, and the location and duplication of sources (sheet music, records, piano rolls)--have been productive. A third, the categorization of piano styles, has been severely deficient. Style classifications have been established with subjective, non-musical terminology; lacking historical and musical justification, these labels have created distorted views that, going

unrefuted, have gained authority. As an alternative to these impressionistic methods, the analytic approach illustrated in this paper could be advantageously applied to other areas of ragtime study.

## PREFACE

To a great extent, this paper was written to satisfy my own curiosity. Several years ago, while preparing to teach a course in the history of jazz, I purchased several folios of piano rags. In playing through the music I quickly recognized the basic patterns of ragtime; more gradually, I grew to appreciate the special qualities of Scott Joplin, a composer I had previously known through a single work, the Maple Leaf Rag. The publication of The Collected Works of Scott Joplin,<sup>1</sup> issued several months after I had begun my investigations of ragtime, had the dual effect of satisfying my immediate curiosity about Joplin's music and, at the same time, provoking new questions of how these works fit into the musical context of the time. Thus began the process that led to the present dissertation.

But this is not a study of Scott Joplin nor of any other individual composer. It is an attempt to take a

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<sup>1</sup>Ed. Vera Brodsky Lawrence; ed. consultant, Richard Jackson; vol. I: Works for Piano, Introduction by Rudi Blesh (also in vol. II); vol. II: Works for Voice, Preface by Carman Moore (New York: New York Public Library, 1971).

broad look at the entire scope of piano ragtime, an effort to fill in the background required for understanding and evaluating the music. To this end I examined over one thousand samples of ragtime, analyzing each piece individually and statistically, and an uncounted quantity of related music. From the accumulated data it has been possible to trace ragtime's evolution and trends, and to discern the style's relationships to other music of the period. This musical study, which has been central to my concern with ragtime, forms the middle section of the present paper, designated Part Two.

Unexpectedly, my efforts to perceive ragtime as it was understood during the ragtime era--a period extending, roughly, from 1896 to 1920--led me to a consideration of extramusical matters, of ragtime's position in the cultural and intellectual life of the period. While this consideration was originally anticipated to be of a minor, introductory nature, it gradually developed into a major portion of the thesis, forming Part One. Adding perspectives to the understanding of the music, this facet also reveals some significant musical-sociological issues that transcend the immediate concerns of ragtime.

The realization that ragtime's meaning had changed, that it was no longer perceived as it was a half-century ago, suggested a new area to be investigated. This final

inquiry, constituting Part Three, traces commentary from 1930 to the present in an effort to detect the reasons for the altered attitudes and the means by which these changes were effected. Implicit in this literary survey is an evaluation of modern writings, for the evolution in thought brought with it many ideas that are historically and musically unjustified.

While ragtime is a product of recent history, the materials of the movement are already scarce; the sheet music and magazines, once purchased so easily for a few cents, were disposed of just as casually. It was therefore necessary for me to rely upon a few depositories where these materials were retained. In a prophetic statement, cited later in these pages, a defender of ragtime in 1899 suggested that the day would come when scholars would sit in libraries sifting through these dusty remnants of a not-so-distant past. As my researches brought me to fulfill this prophecy, it seems appropriate that my acknowledgments of gratitude begin with recognition of the particular institutions where I worked. My searches took me to the Library of Congress, to several libraries at colleges in the City University of New York, and to three branches of the New York Public Library: the General Research Division, the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture, and the Lincoln Center Library for the Performing Arts. It is at

this last branch that I did most of my work, and my appreciation is extended to the staff of the reference collections for its assistance. For special efforts made in helping me obtain several rare items, my gratitude is extended also to Professor William Shank of the Graduate Center Library of the City University of New York.

There is yet one further library to acknowledge, one with materials not found in any of the above, and that is the extraordinary private collection of David Jasen. Generously put at my disposal, Jasen's archives more than once produced treasured items thought to be irretrievably lost.

The assistance of my dissertation Readers, Dr. Eileen Southern and Dr. William B. Kimmel, has been invaluable. Their incisive criticisms and suggestions during the late stages of my writing have done much to shape the final version. A special indebtedness is owed to my Adviser, Dr. H. Wiley Hitchcock. It was his encouragement, a decade ago, which directed me to musicology, and it was he who gave me my first opportunities to practice this profession. Now he has again come to my aid, this time as the ideal dissertation Adviser; critical of lapses in logic and organization, unwavering in maintaining standards, he has been just as scrupulous in avoiding the imposition of his own ideas and predilections, permitting me free rein in the

development of my thesis.

Most of all is the gratitude owed to my wife, Andrée de Plata, not only for a spouse's understanding and support, indispensable to a project of this magnitude, but for her material assistance as well. In addition to performing yeoman's service in the preparation of musical examples, she has been continuously involved in the paper's growth; applying her considerable editorial and literary abilities, she has read every word, challenged every questionable idea, sought to sensitize a musician's ear to the cadences of language. To whatever extent the following pages succeed in conveying their message, it is to her efforts.

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PART ONE

THE RAGTIME ERA: PERCEPTIONS OF THE MUSIC

## CHAPTER I

### THE SCOPE OF RAGTIME

In 1974, seventy-two years after its publication, Scott Joplin's piano rag The Entertainer swept the country, reaching the number three spot in Billboard's survey of best-selling "singles" records. Promoted by the award-winning film score for The Sting, this piece led the return of ragtime to a prominence in American popular culture unequalled since the first two decades of the century.

But the present interest does not quite parallel the original ragtime phenomenon, for the musical emphasis has shifted. Had Billboard made a survey of favorite rags in 1902, the list probably would have included Mister Johnson, Turn Me Loose, All Coons Look Alike to Me, My Coal Black Lady, Hello! Ma Baby, and Under the Bamboo Tree. All songs! Today, in contrast, ragtime is generally thought of as piano music, especially that of Scott Joplin, Joe Lamb, James Scott, and a few others. While such

ensemble versions as The Red Back Book<sup>1</sup> have demonstrated how vibrant ragtime can be on other mediums, the keyboard remains at the center of the present-day conception of the genre.

Clearly, if the contemporaries of that past period perceived ragtime primarily in its vocal forms, then ours is an altered view. Neither is this current view a misconception held only by an uninformed, lay public; it is shared as well by prominent specialists in ragtime and American music. Max Morath, a leading ragtime scholar and entertainer, recently announced on television:

Ragtime though, essentially, at least in the early days, was a music for the keyboard. And that, of course, means the piano.<sup>2</sup>

Many publications, too, of both scholarly and popular orientation, expound similar views:

It is noteworthy that from the time of its origin rag music seems to have been associated primarily with the piano.<sup>3</sup>

. . . ragtime is essentially music for the piano. Ragtime may be described as the application of systematic syncopation to piano playing and composition.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Angel S-36060.

<sup>2</sup>WNET, "Ragtime," 5 October 1974.

<sup>3</sup>Eileen Southern, The Music of Black Americans: A History (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1971), p. 312.

<sup>4</sup>Gilbert Chase, America's Music from the Pilgrims to the Present, 2d ed., rev. (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1966), p. 434.

It [ragtime] was basically a piano music, conforming to the universal properties of the instrument.<sup>5</sup>

[Ragtime] is a relatively formal music, originally designed for the piano.<sup>6</sup>

The two books devoted exclusively to ragtime, They All Played Ragtime and The Art of Ragtime,<sup>7</sup> acknowledge the existence of other manifestations of ragtime, but are concerned primarily with the piano phase. The present study, too, is directed toward piano ragtime, but to place this genre into its true musical, cultural, and historical perspective, the other--and in many ways more pervasive--forms are also explored.

Part One examines how the contemporaries of the ragtime era--the years from about 1896 to 1920--perceived the various aspects of this music. Forming the four chapters in this Part, the main issues considered are: (1) the contemporary understanding and identification of ragtime; (2) the contemporary conception of the origins of

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<sup>5</sup>Ben Sidran, Black Talk (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p. 27.

<sup>6</sup>Martin Williams, Where's the Melody? rev. ed. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1969), p. 88.

<sup>7</sup>Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, They All Played Ragtime (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1950; 4th ed., rev., New York: Oak Publications, 1971). William J. Schafer and Johannes Riedel, The Art of Ragtime: Form and Meaning of an Original Black American Art, with assistance from Michael Polad and Richard Thompson (Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press, 1973).

both the music and the term; (3) the reactions to the music, and what is revealed as the underlying causes of these reactions; (4) the position of piano ragtime within the perspective of the entire ragtime phenomenon. The inquiry is approached primarily through articles and books written during the years 1897-1920. Some additional material from slightly earlier and later dates is included when it reflects upon the main body of literature, and occasional use is made of more current writings when the author, or interviewee, refers to personal experiences from the ragtime era.

Most written discussions of ragtime are very general and do not cite specific musical titles; in a survey of 218 ragtime-related articles and books published before 1921, 174 fit this category. Of the remaining 44 items, 27 refer to songs, 11 name piano works, and 10 specify pieces for band or other instrumental ensembles. Supporting these figures are the totals for writings that, while lacking references to specific pieces, do mention performing mediums: vocal music, 38; piano, 16; band and other instrumental ensembles, 15.

These statistics demonstrate that, while piano ragtime did receive some attention, public interest was directed mostly toward vocal ragtime. Since the present conception of ragtime emphasizes the piano, almost totally

excluding ragtime songs, it is apparent that the term's meaning has undergone a transformation.<sup>8</sup>

### Ragtime as Popular Song

The earliest kind of popular song identified as ragtime is the "coon song," a Negro dialect song frequently, but not always, of an offensively demeaning nature.

Although the coon song had a long prior existence in the American minstrel and vaudeville traditions, in the 1890s it acquired the additional label of "ragtime."

"Ragtime" is a term applied to the peculiar, broken rhythmic features of the popular "coon song."<sup>9</sup>

A hopper is fitted onto the press and into it are poured jerky note groups by the million, "coon poetry" by the ream, colored inks by the ton, and out of the other end of the press comes a flood of "rag-time" abominations, that sweeps over the country.<sup>10</sup>

The coon songs which are cited most often (indicating a degree of popularity and currency) are Ernest Hogan's All Coons Look Alike to Me (1896), Joseph Howard's and Ida Emerson's Hello! Ma Baby (1899), and Theodore Metz's

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<sup>8</sup>Chapter IX, which is an examination of commentaries on ragtime as history, will discuss this transformation.

<sup>9</sup>"Questions and Answers," Etude 16 (October 1898): 285.

<sup>10</sup>W. F. Gates, "Ethiopian Syncopation--The Decline of Ragtime," Musician 7 (October 1902): 341.

A Hot Time in the Old Town (1896). Although the well-known chorus of this last piece does not usually bear the coon song or ragtime label today, the lyrics are in what was accepted as Negro dialect and the music of the verse is syncopated in the manner of ragtime.<sup>11</sup> In the literature of the time, too, this piece is frequently referred to as a rag:

Who can say whether rag-time is not the much vaunted music of the future? Verily, it has a glorious past, for was it not to the joyous acclaim of "There'll Be A Hot Time in the Old Town To-night" that the American victors in Spanish Santiago signalized the long-delayed end of tyranny in the West Indies, July 1, 1898?<sup>12</sup>

"There'll Be a Hot Time in the Old Town To-Night," that heart-stirring song that inspired the soldiers on Santiago, San Juan and Manila has been declared by President Roosevelt unworthy of being considered "a battle song of the nation's history" because it is ragtime.<sup>13</sup>

By 1906 the popularity of the more flagrantly abusive form of coon song had faded, but popular vocal music retained the ragtime label. Some song hits, such as Lewis Muir's Waiting for the Robert E. Lee (1912),

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<sup>11</sup>Cf. the music in facsimile reprint in Robert A. Fremont, ed., Favorite Songs of the Nineties: Complete Original Sheet Music for 89 Songs, Introduction by Max Morath (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), p. 117. Hello! Ma Baby is on p. 108 of the same volume.

<sup>12</sup>Charles R. Sherlock, "From Breakdown to Ragtime," Cosmopolitan, October 1901, p. 639.

<sup>13</sup>Lester A. Walton, "Music and the Stage: President Bans Ragtime," New York Age, 6 February 1908, p. 10.

still present Southern imagery, but even songs totally devoid of regional or racial implications--such as Alexander's Ragtime Band (1911) and Everybody's Doin' It (1911)--fell within the scope of ragtime. This deracialization of ragtime songs is, in fact, viewed by James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938), a prominent writer on black culture, as a theft from the black man:

The first of the so-called Ragtime songs to be published were actually Negro secular folk songs that were set down by white men, who affixed their own names as composers. In fact, before the Negro succeeded fully in establishing his title as creator of his secular music the form was taken away from him and made national instead of racial. It has been developed into the distinct musical idiom by which America expresses itself popularly, and by which it is known universally. For a long while the vocal form was almost absolutely divorced from the Negro; the separation being brought about largely through the elimination of dialect from the texts of the songs.<sup>14</sup>

A controversial article appearing in the London Times<sup>15</sup> includes a rhythmic analysis of Waiting for the Robert E. Lee and cites as other examples of ragtime Oh, You Beautiful Doll, Going Back to Dixie, and How Are You Miss Rag-Time? Although the article was widely quoted and discussed, either for praise or criticism,<sup>16</sup> there was

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<sup>14</sup>James Weldon Johnson, Preface to The Second Book of Negro Spirituals (New York: Viking Press, 1926), pp. 16-17.

<sup>15</sup>"Ragtime," Times (London), 8 February 1913, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup>Reprinted in full in Boston Symphony Orchestra Programmes 32 (19 February 1913): 1186-96; quoted and discussed in "Sees National Music Created by Rag-Time,"

no disagreement on the choice of music cited as ragtime. Similarly, in a pair of articles by Hiram K. Moderwell, a prominent music critic, ragtime is portrayed almost exclusively in its vocal forms:

I remember hearing a negro quartet singing "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee," in a café, and I felt my blood thumping in time, my muscles twitching to the rhythm. . . .

. . . I think of the rollicking fun of "The International Rag," the playful delicacy of "Everybody's Doing It," the bristling laziness of "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee," the sensual poignancy of "La Seduction" tango, and the tender pathos of "The Memphis Blues."<sup>17</sup>

In proposing that ragtime be taken out of the cafés and put into the concert halls, he writes:

I firmly believe that a ragtime programme, well organized and well sung, would be delightful and stimulating to the best audience the community could muster.<sup>18</sup>

The novelist, critic, and essayist Carl Van Vechten (1880-

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New York Times, 9 February 1913, sec. 4, p. 5; "Ragtime as Source of National Music," Musical America 17 (15 February 1913): 37; "Philosophizing Rag-Time," Literary Digest, 15 March 1913, pp. 574-75; Francis Toye, "Ragtime: The New Tarantism," English Review, March 1913, p. 656; Daniel Gregory Mason, "Folk Song and American Music," Musical Quarterly 4 (July 1918): 324-25; "Flays Rag-Time as Not Reflecting Americanism," Musical America 28 (20 July 1918): 22.

<sup>17</sup>Hiram K. Moderwell, "Ragtime," New Republic, 16 October 1915, p. 285.

<sup>18</sup>Idem, "A Modest Proposal," Seven Arts 2 (July 1917): 371.

1964), while disputing the advisability of some of Moderswell's proposals, nevertheless agrees that ragtime is vocal music.<sup>19</sup> And composer-educator Daniel Gregory Mason (1873-1953), who vehemently opposed most of Moderswell's views on this subject, has no qualms about accepting such songs as Everybody's Doin' It and Memphis Blues (1912) as ragtime:

Suppose . . . we examine in some detail a typical example of ragtime such as "The Memphis Blues" . . .<sup>20</sup>

As songs were the most conspicuous species of ragtime, it follows that songwriters were the most conspicuous composers. This assumption is confirmed by the literature of the time, for the songwriter is almost invariably named as ragtime composer (some exceptions will be discussed in Chapters IV and IX), some of the most frequently mentioned being Irving Berlin (b. 1888), George M. Cohan (1878-1942), Louis Hirsch (1887-1924), Lewis F. Muir (1884-1950), and Jean Schwartz (1878-1956). Irving Berlin, who did not attain significant prominence with his ragtime songs until 1911, even claimed a part in the genesis of ragtime:

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<sup>19</sup>Carl Van Vechten, "Communications," Seven Arts 2 (September 1917): 669-70.

<sup>20</sup>Daniel Gregory Mason, "Concerning Ragtime," New Music Review and Church Music Review 17 (March 1918): 114.

Now just one boast: I believe that such songs of mine as "Alexander's Ragtime Band," "That Mysterious Rag," "Ragtime Violin," "I Want To Be in Dixie," and "Take a Little Tip from Father" virtually started the ragtime mania in America.<sup>21</sup>

That the popular understanding of ragtime today is not what it was when the music was being created has been suggested in recent years, but the thesis has not met with general acceptance. In a letter to the Ragtime Society newsletter in 1965, one who was apparently present during the early days of ragtime expressed his perplexity over the present trend of emphasizing a particular kind of piano ragtime and ignoring vocal ragtime:

. . . we who were around when 'Boom de Ay' was discovered in Babe Connor's place in St. Louis as the nineties started up, and when the 'Hot Time' tune took words and entered the ragtime-song race of the second Cleveland and first McKinley administrations (only to wait around two years for the war with Spain to bring it out), await enlightenment as to just what it is about a specimen of syncopation that makes it 'classic ragtime,' while countless of the world's favorite old ragtime numbers apparently go rejected by the modernists.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Irving Berlin and Justus Dickinson, "Words and Music," Green Book Magazine, July 1915, pp. 104-5.

<sup>22</sup>Russ Cole, Untitled letter, Ragtime Society 4 (March/April 1965): 19-20. Cole is also the author of two booklets on popular music: Roundup of Favorites of the Centuries and Songs Father Sang (Pryor, Okla, 1961).

As suggested by Cole's letter, the songs Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay! (1891) and A Hot Time in the Old Town have been traced to Babe Connor's, a Negro brothel in Saint Louis, both appearing there around 1891. The actual origins of the songs are uncertain as each is enmeshed in conflicting stories and claims; one version dates Ta-ra-ra Boom-de-ay! as far back as 1854 or earlier. See

Perhaps the vocal ragtime mentioned above is not on the same musical level as the best in piano ragtime. Quite possibly, only a few ragtime enthusiasts today would be interested in these songs. But ignoring the fact that this music was considered ragtime conceals the historical truth and inevitably leads to serious misinterpretations. In the book Art of Ragtime, for example, a quotation from Moderwell's article "Ragtime" (see discussion above, page 9) is introduced with references to piano ragtimers Scott Joplin (1868-1917), James Scott (1886-1938), and Joe Lamb (1887-1960).<sup>23</sup> The reader is thereby led to make the incorrect inference that Moderwell was praising the kind of music written by these composers, when in fact he was clearly discussing popular songs.

Such instances of distortion are not unique in the recent literature on ragtime, but are rather symptomatic of the refusal of some writers to recognize that the term has had a variety of meanings. Whereas the

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Edward R. Winn, "'Ragging' the Popular Song-Hits," Melody 2 (May 1918): 8; Isaac Goldberg, Tin Pan Alley: A Chronicle of the American Popular Music Racket, Introduction by George Gershwin (New York: John Day Co., 1930); reprinted as Tin Pan Alley: A Chronicle of American Popular Music, Supplement "From Sweet and Swing to Rock 'n' Roll," by Edward Jablonski (New York: Frederick Ungar Publishing Co., 1961), pp. 113-17, 165-67.

The term "Classic Ragtime," to be discussed in Chapter X, is a designation applied to the piano rags of Scott Joplin and a few others.

<sup>23</sup>Schafer and Riedel, Art of Ragtime, p. 41.

restricted interpretation of ragtime suffices the needs of today's entertainment, for a true historical and scholarly view of the subject a broader perspective must prevail.

#### The Ragtime Band

The dominance of vocal music in early writings on ragtime is revealed not only in the relatively high proportion of articles devoted exclusively to songs, but also in the frequent linking of the vocal phase to instrumental ragtime. Although ragtime songs seem to have made their initial impact from the musical stage, they were played as well by dance, march, and concert bands:

Probably the majority of our readers are aware that the most popular music of the day is that known as "rag-time," . . . From New York to California and from the great lakes to the gulf rag-time music of all styles is the rage. Look at the ballroom programmes for the past season and we find rag-time and other "coon" melodies introduced into every dance where it is practicable.<sup>24</sup>

What is the matter with popular taste, when orchestras and military bands of repute play upon the concert stage rag-time songs.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>W. H. Amstead, "'Rag-Time': The Music of the Hour," Metronome 15 (May 1899): 4. Amstead was the editor of Metronome.

<sup>25</sup>Wilson G. Smith, "The Vagrant Philosopher," Negro Music Journal 1 (May 1903): 183; reprint ed., (Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970).

[Sousa] was as usual liberal with his encores consisting of his own marches and ragtime ballads.<sup>26</sup>

Speaking of his reminiscences of New Orleans around 1905, ragtime-jazz historian Roy Carew has reported:

. . . many of the tunes played by the small marching bands were popular ragtime songs, not classic rags such as those composed by Joplin.<sup>27</sup>

Even when not direct adaptations of existing songs, instrumental rags were frequently perceived as derivatives of the vocal medium:

The craze for "coon" songs, as they are familiarly known, began about three years ago, and shows little sign of abatement at the present time. Not content with "rag-time" songs, marches, two-steps, and even waltzes have been subjected to this syncopated style of treatment, in order to appease the seemingly insatiable thirst for that peculiar

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<sup>26</sup>"Sousa at the Hippodrome," New York Times, 15 January 1906, p. 9.

<sup>27</sup>George W. Kay, "Reminiscing in Ragtime: An Interview with Roy Carew," Jazz Journal 17 (November 1964): 9. Roy Carew (1884-1967) was one of the pioneering figures in ragtime research. (Chapter IX below includes a discussion of Carew's writings.) A life-long enthusiast of piano ragtime, he played his first rag--Charles Hunter's Tickled to Death (1899)--around the turn of the century, soon afterward becoming an amateur ragtime composer. His interest in this music was intensified in 1904 when, upon moving to New Orleans, he heard performances by the ragtime pianist Tony Jackson (1876-1921). His cultivation of friendships within the ragtime community found new significance in the 1930s with his eventful meeting and subsequent close acquaintance with ragtime-jazz musician Jelly Roll Morton (1885-1941). Finding Morton in financial difficulties, Carew formed the Tempo-Music Publishing Company as a means of publishing and protecting the composer's music and assuring him of an income. After Morton's death, Carew became executor of his estate.

rhythmic effect produced by successive irregular accent.<sup>28</sup>

The song-to-instrument route was not one-sided; the process was also reversed as original instrumental pieces were reissued in alternate versions with words. Kerry Mills's dance hit At a Georgia Campmeeting (1897), was reissued as a song; Scott Joplin's piano pieces Maple Leaf Rag (1899) and Pine Apple Rag (1908), too, were republished as songs, in 1904 and 1910. In addition, many early instrumental rag publications include a vocal chorus. Because of such developments, original instrumental pieces as well as adaptations from songs merged into the same body of ragtime literature.

Also within the scope of instrumental ragtime was the practice of improvising syncopated versions of existing pieces. Jelly Roll Morton has described the activity of turn-of-the-century New Orleans ragtime bands, playing such pieces as Sousa's popular march Stars and Stripes Forever (1897).<sup>29</sup> Early jazz cornetist Bunk

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<sup>28</sup>R. M. Stults, "Something about the Popular Music of Today," Etude 18 (March 1900): 97. Stults was a successful composer of sentimental, popular songs.

<sup>29</sup>Alan Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and "Inventor of Jazz" (New York: Duell, Sloan and Pearce, 1950; 2nd ed., Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1973), pp. 12-13.

Johnson (1879-1949), too, has referred to the improvised ragging of existing tunes at New Orleans funerals:

. . . we'd march away from the cemetery by the snare drum only, until we got about a block or two blocks from the cemetery. Then we'd go right into ragtime --what people call today swing--ragtime. We would play "Didn't He Ramble," or we'd take all those spiritual hymns and turn them into ragtime.<sup>30</sup>

Identical in spirit, and more gracefully articulated, are the words of Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906), a highly respected and prominent black poet and song lyricist of the time:

But hit's Sousa played in ragtime, an' hit's Rastus  
on Parade,  
W'en de colo'd ban' comes ma'chin' down de street.<sup>31</sup>

Although much ensemble ragtime was published and copyrighted in piano editions, it is evident that in at least some cases the composers intended the music for band performance. On the cover of William Krell's Mississippi Rag (1897), for instance, the earliest iden-

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<sup>30</sup>Marshall W. Stearns, The Story of Jazz (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p. 61.

<sup>31</sup>Paul Laurence Dunbar, "The Colored Band," in Lyrics of Love and Laughter (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1903), stanza 3, lines 3-4; reprinted in The Complete Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1958), pp. 286-87. This poem was set to music by J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954) in 1901; see James Weldon Johnson's autobiography, Along This Way (New York: Viking Press, 1933), p. 161.

tified piano score using the term "rag" in its title, is a banner proclaiming: "The First Rag-Time Two Step Ever Written, and First Played by Krell's Orchestra, Chicago." In another case, an unusual bass line in Arthur Pryor's A Coon Band Contest (1899) is identified as "trombone solo" (Example I-1). The prominence of bands in early

EXAMPLE I-1. Arthur Pryor, A Coon Band Contest (Arthur Pryor, 1899), C 2-6.<sup>32</sup>

Trombone Solo.

nonvocal ragtime recordings, too, testify to the activity in this area,<sup>33</sup> as do the advertisements for band arrangements in some popular-oriented music magazines. One such

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<sup>32</sup>The designation C 2-6 means: third formal section, or strain, measures 2-6. The formal designs of instrumental rags will be discussed in Chapter V.

<sup>33</sup>The most thorough discography of ragtime recordings on 78 r.p.m. discs--including recordings made during the earliest days of ragtime--is David Jasen's Recorded Ragtime, 1897-1958 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, Shoe String Press, 1973). There are also additional ragtime recordings listed in James R. Smart, The Sousa Band: A Discography (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1970), and in Allen Koenigsberg, Edison Cylinder Records, 1889-1912 (New York: Stellar Productions, 1969).

periodical that devoted considerable space to band advertisements is Metronome. Throughout 1897 Metronome printed numerous announcements of cakewalk marches, two-steps, schottisches, polkas, waltzes, and band arrangements of coon songs. The first advertisement in this magazine to specify "ragtime" appeared in the January 1898 issue, and by the following year such notices were commonplace. Throughout the duration of ragtime's greatest popularity ragtime advertisements continued to appear in substantial quantities. By early 1916, reflecting the reduced demand for this music in the ballroom, the number of ragtime announcements had declined noticeably. (The other dances being advertised at this time were one-steps, tangos, fox and turkey trots, waltzes, and maxixes.) In the November 1916 issue the ragtime category was eliminated. Although the word "rag" continued to appear occasionally in titles, such pieces were not necessarily considered rags; Eubie Blake's Bugle Call Rag (1916), for instance, was labeled a fox trot.

#### Ragtime for Other Instrumental Combinations

The medium for ragtime was not restricted to piano, vocal, and band performances; the instrumental diversity included some combinations which must

certainly seem exotic today. The cover of the piano publication of Theodore Morse's Coontown Capers (1897), for instance, lists the availability of fifteen different arrangements, including: orchestra; brass band; violin and piano; banjo; zither; two mandolins, guitar and piano. Similarly the cover of Abe Holzmann's Bunch o' Blackberries (1899) advertises: "Published also for all instruments including Mandolin, Guitar, Banjo, Orchestra, Band, Etc."

Recordings of the period reveal this same diversity. While the listings in Jasen's Recorded Ragtime do not specify medium, some clues to the instruments of frequently recorded artists are given on pages 7-10 of the introduction, and additional identification is occasionally supplied by the name of the performing group, such as "Murray's Ragtime Banjo Quartet."<sup>34</sup> Thus, it is possible to detect some of the instrumental variety represented on recordings: two accordion performances (1914, 1915) of Hungarian Rag, a marimba band version (1916) of Dill Pickles, three piccolo solos (1900-02) on Rag Time Skedaddle, a xylophone recording (1912) of Red Pepper, and others. Similarly, in Koenigsberg's Edison Cylinder Records, among the eight thousand listings there are many rags by mediums not usually identified with ragtime today. Of the three recordings of

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<sup>34</sup>Jasen, Recorded Ragtime, p. 51.

At a Georgia Campmeeting, for instance, one is for brass quartet.

The relative position of piano ragtime will be considered in Chapter IV. For the present it is sufficient to observe that with such an abundance and variety of instrumental and vocal versions of ragtime, the piano genre did not have the prominence it enjoys today.

### Syncopation

At the core of the contemporary understanding of ragtime, regardless of medium, was syncopation. The question "What is ragtime?" occupied the pages of magazines throughout the ragtime period, and almost invariably the explanations included a statement about syncopation:

RAG-TIME is an exaggerated form of what is known in musical literature as SYNCOPATION.<sup>35</sup>

"Rag-time" is essentially a simple syncopation.<sup>36</sup>

So rag-time music is, simply, syncopated rhythm maddened into a desperate iterativeness; a rhythm overdone, to please the present public music taste.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup>Ned Wayburn and Stanley Whiting, Preface to song Syncopated Sandy (New York: Broder & Schlam, 1897).

<sup>36</sup>"Questions and Answers," Etude 16 (December 1898): 349.

<sup>37</sup>C. Crozat Converse, "Rag-Time Music," Etude 17 (June 1899): 185. Converse (1832-1918) was a composer of religious and patriotic American music.

Rag-time is merely a common form of syncopation in which the rhythm is distorted in order to produce a more or less ragged, hysterical effect.<sup>38</sup>

This craze [for ragtime] was a unique example of an exaggerated use of a musical idiom that in itself is not only a lawful means of musical expression, one that, used in reasonable moderation and in proper surroundings, is full of beauty and interest, namely, the feature of syncopation.<sup>39</sup>

John Philip Sousa has said that "the exaggerated syncopation known as rag time has 'come to stay'" . . .<sup>40</sup>

RAG TIME. A modern term, of American origin, signifying, in the first instance, broken rhythm in melody, especially a sort of continuous syncopation.<sup>41</sup>

What is ragtime? It is only an exaggerated use of syncopation.<sup>42</sup>

"Rag-time," then may be said to be a strongly syncopated melody superimposed on a strictly regular accompaniment, and it is the combination of these two rhythms that gives "rag-time" its character.<sup>43</sup>

Ragtime music is chiefly a matter of rhythm and not not much a matter of melody or fine harmony. It is

<sup>38</sup>A. J. Goodrich, "Syncopated Rhythm vs. 'Rag-Time,'" Musician 6 (November 1901): 336. Goodrich (1847-1920) was an eminent theorist and academician.

<sup>39</sup>W. F. Gates, "Ethiopian Syncopation--The Decline of Ragtime," Musician 8 (October 1902): 341.

<sup>40</sup>"Rag Time and Royalty," New York Times, 10 October 1903, p. 6.

<sup>41</sup>Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians, 1908 ed., s.v. "Rag Time," by Frank Kidson.

<sup>42</sup>"Rag Time and Program Making," American Musician and Art Journal 28 (10 August 1912): 10.

<sup>43</sup>"Ragtime," Times (London).

based almost exclusively upon syncopated time.<sup>44</sup>

. . . the majority of musicians do not even know what ragtime is. Ask them, and they will reply: "Ragtime is syncopation."<sup>45</sup>

. . . ragtime is only a rhythm--not music but only one element of music. Technically it is known as "syncopation."<sup>46</sup>

Rag, c'est-à-dire le démantibulé; rag-music, la musique qui se fonde essentiellement sur le rythme et en particulier sur les vertus de la syncope dans le rythme.

(Rag music is founded essentially on rhythm and in particular on the qualities of syncopation in rhythm.)<sup>47</sup>

In an article from the 1920s, a writer recalls, with

"tongue-in-cheek" (?) the time

. . . when first burst forth upon my scholastic ear those distortions which have spiced syncopation out of its original purity. (O thou Fourth Species, was it for such end thou wert designed and destined?)<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>Leo Oehmler, "Ragtime" A Pernicious Evil and Enemy of True Art," Musical Observer 11 (September 1914): 14.

<sup>45</sup>Leonard Liebbling, "The Crime of Ragtime," Musical Courier 72 (20 January 1916): 21. Liebbling (1880-1945) was a pianist and music journalist; he edited Musical Courier and was a critic for the New York American.

<sup>46</sup>"Great American Composer--Will He Speak in the Accent of Broadway?" Current Opinion, November 1917, p. 316.

<sup>47</sup>Ernest Ansermet, "Sur un orchestre nègre," Revue romande 3 (15 October 1919): 10; facsimile reprint in "Ein Jazzbericht aus dem Jahre 1919," by Jan Slawe, Jazzforschung 3/4 (1971/72): 162. Trans. by Walter J. Shaap, "Bechet and Jazz Visit Europe, 1919," in Frontiers of Jazz, 2nd ed., ed. Ralph de Toledano (Ungar Publishing Co., 1962), p. 115.

<sup>48</sup>Harry Farjeon, "Rag-Time," Musical Times 65 (1 September 1924): 795. Farjeon (1878-1948) was a composer and professor of theory at the Royal Academy of Music.

Not satisfied simply with the designation of syncopation as the defining feature of ragtime, Hiram Moderwell, who, as a frequent contributor of music articles to New Republic and other periodicals, should have known better, attributes an exaggerated significance to the rhythms of ragtime:

It [ragtime] has carried the complexities of the rhythmic subdivision of the measure to a point never before reached in the history of music.<sup>49</sup>

Irving Berlin reverses the relationship between ragtime and syncopation as he says, not that ragtime is a form of syncopation, but, "Syncopation is nothing but another name for ragtime." From this false premise, he compounds his delusions by concluding that "the old masters" also wrote ragtime, but "in a stiff and stilted way."<sup>50</sup>

The implication, evident in many of these articles, that the term "ragtime" refers directly to the ragged rhythmic quality of syncopation is occasionally spelled out explicitly. An editorial referring to compositions "written in what is contemptuously called 'rag time'"<sup>51</sup> clearly

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<sup>49</sup>Moderwell, "Ragtime."

<sup>50</sup>Frederick James Smith, "Irving Berlin and Modern Ragtime," New York Dramatic Mirror, 14 January 1914, p. 38.

<sup>51</sup>"Music for Piers and Parks," New York Times, 29 May 1902, p. 8; my emphasis.

designates ragtime as a rhythmic process rather than a genre. The word is also used as a synonym for syncopation: ". . . in American slang to 'rag' a melody is to syncopate a normally regular tune."<sup>52</sup> "Strictly speaking, to rag a tune means to destroy its rhythm and tempo and substitute for the 2-4 or 4-4 time a syncopated rhythm."<sup>53</sup> Similarly, an article on ragtime performance specifies that the pianist must have the ability "to syncopate (rag) the tones."<sup>54</sup>

In other words, while "rag" functions as a noun to identify a type of music, it also functions as a verb, referring to the process of syncopation, and as an adjective, modifying "time," that is, "ragged time." Etymologically, the hyphenated form used in the earlier articles--"rag-time"--or the even rarer two-word form--"rag time"--also suggest adjectival origins.

The assumption of ragtime's being characterized primarily by a syncopated rhythm was so widespread that few writers even tentatively questioned this connection.

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<sup>52</sup>"Ragtime," Times (London).

<sup>53</sup>"'To Jazz' or 'To Rag,'" Literary Digest, 6 May 1922, p. 37. Quoted here is Paul Whiteman (1890-1967), a commercially successful band leader and "popularizer" of jazz.

<sup>54</sup>Edward R. Winn, "Ragtime Piano Playing: A Practical Course of Instruction for Pianists," Tuneful Yankee 1 (January 1917): 42.

One who did was music critic and biographer Francis Toye (1883-1964). Noting the absence of syncopation in some pieces identified as ragtime, he commented:

I do not think that rag-time can be defined as rhythm at all. True it has a characteristic rhythm and usually a syncopated one. But not invariably. The popular "Hitch-Koo" and "Dixie," for instance, are hardly syncopated, yet it were pure pedantry not to class them as rag-time.<sup>55</sup>

Another writer, giving similar reasons, tried to separate the concept of ragtime from syncopation:

Perhaps the best was to define ragtime and prove that it and syncopation are not necessarily analogous will be to go to the bottom of things and summon up some actual illustration. . . .

"For Me and My Gal" is typically ragtime, yet it is practically free of syncopation--to be exact, there are just three measures of syncopated melody, . . . The most striking example of ragtime music came out a few years ago in Irving Berlin's song "Alexander's Ragtime Band." . . .

What made this song so popular? It was not syncopation, for there is no syncopation at all in the chorus, which is the most pleasing part of the song.<sup>56</sup>

These articles, however, are exceptions, and reflect the general tendency by 1911 to include in the ragtime category almost any rhythmical popular music. At least one commentator protested against this extension of the term "ragtime," suggesting that application be restricted to syncopated music:

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<sup>55</sup>Toye, "Ragtime," p. 654.

<sup>56</sup>Harold Hubbs, "What Is Ragtime?" Outlook, 27 February 1918, p. 345.

"Ragtime" . . . has become a most comprehensive word in recent years, and at least with a certain class of musicians who should know better, it means pretty nearly anything not under the head of serious or classical music.

If the rhythmic element predominates or is at all prominent it is "ragtime," no matter whether a single instance of syncopation occurs in the music or not. . . .

The writer, for one, is in favor of restricting the word ragtime to its original definition, as meaning that time or rhythm in which the dominating characteristic feature is syncopation.<sup>57</sup>

What this protest reveals is a recognition, by 1913, of the process that was already divesting ragtime of its most definitive feature. Of this process, more will be said later.

#### Ragtime Dance

While ragtime music was frequently designed for dancing (see pages 13-15 above), the actual dance steps also carried the "ragtime" label. In the survey of 218 contemporary literary discussions on ragtime (see page 5), 34 items were found to contain references to ragtime dances. The term was applied almost indiscriminately to fashionable duple- and quadruple-metered dances,<sup>58</sup> although, as will be specified below, some steps were more consistently placed in the ragtime category.

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<sup>57</sup>Myron A. Bickford, "Something about Ragtime," Cadenza 20 (September 1913): 13.

<sup>58</sup>A few ragtime waltzes were published, but triple-metered rags received little acceptance.

The negroes call their clog-dancing "ragging," and the dance, a "rag."<sup>59</sup>

The prevailing one-step, or "rag," which has all but driven the waltz out of the ballroom . . .<sup>60</sup>

Perhaps their objections [to ragtime] are partly accounted for by the fact that many of the best and most popular "rag-time" tunes are associated in their minds with certain repulsive ball-room dances or such abominations as the "Gaby Glide."<sup>61</sup>

As a dance it [ragtime] is certainly separable from the "turkey trot" type, which is a comparatively recent development.<sup>62</sup>

Some of the latest ragtime numbers in fox trot rhythm are brimful of the slapdash American humor and animal ebullience. Also, one must be able to dance the one step and the fox trot in order to be able to appreciate the push and cleverness of those rhythms.<sup>63</sup>

La rag-music nous est venue d'abord en Europe sous la forme du cake-walk, me semble-t-il, puis, avec les one-step, two-step, fox-trot, et toutes danses ou chansons américaines auxquelles on applique le sous-titre de rag-time.

(Rag music first came to Europe in the form of the cake-walk, as I recall, and then with the one-step, two-step, fox-trot, and all the American dances and songs to which

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<sup>59</sup>Rupert Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," Musical Record, no. 447 (1 April 1899), p. 158. Hughes (1872-1956) was a novelist, a dramatist, and a writer on musical subjects.

<sup>60</sup>"Canon Newbolt's Warning," New York Times, 26 August 1913, p. 8.

<sup>61</sup>"Ragtime," Times (London).

<sup>62</sup>John N. Burk, "Ragtime and Its Possibilities," Harvard Musical Review 2 (January 1914): 11. Burk (1891-1967) later became the program annotator for the Boston Symphony Orchestra concerts and the author of several biographies of musical figures.

<sup>63</sup>Liebling, "The Crime of Ragtime," p. 21.

the subtitle of ragtime is applied.)<sup>64</sup>

Fred Stone, star of "Stepping Stones," traces it [ragtime dance] back to a ragtime song "The Pasamala" written by a negro actor, Ernest Hogan, in the nineties. . . . The name is a corruption of the French term "pas à mêlé," which means "a mixed step." That is exactly what it was--a step generally done backward . . . ; a short unaccented beat before a long accented one, the same principle now used in jazz and known as syncopation. . . .

Always the dances were done in the new jiggy time, and they influenced clog, straight jig, Irish reel, Irish jig, soft shoe, and the George M. Cohan styles of dancing. Everyone was dancing ragtime and the motif was to be found in the original buck dancing.<sup>65</sup>

Ragging, a style of dancing with slight foot-work, but with much shoulder-throwing, came home from the bawdy house bearing the mark of the earlier hoochie-coochie, . . . It infected the walk-steps, had a convulsion called the turkey-trot, which proved too difficult to keep up, and finally, calling itself both the one-step and fox-trot, became national and endemic. The former name, which merely indicated a tempo, is no longer used.<sup>66</sup>

Since instrumental ragtime functioned as a popular dance music, it was often the practice to list some of the appropriate dances on the published sheet music. These

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<sup>64</sup>Ansermet, "Sur un orchestre nègre," p. 10; Shaap, trans., p. 115.

<sup>65</sup>"The Origin of Ragtime," New York Times, 23 March 1924, sec. 9, p. 2. The Fred Stone referred to was the comedian and dancer, not the ragtime composer--Fred S. Stone --who died in 1912.

The description of "a step generally done backward" may be a reference to the "back step prance" mentioned in Joplin's Ragtime Dance. See p. 31 below.

<sup>66</sup>Virgil Thomson, "Jazz," American Mercury, May 1924, p. 465.

publications, then, are an important source of information on ragtime ballroom styles, and a year-by-year survey of the dance labels appearing on ragtime sheet music reveals the gradual changes in fashions.

The dances named on the earliest ragtime sheet music are<sup>67</sup> the cakewalk, march, and two-step. As with the word "ragtime," there is no orthographical consistency; "cakewalk" and "two-step" appear also as "cake walk," "cake-walk," "two step," and "twostep." Indicative of the lack of musical distinction made between these dances, all, or any combination, may appear on a single piece of music: The Rag-Time Sports. Cake Walk-March and Two Step (1899); Rag Time Society. Characteristic March & Two Step (1899), Africana. A Rag-Time Classic. Characteristic March Two-Step and Cakewalk (1903). Sometimes another dance, such as the polka, is also included: The Honolulu Cake Walk. Ragtime March (1899) "Can also be used as: Two-Step, Polka or Cake-Walk."<sup>67</sup>

The first of these three main dances to disappear from the sheet music was the cakewalk, which died out by 1904. The march began to decline in 1908, and the two-step, in 1911; both dances, though, lingered on until the mid-

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<sup>67</sup>The distinction between subtitles and descriptions is also treated inconsistently. The practice in this paper is to consider dance labels as part of a subtitle unless clearly presented as a description, in which case it will be transcribed as in the last citation above.

1910s.

In the second decade of the century new dances were cited on ragtime sheet music, but without the persistence of the earlier steps. The turkey trot had a short life, from about 1912 to 1914; the one-step and fox trot were both prominent by 1913, the former lasting until 1917, the latter having an unmatched longevity.<sup>68</sup> The slow drag was mentioned throughout the entire ragtime period, but never in significant numbers.

The vocal version of Scott Joplin's Ragtime Dance<sup>69</sup> is particularly interesting for its inventory of dances, some

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<sup>68</sup>The fox trot of that time, though, was not the indiscriminate shuffle it is today, judging by a description printed in Christensen's Ragtime Review 1 (March 1915): 8:

"How To Dance the Fox Trot

"The fox trot resembles the onestep, but is a slightly faster dance and is quite easy to learn. The exaggerated movements of the shoulders and arms, characteristic of the turkey trot, the things that made it capable of vulgarity, are absent from the fox trot. Here are the four figures of this dance:

"Fig. 1.--Four slow steps, four running steps and four running steps turning. Repeat four times.

"Fig. 2.--Two slow grapevines and four running steps. Repeat four times.

"Fig. 3.--One polka step and rest: four running steps. Repeat four times.

"Fig. 4.--Four wigwags, then three steps to each side."

<sup>69</sup>There are two versions of this piece, both published by Stark Music Co., St. Louis, Mo. The earlier publication (1902) has lyrics simulating calls as they might be heard at a country dance, and parenthetical instructions specifying when each new step is to begin. The later version (1906), subtitled a "Stop-Time Two Step," is without lyrics,



be demonstrated in Chapter VIII, the rhythmic patterns associated with the fox trot tended to replace the accepted modes of ragtime syncopation, and this process ultimately led to the disintegration of ragtime as a distinctive musical type.

#### Jazz, and the Close of the Ragtime Era

It was with the advent of the "jazz age," shortly before the 1920s, that the "ragtime era" came to a close. The end came gradually as characteristics of ragtime were absorbed by jazz; for a while, the two terms were freely interchanged. But, supplanted by a newer wave of syncopation, ragtime ceased to be the emissary of American popular culture.

Jazz, like ragtime, originally embraced a much broader musical and social spectrum than admitted by the present-day conception. In publications of the late 1910s and early '20s, jazz was typified not by the figures who are today considered the main exponents of that time (Louis Armstrong, Jelly Roll Morton, Fletcher Henderson, and Bix Beiderbecke), but by popular band leaders and song writers (Paul Whiteman, Irving Berlin, Victor Herbert)--and ballroom dance.

For many writers there was actually little or no distinction between ragtime and jazz, and the terms were used almost synonymously:

Oldtimers such as "Alexander's Ragtime Band" . . . and "Maple Leaf Rag" began to establish a conventional form for jazz. . . .

For purposes of this discussion we will omit the waltz, which is not jazz, and the so-called "ballad." Just how is the typical "rag" built?<sup>72</sup>

Aujourd'hui le rag-time a conquis l'Europe; c'est le rag-time qu'on danse toutes nos villes sous le nom de jazz . . .

(Today, rag-time has conquered Europe; we dance to rag-time under the name jazz in all our cities . . .)<sup>73</sup>

A report of Roger Ducasse's Epithalme discusses the composer's use of "ragtime rhythms" as "evidence of the valuable use to which the European craze for jazz can be put."<sup>74</sup> A discussion of jazz describes the "ragtime pianist" in terms that apply equally to the jazz pianist: "The real ragtime pianist is a composer as well as performer. That is, he can take a tune and reharmonize it if necessary, judiciously introduce innovations, alter the rhythm . . ."<sup>75</sup> In describing a ballroom drum technique--"fly-drumming"-- a writer suggests that the distinction between jazz and ragtime is one in name only: "A decade past it was called

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<sup>72</sup>Don Knowlton, "The Anatomy of Jazz," Harper's Magazine, April 1926, pp. 578-79.

<sup>73</sup>Ansermet, "Sur un orchestre nègre," p. 10; Shaap, trans., p. 116.

<sup>74</sup>"Ducasse Uses Ragtime in New Tone Poem," Musical America 37 (10 March 1923): 15.

<sup>75</sup>William J. Morgan, "A Defense of Jazz and Ragtime," Melody 6 (September 1922): 5.

'ragging' while today we call it 'jazzing.'"<sup>76</sup> Another article mixes the two terms in the title and subheading without distinction:

The Origin of Ragtime  
Fred Stone Credits Ernest Hogan, a Negro, with Starting  
the Jazz Era in Music<sup>77</sup>

There were some who objected to the word "jazz," preferring to retain the older "ragtime": "The Rag-time movement would have been the better style, but the word 'Jazz' has passed into at least two languages . . ."<sup>78</sup> Others favored the term "jazz," even applying it to music clearly falling within the ragtime era and sphere: "Ragtime was the name employed by Mason and Moderwell; jazz was the thing they were discussing."<sup>79</sup> While disagreeing over the more appropriate terminology, these two writers implicitly concur in assuming no substantive distinction between ragtime and jazz.

Some critics of the time also tried to identify the characteristics of jazz, and while the intent was not

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<sup>76</sup>Carl E. Gardner, "Ragging and Jazzing," Metro-  
nome 25 (October/November 1919): 34.

<sup>77</sup>"The Origin of Ragtime," New York Times.

<sup>78</sup>Clive Bell, "Plus de jazz," New Republic, 21  
September 1921, p. 93.

<sup>79</sup>Goldberg, Tin Pan Alley, p. 252. Critic Hiram K. Moderwell and composer Daniel Gregory Mason were on opposing sides of a heated controversy which raged over ragtime in the second decade of the century; see Chapter III.

necessarily to contrast it with ragtime, the descriptions and affiliations of jazz often served to differentiate it from the earlier style. One such association was with new dances, especially the fox trot:

The latest international word seems to be "jazz." It is used almost exclusively in British papers to describe the kind of music and dancing--particularly dancing--imported from America. . . . While society once "ragged," they now "jazz."<sup>80</sup>

Jazz, in brief, is a compound of (a) the fox-trot rhythm, a four-four measure (alla breve) with a double accent, and (b) a syncopated melody over this rhythm.<sup>81</sup>

Modern jazz began with the fox trot. For this new dance the four-quarter bass was used as in ragtime, but at a considerably slower pace and miraculously improved by accenting the least obvious beats, the second and fourth--1-2-3-4.<sup>82</sup>

The jazz that we know, it is now generally agreed, began with the fox-trot.<sup>83</sup>

Another frequently made identification typifies jazz by certain unique instrumental effects:

Jazz, strictly speaking, is instrumental effects, the principal one being the grotesque treatment of the portamento, especially in the wind instruments. The professor of jazz . . . calls these effects "smears." The writer first heard jazz performed by trombone-players in some of the marching bands. . . . Afterward

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<sup>80</sup>"A Negro Explains Jazz," Literary Digest, 26 April 1919, p. 28; reprinted in Eileen Southern, ed., Readings in Black American Music (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1971), p. 224.

<sup>81</sup>Thomson, "Jazz," p. 465.

<sup>82</sup>Aaron Copland, "Jazz Structure and Influence," Modern Music 4 (February 1927): 10.

<sup>83</sup>Goldberg, Tin Pan Alley, p. 273.

the ingenious players of the popular music discovered how to produce these wailing, sliding tones on other instruments.<sup>84</sup>

Certain instruments and effects . . . are characteristic, especially the use of the saxophone . . . and the monotonous banjo accompaniment, giving out the ground rhythm--a rhythm so sonorous that it would be unendurable were not its hypnotic effect turned into motor stimuli by bizarre cross-accents.

Another thing characteristic of jazz is the use of the glissandi. It has long been common on the trombone. It is also possible on the clarinet and saxophone. . . .

With the growth of the contrapuntal style, enforced by disparate combinations, the varieties of wind tone has been considerably extended.<sup>85</sup>

Jazz is a type of music grown out of ragtime and still ragtime in essence; it is also a method of production and as such an orchestral development; . . .<sup>86</sup>

Ragtime is now so specifically written for the jazz band that it is acquiring new characteristics. . . . Rhythmically--essentially--jazz is ragtime, since it is based on syncopation, and even without jazz orchestration we should have had the full employment of precise and continuous syncopation which we find in jazz now, . . .<sup>87</sup>

The most fundamental and common view was that jazz was a later and more complicated phase in the development

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<sup>84</sup>W. J. Henderson, "Ragtime, Jazz, and High Art," Scribner's Magazine, February 1925, p. 202. Henderson (1855-1937) was a music critic for the New York Times and New York Sun, and author of many books on music.

<sup>85</sup>Thomson, "Jazz," p. 466.

<sup>86</sup>Gilbert Seldes, The Seven Lively Arts (New York: Harper & Bros., 1924; rev. ed., New York: Sagamore Press, 1957), p. 83. The rev. ed. is completely faithful to the original publication as all of the original text is retained and unaltered, corrections and afterthoughts being interpolated in clearly designated and separate paragraphs.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., pp. 85-96.

of syncopated music. While some writers continued to perceive jazz and ragtime as the same phenomenon going under two labels, others considered jazz as the replacement of the earlier style:

Jazz! Whence came this rhythmic madness and what is the secret of its hold or grip upon the people? Regarding its grip, that side may be dismissed without argument either pro or con, for (and almost ousting the simpler forms of syncopation known as ragtime) jazz has swept over the entire country in an irresistible wave . . . <sup>88</sup>

"Jazz" . . . is Ragtime raised to the Nth power.<sup>89</sup>

Between the earlier "rag" and the "blues," there is this distinction: the rag had been mainly a thing of rhythm, of syncopation; the blues were syncopation relished with spicier harmonies. . . . Jazz is ragtime, plus orchestral polyphony; it is the combination, in the popular current, of melody, rhythm, harmony, and counterpoint.<sup>90</sup>

This is the coroner's inquest, with the probable verdict that the popular song was unintentionally killed by ragtime, which is in turn being slowly poisoned by jazz.<sup>91</sup>

Ragtime has definitely become jazz--ragtime never died, it grew up . . . <sup>92</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>"The Whence and What of Jazz," Melody 3 (April 1919): 4.

<sup>89</sup>Rupert Hughes, "Will Ragtime Turn to Symphonic Poems?" Etude 28 (May 1920): 305.

<sup>90</sup>Carl Engel, "Jazz: A Musical Discussion," Atlantic Monthly, August 1922, p. 186. At the time this article appeared, Engel (1883-1944) was in charge of the Music Division at the Library of Congress.

<sup>91</sup>Seldes, Seven Lively Arts, p. 70.

<sup>92</sup>Goldberg, Tin Pan Alley, p. 251.

Isidore Witmark, one of the most important ragtime publishers, in the late 1930s made this distinction between ragtime and jazz:

It was simple enough in its fundamentals, and not nearly so complicated as jazz, its breaks, its cross-rhythms, and its off-accents would be. Yet jazz . . . was a gradual and natural evolution from ragtime . . .<sup>93</sup>

Whether jazz actually replaced ragtime or was simply a new and unnecessary word designating a later phase of development becomes an argument over semantics. What is important is that accompanying the stylistic evolution of ragtime in the late 1910s and early '20s there was a shift away from the term "ragtime" and toward "jazz." By 1924 it could be confidently written that jazz "is the symbol, or byword for a great many elements in the spirit of the time--as far as America is concerned it is actually our characteristic expression."<sup>94</sup>

Sheet music publications and changes in musical style confirm the observations made by the writers quoted above. As will be discussed in later chapters, by the late 1910s there was a substantial decline in the number of compositions identified as rags and a blurring of stylistic traits that had previously characterized ragtime. Therefore,

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<sup>93</sup>Isidore Witmark and Isaac Goldberg, The Story of the House of Witmark: From Ragtime to Swingtime (New York: Lee Furman, 1939), p. 169.

<sup>94</sup>Seldes, Seven Lively Arts, p. 83.

some aspects of ragtime were retained by later forms, the evolution in style and terminology made it a thing of the past and the "ragtime era" came to a close.

#### Summary

Today, the term "ragtime" usually signifies piano music. During the ragtime era (from about 1896 to 1920), though, ragtime was perceived more often as vocal music. In the 1890s and early 1900s the songs usually identified as ragtime were coon songs; soon after the turn of the century the coon song was replaced by nonethnic, rhythmic popular songs.

In addition to songs, the ragtime concept was applied to band music played for dance, march, theater, and concert performance, and to a wide variety of unusual instrumental combinations. The music played by these ensembles included transcriptions of ragtime songs, syncopated versions of nonrag instrumental pieces, and original instrumental ragtime works. The relative position of piano ragtime will be examined more thoroughly in Chapter IV, but from the observations already made it is evident that the piano phase of ragtime was not as prominent as it appears today.

The main feature identifying almost all kinds of ragtime was syncopation. While the words "ragtime" or

"rag" referred to the genre, they also described the process of syncopation.

Ragtime also referred to dance. Although some dances were more closely associated with ragtime than others, the word was applied, rather loosely, to any steps performed to music identified as ragtime.

In the late 1910s the term "jazz" appeared, sometimes as a synonym for "ragtime," at other times as a replacement. By the 1920s jazz became dominant; the characterizing motto of American popular culture was no longer "ragtime," but "jazz."

## CHAPTER II

### ORIGINS AND EARLY MANIFESTATIONS

Ragtime was a new musical experience for most Americans in the late 1890s, and fascination with the music extended to a curiosity about its origins. There were many commentators willing to minister to this interest, and literature from the period provides a great variety of explanations of where, how, and when the music developed, acquired its name, and became popular. Some of the accounts have a ring of plausibility; others border on fantasy. All of the reports, though, provide additional insight on how contemporaries of the period considered the music.

#### Origins of the Music

Whether referring to vocal or instrumental ragtime, almost all commentators expressed the view that the originators of this syncopated music were black. There were some, convinced of ragtime's racial character, who assumed that the music was a direct import from Africa. An early newspaper item, for instance, suggested that ragtime could be fashioned simply by arranging African music into a song form:

M. B. Garrett, during the World's Fair, long before the 'coon' song epidemic became prevalent, was impressed one day during a visit to the Dahomey Village with a melody in strict 'rag-time' played by the natives. He jotted down the notes, filed them away and forgot about them. When the rage for Negro songs commenced . . . he at once set about arranging it into a song. No Coon Is One Half So Warm is now one of the most sought-after songs of the popular order before the public.<sup>1</sup>

Henry Edward Krehbiel (1854-1923), celebrated music critic for the New York Tribune, also listened to the Dahomean music at the World's Fair, and from his study of this and other African music (in published transcriptions) he concluded that more than half of his sampling of 527 melodies contained a rhythmic "snap" reminiscent of ragtime.<sup>2</sup>

Scott Joplin, too, described ragtime as something which Africans brought with them to this country:

Ragtime rhythm is a syncopation original with the colored people, though many are ashamed of it. But the other races throughout the world are learning to write and make use of ragtime melodies. . . .

There has been ragtime music in America ever since the Negro race has been here, but the white people took no notice of it until about twenty years ago.<sup>3</sup>

Krehbiel, in his study of Negro folksongs, concluded that the roots of ragtime could also be perceived in the

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<sup>1</sup>Unidentified article from the Chicago Chronicle, 1897, as quoted in Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, p. 150.

<sup>2</sup>Henry Edward Krehbiel, Afro-American Folksongs. A Study in Racial and National Music (New York: G. Schirmer, 1914), pp. 60-68.

<sup>3</sup>"Theatrical Comment," New York Age, 3 April 1913, p. 6.

rhythmically similar songs of the slave plantations, but implied that there was still a marked distinction between the two:

My analytical table shows that three-fifths of the [slave] songs which I have examined contain the peculiarly propulsive rhythmical snap, or catch, which has several times been described as the basis of "ragtime."<sup>4</sup>

The songs created by the negroes while they were slaves on the plantations of the South have cried out in vain for scientific study, though "ragtime" tunes, which are their debased offspring, have seized upon the fancy of the civilized world.<sup>5</sup>

Natalie Curtis (1875-1921), a writer on Negro and Indian music, had a more positive view toward ragtime, but shared Krehbiel's opinion that ragtime, though derived from slave music, was still something quite different:

Very different indeed from modern "rag-time" both musically and spiritually are the old folk-melodies of the plantation; yet many of these have also the rhythmic feature of syncopation--the short note falling on the even beat of the musical bar.<sup>6</sup>

She also suggested, however, that another body of black music may be the true source of ragtime:

. . . some authoritative colored men have traced the origin of the first "rag-time" melodies directly to the common working songs and boisterous merry-making of their own people.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Krehbiel, Afro-American Folksongs, p. 48.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. v.

<sup>6</sup>Natalie Curtis, "The Negro's Contribution to the Music of America: The Larger Opportunity for the Colored Man of Today," Craftsman, 15 March 1913, p. 662.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 661.

The possibility that the roots of ragtime, or at least a reflection of it, might lie in "patting juba"-- a dance accompaniment with a variety of rhythmic sounds produced by foot-tapping, hand-clapping, and slapping parts of the body<sup>8</sup>--was suggested by several writers, although they do not actually use that term:

The banjo figuration is very noticeable in the ragtime music and the division of one of the beats into two short notes is perhaps traceable to the hand-clapping; every American is familiar with the way the darkey pats his hands with two quick slaps alternating with the time-beating of the foot. Something like this effect is seen in the Bolero and in the accompaniment to the Polonaise. The so-called "snap" may be traced to the quick slap of the heel and toe of the foot in sharp succession.<sup>9</sup>

While the "patting juba" hypothesis seems plausible, no musical notation specifically relating juba to ragtime rhythms has been found. There is also evidence to the contrary. R. Nathaniel Dett (1882-1943), a black composer who grew up in a Canadian community populated by former slaves,<sup>10</sup> described "patting juba" in terms quite similar to Hughes's:

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<sup>8</sup>See descriptions in Southern, Music of Black Americans, pp. 53, 99, 168-69.

<sup>9</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," p. 158.

<sup>10</sup>Dominique-René de Lerma, "The Man," Introduction to The Collected Piano Works of R. Nathaniel Dett (Evanston, Ill.: Summy-Birchard Co., 1973), p. v.

"Juba" is the stamping on the ground with the foot and following it with two staccato pats of the hands in two-four time.<sup>11</sup>

But the rhythmic notation for his movement subtitled "Juba" (Example II-1) is clearly unlike the patterns characterizing ragtime (described in Chapter V below; see Examples V-2 and V-3). It is probable that there was more than one

EXAMPLE II-1. R. Nathaniel Dett, "Dance (Juba)," from In the Bottoms (Chicago: Clayton F. Summy Co., 1913): (a) measures 1-4; (b) measures 81-84.

(a)

(b)

style of patting juba, but without more evidence juba cannot be linked to ragtime except as a manifestation of the gener-

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<sup>11</sup>R. Nathaniel Dett, Program Notes for "Dance (Juba)," fifth movement of the suite In the Bottoms (Chicago: Clayton F. Summy Co., 1913); reprinted in Collected Piano Works of R. Nathaniel Dett, p. 33.

ally rhythmic nature of black dance music.

As the vaudeville and minstrel stages were the natural habitats of the coon song, black inspired minstrelsy was widely regarded as a source of ragtime:

Even the rag-time, that decidedly unique phenomenon of harmonies, is a child of the stage.<sup>12</sup>

Some more recent commentaries by two observant contemporaries of the ragtime era express the same view:

Q: Do you think the ragtime era, which supposedly started in Sedalia, Missouri and later developed in St. Louis, existed prior to the development in New Orleans and New York?

Carew: I think the idea was developing in the minstrel shows in the midwest with these songs that had ragtime in them. . . . The first publications, though, did not have ragtime accompaniment. For example, Turkey in the Straw and Buffalo Gals had ragtime melody that they sang with chords for the accompaniment.<sup>13</sup>

Old Dan Tucker, Buffalo Gals and others of the 1840's suggest the advanced age of ragtime.<sup>14</sup>

Composer Charles Ives (1874-1954) also linked minstrelsy with ragtime, recalling how, in the early 1890s in Danbury and New Haven, he witnessed "black-faced comedians . . . ragging their songs."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Sherlock, "From Breakdown to Ragtime," p. 639.

<sup>13</sup>Kay, "Reminiscing in Ragtime: An Interview with Roy Carew," p. 8.

<sup>14</sup>Cole, Untitled letter, p. 20.

<sup>15</sup>Charles E. Ives: Memos, ed. John Kirkpatrick (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1972), p. 56. The piece Ives cites as being one he heard in 1893 or 1894 is Irving Jones's I'm Livin' Easy, published in 1899, some years later than the dates suggested by Ives. Ives's memory may have

While piano ragtime accounts for only a small portion of the literature on this subject, there are several citations connecting the piano with the origins or early appearances of the genre. A description in James Weldon Johnson's novel The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man<sup>16</sup> specifically attributes the genesis to pianists, making the ragtime song a derivative of the piano style:

This was rag-time music, then a novelty in New York, and just growing to be a rage, which has not yet subsided. It was originated in the questionable resorts about Memphis and St. Louis by Negro piano-players who knew no more of the theory of music than they did of the theory of the universe, but were guided by natural musical instinct and talent. It made its way to Chicago, where it was popular for some time before it reached New York. These players often improvised crude, and, at times, vulgar words to fit the melodies. This was the beginning of the rag-time song. Several of these improvisations were taken down by white men, the words slightly altered, and published under the names of the arrangers. They sprang into immediate popularity and earned small fortunes, of which the Negro originators got only a few dollars. But I have learned that since that time a number of coloured men, of not only musical talent, but training, are writing out their own melodies and words and are reaping the reward of their work. I have learned also that they have a large number of white imitators and adulterators.<sup>17</sup>

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faltered on this detail, or the song might have been known to the minstrel stage prior to its publication.

<sup>16</sup>Originally published anonymously (Boston: Sherman, French & Co., 1912); reprinted with the author's name (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1927); reprinted in Three Negro Classics (New York: Avon Books, Discus Books, 1965), pp. 391-511. Page numbers for quotations are from the last-mentioned publication.

<sup>17</sup>Johnson, Ex-Colored Man, chap. 6 (pp. 447-48). While this passage is from a work of fiction, its serious consideration as a historical document is justified. Johnson

The piano is also central to the various accounts of Ben Harney's role in the early development of ragtime. But his piano style was connected with vocal ragtime as he was equally prominent as a singer on the vaudeville stage. The first piano ragtime instruction book bears his name, Ben Harney's Rag Time Instructor (1897), but it contains no original piano pieces; it consists entirely of song transcriptions. His popular publications, too, are ragtime songs. Therefore, while his piano style did attract attention, it had roots in the popular songs of the day.

Articles, such as those below, often refer to Harney's importance in the early popularization of ragtime --or even in its origin--but they should be read with the understanding that despite his fame as a pianist, he probably represents a fusion of vocal and piano phases.

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(1871-1938) was a widely accomplished individual whose activities spanned the various provinces of education, law, international diplomacy, literature, music, musical theater, history, journalism, and race relations. In the first decade of the twentieth century he was intimately connected with the creation of ragtime songs, collaborating as a lyricist with his brother J. Rosamond Johnson (1873-1954) --educated at New England Conservatory of Music--and Bob Cole (1863-1911) in writing some of the most successful songs and Negro musical comedies for the New York stage. In the above novel, music, and especially ragtime, is assigned a decisive role. In following years he wrote several important nonfictional studies of Afro-American history, music, and culture. His allusions to ragtime, then, should be judged not as fantasy, but as the considered opinions of an able and articulate black man who had devoted much of his life to the revelation and furtherance of black culture.

Mr. Ben Harney is believed to have been the first Caucasian to translate ragtime to the piano. He learned it from a negro whose songs he accompanied and made it the rage of Chicago and the West before it was heard in the East.<sup>18</sup>

Ben Harney, a white man who had a fine negro shouting voice, probably did more to popularize ragtime than any other person. Harney, who was playing in Louisville, heard the new music, and grew so adept at it that he came to New York and appeared in the Weber and Fields Music Hall. Of course ragtime may have appeared here before Harney; there were numbers of wandering musicians playing in saloons and cafés in those days; but credit is due him because he played in a first-class theatre before any other ragtime exponent.<sup>19</sup>

Harney apparently took his reputation as originator, or original popularizer, of ragtime quite seriously. In 1918, in response to rival assertions--most notably those by minstrel dancer Jim McIntyre, who claimed to have brought ragtime to Tony Pastor's Theatre in New York in 1879--Harney offered to leave the profession and forfeit one hundred dollars if anyone could submit a rag predating his own ragtime songs, the earliest being You've Been a Good Old Wagon but You've Done Broke Down (1895) and Mister Johnson, Turn Me Loose (1896).<sup>20</sup> Presumably, no one claimed the award.

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<sup>18</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Ragtime," p. 159. Ragtime pianist and songwriter Eubie Blake (b. 1883) has revealed that Harney (1871-1938) was actually a black man who passed for white; see Alec Wilder, American Popular Song (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 9. A photograph of Harney is reproduced in Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, following p. 80.

<sup>19</sup>"The Origin of Ragtime," New York Times.

<sup>20</sup>"Again the Origin of Ragtime," Melody 2 (December 1918): 4.

The city of Chicago was frequently mentioned as the site of the initial unveiling of ragtime to a mass public. James Weldon Johnson, for example, claimed that after originating in Memphis and Saint Louis, the style became popular in Chicago prior to reaching New York (see page 47 above). Shep Edmonds (1876-1975), a black dancer, song writer, and ragtime pianist, also made this point:

Genuine ragtime arrived in New York by way of Chicago, Mr. Edmonds recalls, and most of the early [ragtime] contest players came from the Windy City; such men as Eddie James, Plunk Henry, Johnnie Europe, Ben Harney and his partner, "Black Strap," Johnnie Seamore . . .<sup>21</sup>

Rupert Hughes, quoted above, referred to Harney's early success in Chicago, and M. B. Garrett claimed to have found inspiration in the African music heard at the World's Columbian Exposition, more commonly known as the Chicago World's Fair of 1893 (see page 42 above). The publisher Isidore Witmark, referring to what might be the earliest published ragtime arrangements (1896), also links ragtime to the Fair: "The work [ragtime arrangements] was begun in Chicago, which still echoed with the joyousness of the World's Fair of 1893."<sup>22</sup> There are other allusions, as well, associating the Fair with the development and popularization of ragtime:

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<sup>21</sup>R. J. Carew, "Shephard N. Edmonds," Record Changer (December 1947): 14.

<sup>22</sup>Witmark and Goldberg, House of Witmark, p. 169.

"Rag-time" is essentially a simple syncopation. The faculty for it must be acquired, much like the taste for caviar. The negroes of the South employed it in the banjo accompaniments to their songs, but not until the "mid-ways" of our recent expositions stimulated general appreciation of Oriental rhythms did "rag-time" find supporters throughout the country.<sup>23</sup>

The American public has renounced the "coon" song with its negro "rag time."

Probably no fad in the musical world ever took hold of the popular fancy with a more tenacious or long-lived grip than the "coon" song. The fad had its origin along about 1893, the year of the Chicago World's Fair.<sup>24</sup>

It has been said that "rag-time" first appeared in our music-halls about the time of the Chicago World's Fair.<sup>25</sup>

Precisely what occurred at the Fair in terms of ragtime, or of some embryonic form, is elusive. Blesh and Janis assert that Joplin and hundreds of other itinerant pianists converged upon the Fair, giving ragtime a strong impetus,<sup>26</sup> but provide no documentation. While there were many music exhibits at the Fair, no notices have been found suggestive of ragtime activity. It is possible that this

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<sup>23</sup>"Questions and Answers," Etude 16 (December 1898): 349.

<sup>24</sup>"'Coon Songs' on the Wane," American Musician and Art Journal 22 (12 June 1906): 26a.

<sup>25</sup>Curtis, "The Negro's Contribution to the Music of America," p. 662.

<sup>26</sup>They All Played Ragtime, pages 18, 41. The "Worlds Fair dance" in Joplin's Ragtime Dance (see p. 31 above) might refer to the Chicago Exposition, but there were also several later fairs which may have provided this name.

activity occurred outside the fair grounds, or without official sanction on the fair grounds, and was therefore "officially" ignored; such an attitude would not be surprising for, while Africans were invited to participate, Afro-Americans were generally excluded.<sup>27</sup> It seems strange that Krehbiel, who was so intent on studying the music at the Fair and drawing parallels between African and Afro-American musics, failed to note the emergence of something new and unique in this area, but he may have simply missed it. The evidence of the above quotations indicates that something did happen there, however obscure the picture now appears.

#### Origins of the Term

Among the commentaries on ragtime, many sought to explain how the music acquired the peculiar name of "ragtime." Some of the explanations appear reasonable; others strain credibility.

Precisely when the word "ragtime," or some recognizable variant or ancestor, was first used to describe one of the categories of music which eventually became known by that term is yet to be discovered. Blesh and Janis

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<sup>27</sup>Eugene Levy, James Weldon Johnson: Black Leader; Black Voice (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973), pp. 39-40. See also, The Reason Why the Colored American Is Not in the World's Columbian Exposition (Chicago, 1893).

propose an article from 1886 in which the rhythm of a Negro dance music is described as "ragged":

The bamboula still roars and rattles, twangs, contorts, and tumbles in terrible earnest. . . . Will they dance nothing else? Ah!--the music changes. The rhythm stretches out heathenish and ragged.<sup>28</sup>

The musical example corresponding to the description of the "ragged" rhythm, though, does not present ragtime rhythms (Example II-2a). Ironically, the preceding bamboula, which is mentioned before the rhythm becomes "ragged," is illustrated by music more closely resembling ragtime (Example II-2b). While it is intriguing to speculate that

EXAMPLE II-2. Illustrations from Cable, "The Dance in Place Congo": (a) page 526; (b) page 525.

(a)

En bas hé, en bas hé, Par en bas yé pé - lé - lé moin, yé pé - lé - lé, Counjaille  
'Way yon - der, 'way yon - der, 'Way down there they're call - ing me, they are calling, but Coonjye,

(b)

ARR. BY H. E. KREHBIEL.  
*Fine.*

Vo - yez ce mu - let la, Mi - ché Bain - jo, comme il est in - so - lent. Cha - peau sur co -

PIANO—*Sempre staccato.*

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<sup>28</sup>George W. Cable, "The Dance in Place Congo," Century Magazine, February 1886, p. 525; reprinted in Bernard Katz, The Social Implications of Early Negro Music in the United States (New York: Arno Press & New York Times, 1969), p. 40. Quoted in Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, p. 83.

Cable's use of the term may be related in some way to the eventual blossoming of the word "ragtime," that his use may have reflected a common and widespread manner of describing Negro dance rhythms, additional supportive evidence has not been found.

Another article cited by Blesh and Janis attributes the first written use of the term "ragtime" to an unidentified journalist:

This branch of music was later named 'rag time' by a white newspaper critic who was not aware that he had discovered a name for it even after other writers and the public had taken the name and used it.<sup>29</sup>

However, without knowing where or when this journalist used the term, the claim can not be evaluated.

Despite the indication that some form of ragtime made an appearance at or around the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, there is no evidence that the term was at that time attached to the musical style. The earliest authenticated application of the words "rag" and "ragtime" is on several coon song editions from 1896, published by M. Witmark (New York and Chicago). Appended to Ernest Hogan's All Coons Look Alike to Me there is an optional arrangement of the chorus, labeled: "Choice Chorus, with Negro 'Rag' Accompaniment Arr. by Max Hoffmann"; a similar statement and arrangement by Hoffmann is included in the publication

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<sup>29</sup>Unidentified article, Stage (September 1904), as quoted in Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, p. 103.

of W. T. Jefferson's My Coal Black Lady (see example IV-1). Also, on the cover of Ben Harney's You've Been a Good Old Wagon but You've Done Broke Down appears the banner:

"Original Introducer to the Stage of the Now Popular 'Rag Time' in Ethiopian Song."<sup>30</sup> By the following year, 1897, many published songs and instrumental pieces bore these labels. The preface to the song Syncopated Sandy (1897)--perhaps the earliest printed discussion of ragtime--suggests that the term is derived from a description of the characteristic syncopation:

Rag-Time

As Illustrated in "Syncopated Sandy"

The authors and publishers in presenting "Syncopated Sandy" to the public, have succeeded in illustrating for the first time the absolute theory of the now famous "RAG-TIME" music, which originated with the negroes and is characteristic of their people. The negroe in playing the piano, strikes the keys with the same time and measure that he taps the floor with his heels and toes in dancing, thereby obtaining a peculiarly accented time effect which he terms "RAG-TIME."<sup>31</sup>

The suggestion of this preface, that the word "rag-time" was an outgrowth of attempts to describe the synco-

<sup>30</sup>The copyright registrations for these songs are dated, respectively, the weeks of August 3, 1896, November 23, 1896, and October 5, 1896. You've Been a Good Old Wagon had a prior publication, in 1895, by a different publisher (Louisville, Ky.: Greenup Music Co.), without the ragtime banner.

<sup>31</sup>Ned Wayburn and Stanley Whiting, Syncopated Sandy (New York: Broder & Schlam, 1897), p. 2; see Ex. IV-1 below. Some time later, Wayburn asserted that this was the first rag introduced to Broadway; see "The Father of Ragtime Has Another Big Idea," New York Times, 12 September 1915, sec. 6, p. 3.

pated rhythm, is supported by other writers as well:

"Where did the term 'Ragtime' originate?" It originated in the South at a darkey dance! . . .

One of the dusky dancers stepped up to the first fiddler and asked him to repeat the dance.

"Which one?"

"Oh, the one that had sort of a ragged time to it, a sort of ragtime piece."<sup>32</sup>

Etymological roots were also suggested. A librarian at the Library of Congress sought to connect "rag" with Indian "raga,"<sup>33</sup> while Rupert Hughes found Romanic derivations:

What the derivation of the word is, I haven't the slightest idea. The negroes call their clog-dancing "ragging," and the dance a "rag." There is a Spanish verb, raer "to scrape," and a French naval term ragué, "scraped," both doubtless from the Latin rado--and in such direction the etymologists may find peace, for the dance is highly shuffling.<sup>34</sup>

Far less sober is the account tracing ragtime to Shake Ragtown, a supposed mid-nineteenth century village outside Saint Louis. The Shake Ragers, as the inhabitants were known, often had dances, the music being provided by a single musician,

. . . a left-handed fiddler, a Frenchman named Tebeau, whose musical proficiency was limited to three tunes . . . ; to make up for his lack of music and to give variety to his performance he would also sing the tune and keep time by pounding on the floor with his heavy boots. . . .

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<sup>32</sup>Oehmler, "Ragtime," p. 14.

<sup>33</sup>"A Ragtime Communication," Musical Courier 40 (30 May 1900): 20.

<sup>34</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," p. 158.

It was not long before the shake ragger's dances became known all over St. Louis, and the left-handed fiddler Tebeau was called upon to preside at more pretentious affairs. Musicians soon imitated him. . . . Tebeau's ragtime extended along its [the Mississippi River's] length and spread up and down its tributaries until it became known all over the country.<sup>35</sup>

The ambiguity of the word "rag," referring equally to the music, to the clothing worn by its black exponents (taking a stereotyped view), and to the rag-picking vocation, produced puns in titles and on covers: Rag-a-Muffin Rag, Ragged Rastus, Rag Pickers Rag, Rags to Burn, Original Rags --"Picked by Scott Joplin"--(cover depicting a Negro rag-picker), Harlem Rag and Rag Medley (both with covers showing ragged clothing on clothes lines), and the like. Inevitably, this equivocation suggested derivations of the word as well:

"Rag-time" originated in the South, where bands of colored musicians first played it. These bands are not usually organized, not uniformed, being volunteer affairs. The colored race is extremely imitative, and all playing mostly "by ear," any mistake or peculiarity made by one band, which happens to take their fancy, is readily taken by all the others.

This music got its name from the rough appearance of the bands, which are called rag-bands, and the music rag-music, or "rag-time" music.<sup>36</sup>

Another Ben Harney story also associates the term's origin with clothing. Attending a Negro party in a suburb of Louisville, Harney tried to imitate at the piano the

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<sup>35</sup>"Origin of Ragtime," Metronome 17 (August 1901): 7.

<sup>36</sup>"Questions and Answers," Etude 18 (February 1900): 52.

rhythm he heard being produced on two banjos. One of the banjoists then approached Harney and inquired:

"Marsa Ben, wha' am yo' playin' dar? Dat am de funniest kin' ob tune I'se ebber heerd."

"I don't know what it is myself," replied Harney, in an off-hand way. "I suppose if I had a dress suit on like some of these actors at the show, I might give it a nice, fashionable name. But as it is I can't think of any name in these rags and you will have to let it go at that."

The following week Harney was at another party in the same neighborhood, and the banjoist announced to the guests:

"Ladies an' ge'men. Marsa Ben Harney has got some ob de most peculiarist kin' ob music dat I ebber heerd afo'. An' I'se beg yo' kin' 'dulgence fo' t' hyar it. I'se don' know de name ob de tune, but it am de loblied I'se ebber heerd."

Ben thought the remark very funny and replied, "What do you mean, Jasper? That music I played in those rags last week?"

"Yes," returned Jasper, enthusiastically, "dat rag-time music."<sup>37</sup>

Of the various derivations of the term, those tracing the name to condition of dress and to places are too implausible for serious consideration. Etymological derivations, too, though interesting, are not convincing. Dance may be a source of ragtime rhythms, but it does not appear to have supplied the name. Overwhelmingly, the evidence points to the simplest and most direct explanation, tying the term to the ragged quality of the syncopated rhythm.

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<sup>37</sup>"Origin of Rag Time," Musician 6 (September 1901): 227.

Summary

The question of how and where ragtime, the word and the music, began intrigued contemporaries of the period. While their written speculations often fail to shed significant light on the actual origins, these writings remain important components to the present survey of contemporaneous thinking about ragtime.

The one point on which almost everyone agreed was that ragtime originated with blacks; some writers sought to trace the music back to Africa, but most were content to place the origins in the nineteenth century. Rhythmic similarities with plantation music were noted, but ragtime was generally assumed to lack the spiritual values of the former. The practice of "patting juba" was also suggested as being an earlier manifestation of the ragtime impulse, but, while this explanation is plausible, no musical evidence in the form of written notation has been found to substantiate a specific connection. As Negro minstrelsy sustained the coon song--the first music to carry the ragtime label--it was reasonably assumed that ragtime emerged from the minstrel stage. There is testimony, too, confirming that these songs were syncopated in performance at least by the early 1890s.

The most prominent figure named in connection with the origins of piano ragtime was pianist-singer Ben Harney, whose keyboard publications are all transcriptions of vocal

music. Accounts generally place the origins of piano ragtime in states bordering on the Mississippi River--specifically, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Missouri. From there it is supposed to have moved to Chicago, and then to New York. Despite the apparent conflict with reports of early and widespread "ragging" on the minstrel stage, there is abundant testimony that ragtime--in all of its forms--was introduced to the general public at or around the Chicago World's Fair of 1893. While detailed information is lacking on the ragtime or ragtime-related activities at the Fair, it would seem that something significant did occur there.

The earliest appearance of the word "ragtime" in print has been found on a coon song publication--Ernest Hogan's All Coons Look Alike to Me--from the summer of 1896. Later that year the same publisher, M. Witmark, issued additional coon songs with the "ragtime" label; the way the term is used in these publications, without explanation and with reference to its popularity, suggests that "ragtime" was already a familiar word.

Various attempts were made to demonstrate the derivation of the word itself. Some explanations derived the word from Indian or Romance languages, others linked it to the ragged clothing supposedly worn by black ragtime musicians, or to the name of a town where the music originated. The most plausible reasoning related the term to the ragged rhythmic quality of the syncopated music.

## CHAPTER III

### THE RAGTIME CONTROVERSY

Written opposition to ragtime must certainly mark a low point in the history of music criticism. Not that the supportive writings, appearing in approximately the same numbers, display greater judicious insight; the exaggerated significance attributed to ragtime, by both factions, generally reveals an acute lack of perspective. But defenders of the music, when compared with the righteous, pompous, and abusively prejudiced critics, almost invariably appear more reasonable.

While the controversy raged in print, the American public, and ultimately the European audience, could not get enough of the catchy syncopated beat. The real significance of the criticism of ragtime lies not in any influence it could exercise over the music or on its public, but in what it reveals of attitudes toward popular culture, attitudes that are still prevalent today. The European-oriented critics saw ragtime as a threat to the accepted aesthetics of the past. Ludicrous as it may seem, they envisioned Bach and Beethoven as being replaced by Botsford

and Berlin.<sup>1</sup> Further intensifying the reaction was the recognition that this popular music engulfing the United States had its origins with the despised Negro race. It is only against the background of these fears and ingrained sentiments that the virulence of ragtime's critics can be understood.

#### Ragtime Texts

At least one major criticism was justified. Expressed mostly during the early days of ragtime, this objection was directed not against the music itself, but against the words:

Unfortunately, the words to which it [ragtime] is allied are usually decidedly vulgar, so that its present great favor is somewhat to be deplored.<sup>2</sup>

Rag-time . . . is heard on every hotel piano, from the windows of private houses and in concert halls. It is the vulgar words to which it is set that make it so degrading.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ironically, the record industry's recent classification of Scott Joplin as a "classical" composer, apparently because of the releases on such "classical" labels as None-such and Angel, has brought about a type of fulfillment of this fear. The 6 July 1974 issue of Record World, a trade publication, refers to Joplin as "THE classical phenomenon of the decade," and notes that for several weeks in 1974 the entire list of "Best Sellers" in classical music recordings was composed of Joplin albums. (As summarized in "'Record World' Features Joplin," Rag Times 8 [September 1974]: 5.)

<sup>2</sup>"Questions and Answers," Etude 16 (October 1898): 285.

<sup>3</sup>"The Ragtime Rage," Musical Courier 40 (23 May 1900): 20.

It is by the addition of words that this grade of composition receives another signification--words that are halting in morals and measure--and that render them not only inappropriate upon most occasions, but highly improper.<sup>4</sup>

The reasons for the complaints are obvious; many of the early songs--the coon songs--make the basest appeals to racial bigotry, using caricatured, stereotyped ridicule and brutally coarse language. As described by one writer, in announcing the demise of the coon song,

Nearly all of them were written around the ornery, lazy, "nigger" type of the negro, who was everlastingly having trouble of some kind with his "gal."<sup>5</sup>

Another, also celebrating the decline of this genre, depicted it as "the crude and rough 'coon' song that tells about razors, chickens and pork pies."<sup>6</sup> Emphasizing that his distaste for coon songs was not a blanket condemnation of all ragtime, he added:

While the "rag" dance is always a fairly welcome addition to modern music--such as the "Maple Leaf," the new "Buxton Rag" and other odd affairs, still these are a far cry to the acrobatic, tough, darky shout.<sup>7</sup>

Generally, the themes of coon song lyrics can be summarized as: violence (especially with a razor), dishonesty,

<sup>4</sup>Paul G. Carr, "Abuses of Music," Musician 6 (October 1901): 299.

<sup>5</sup>"'Coon Songs' on the Wane."

<sup>6</sup>"Scores of Popular Songs Coming Out," American Musician and Art Journal 26 (14 March 1907): 26.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

greed, gambling, shiftlessness, cowardliness, and sexual promiscuity.<sup>8</sup> Several samples of these song texts are presented here as illustrations:

May Irwin's "Bully" Song

Have yo' heard about dat bully dat's just come to town  
He's round among de niggers a-layin' their bodies down  
I'm lookin' for dat bully and he must be found.

. . . . .

I was sandin' down the Mobile Buck just to cut a shine  
Some coon across my smeller swiped a watermellon rin'  
I drewed my steel dat gemmen for to fin'  
I riz up like a black cloud and took a look aroun'  
There was dat new bully standin' on the ground  
I've been lookin' for you nigger and I've got you found.  
Razors 'gun a flyin', niggers 'gun to squawk, . . .<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>This last item differs considerably from the glorified sexuality of early jazz and rock lyrics, although the opposition to these later styles is voiced in language strikingly similar to the above quotations. For studies on the reactions to jazz and rock lyrics, see: Jonathan Kamin, "Parallels in the Social Reactions to Jazz and Rock," Journal of Jazz Studies 2 (December 1974): 95-125; reprinted in Black Perspectives in Music 3 (Fall 1975): 278-98; Morroe Berger, "Jazz: Resistance to the Diffusion of a Culture Pattern," Journal of Negro History 33 (October 1947): 461-94; reprinted in Charles Nanry, ed., American Music: Storyville to Woodstock (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1972), pp. 11-43; Neil Leonard, Jazz and the White Americans (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1960); David A. Cayer, "Black and Blue and Black Again: Three Stages of Racial Imagery in Jazz Lyrics," Journal of Jazz Studies 1 (June 1974): 38-71.

<sup>9</sup>Charles E. Trevathan, May Irwin's "Bully" Song (New York: White-Smith Music Publishing Co., 1896); reprinted in Stanley Appelbaum, ed. Show Songs from "The Black Crook" to "The Red Mill": Original Sheet Music for 60 Songs from 50 Shows, 1866-1906 (New York: Dover Publications, 1974), p. 77. James Weldon Johnson has written that prior to its publication this song had been a roustabout folk song frequently heard along the Mississippi River; see Johnson, "Preface to the First Edition," The Book of American Negro Poetry, rev. ed. (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1931),

## My Coal Black Lady

## [Chorus]

This coal black lady, She is my baby,  
 You cannot blame me, No! no! no!  
 'Case I love her, so! so! so!  
 Her color's shady, But she's a lady,  
 Don't trifle with my coal black lady.

## [Verse 2]

I'se particular to mention,  
 That it is my great intention  
 For to carve that yaller coon,  
 That tries to win this girl of mine,  
 This little coal black valentine,  
 My razor'll seal his doom, . . .<sup>10</sup>

## Mister Johnson, Turn Me Loose

## [Verse 1]

T'other eb'ning eb'rything was still, Oh! babe  
 De moon was climbin' down behind de hill, Oh! babe  
 T'ough eb'ry body was a sound asleep  
 But a old man a Johnson was a on his beat, Oh babe,  
 I went down into a nigger crap game  
 Where de coons were a gambling wid a might and main,  
 T'ought I'd be a sport and be dead game,  
 I gambled my money and I wasn't to blame  
 One nigger's point was a little, a Joe  
 Bettin' six bits t'a quarter he could make the four.  
 He made dat point but de made no more  
 Just den Johnson jump'd thro' de door.

## [Chorus]

Oh! Mister Johnson turn me loose,  
 Got no money but a good excuse  
 Oh! Mister Johnson, I'll be good  
 Oh! Mister Johnson turn me loose,  
 Don't take me to de calaboose,  
 Oh! Mister Johnson, I'll be good.

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p. 31. The same observation was made by pioneer blues composer W. C. Handy (1873-1958); see Handy, The Father of the Blues: An Autobiography, ed. Arna Bontemps, Forward by Abbe Niles (New York: Macmillan Co., 1941), p. 118.

<sup>10</sup>W. T. Jefferson, My Coal Black Lady. Symphony de Ethiopia (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1896).

## [Verse 2]

. . . . .  
 A big black coon was a lookin' fer chickens,  
 When a great big bulldog got to raisin' de dickens,  
 De coon got higher, de chicken got nigher,  
 Just den Johnson opened up fire.

## [Chorus 2]

I got no chance for to be turned loose  
 Got no chance for a good excuse  
 Oh! Mister Johnson, I'll be good,  
 And now he's playin' seben eleben  
 Way up yonder in de nigger heabn,  
 Oh! Mister Johnson, made him good.<sup>11</sup>

## Do Your Honey Do

## [Verse 1]

What am de use for to tarry and toil,  
 And to save up all your dough,  
 When you feel in your bones,  
 Dat de gal dat you love,  
 Is another big nigger's beau,  
 And the cheek of dat wench  
 For to come around and say,  
 Dis here love you nebber can share,  
 I've another big coon,  
 He am de star o' my soul,  
 Now do him if you dare.

## [Chorus]

And I done him, cause I loved her  
 I carved him long, I carved him deep,

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<sup>11</sup>Ben Harney, Mister Johnson, Turn Me Loose (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1896; original publication, New York: Frank K. Harding, 1896); reprinted in Appelbaum, Show Songs, p. 98. Prior to the publication of Harney's Mister Johnson, also in 1896, a slightly different version of this song, composed by Haering and Green and arranged by Gus Guentzel, was published by G. W. Warren Co. of Evansville, Ind. Concerned about conflicting claims of authorship to this and other Harney pieces, including You've Been a Good Old Wagon and the Ragtime Instructor, publisher Isidore Witmark traveled to Louisville, Kentucky, and Evansville, Indiana to determine who the true composer was. After interviewing individuals in the musical life of these cities, he was convinced of Harney's claim. See Witmark and Goldberg, House of Witmark, p. 153.

Yes I done him, Does you believe me,  
And I put that coon to sleep, . . .<sup>12</sup>

There were some who were willing to find positive features to such lyrics. Rupert Hughes, for example, praised Ernest Hogan (Reuben Crowders, 1865-1909) for "his exceedingly ingenious satire on his own race, 'All Coons Look Alike to Me.'"<sup>13</sup> While this song is not quite as offensive as those quoted above, other individuals sensitive to the mockery inherent in the title viewed it less generously. When Rosamond Johnson and Bob Cole<sup>14</sup> performed this song, uneasy about using the word "coon," they habitually substituted the word "boys," thereby removing much of the piece's racially denigrating quality.<sup>15</sup> Because of the embarrassment he caused others of his race, Hogan came to regret being responsible for bringing this song before the public,<sup>16</sup> a song he actually did not originate, but had appropriated from a Chicago saloon pianist. Ironically, Hogan's contri-

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<sup>12</sup>Theodore A. Metz, Do Your Honey Do (Supplement to the Philadelphia Press, 14 November 1897.) Additional samples of lyrics may be seen in Goldberg, Tin Pan Alley, pp. 155-63.

<sup>13</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," p. 159.

<sup>14</sup>See p. 48 n above.

<sup>15</sup>Levy, James Weldon Johnson, p. 87.

<sup>16</sup>Tom Fletcher, The Tom Fletcher Story: 100 Years of the Negro in Show Business (New York: Burdge & Co., 1954), p. 141. See also, Ann Charters, Nobody. The Story of Bert Williams (New York: Macmillan Co., 1970), p. 50.

bution to the song was in making the words more acceptable, "coons" replacing the original "pimps."<sup>17</sup>

After the first few years of the twentieth century, the more flagrantly abusive lyrics were put aside and replaced by texts of greater acceptability to a broader spectrum of the American public. James Weldon Johnson, for instance, while favoring dialect lyrics as a valuable part of the Afro-American heritage (see his statement on page 8 above), avoided the rough, razor-wielding bully and other demeaning stereotypes in his own lyrics; instead he depicted situations and characters with which his white audience could sympathize, and even identify (see his words for Under the Bamboo Tree, page 70 below). As the trend toward milder lyrics continued, instances of criticism directed toward song texts accordingly declined. While later songs also were occasionally accused of vulgarity, the specific objections are not clear. Scott Joplin, for example, who was not averse to writing coon lyrics of a gentler sort (as in his song The Ragtime Dance), as late as 1913 voiced a complaint against ragtime song texts:

I have often sat in theatres and listened to beautiful ragtime melodies set to almost vulgar words as a

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<sup>17</sup>Fletcher, Tom Fletcher Story, p. 138; Charters, Nobody, p. 49. In addition, publisher Isidore Witmark was responsible for much of the final version, composing the music for the verse and some of the words for the second verse; see Witmark and Goldberg, House of Witmark, pp. 195-96.

song, and I have wondered why some composers will continue to make the public hate ragtime melodies because the melodies are set to such bad words.

I have often heard people say after they heard a ragtime song, "I like the music, but I don't like the words." And most people who say they do not like ragtime have reference to the words and not the music.

If some one were to put vulgar words to a strain of Beethoven's beautiful Symphonies, people would begin saying: "I don't like Beethoven Symphonies." So it is the unwholesome words and not the ragtime melodies that many people hate.<sup>18</sup>

A writer for the London Times was less inclined to attack later ragtime lyrics. Quoting the text of Waiting for the Robert E. Lee (1912),

Way down on the levee in old Alabamy  
There's daddy and mammy  
There's Ephraim and Sammy  
On a moonlight night you can find them all,

and citing other songs with equally innocuous words, he defended the texts and praised the settings, demonstrating the rhythmic compatibility of words and music.<sup>19</sup>

Hiram Moderwell, a fervent supporter of ragtime, acknowledged that "The words, also, too often have the chief vice of vulgarity," but failed to demonstrate this "vice." Instead, he pointed out that "ragtime words have at least one artistic quality of the highest rank. They fit the music like a glove."<sup>20</sup> In a later article he came

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<sup>18</sup>"Theatrical Comment."

<sup>19</sup>"Rag-Time," Times (London); see additional quotation below, pp. 98-99.

<sup>20</sup>Moderwell, "Ragtime," p. 285.

out with a more forthright defense; comparing the words of I Love a Piano with the saccharine lyrics of an unnamed American art song, he asked which a "healthy people" should prefer. His conclusion suggests that charges of vulgarity may be directed against nothing more objectionable than ordinary American, or New York, slang.<sup>21</sup> (As he pointed out elsewhere in the article, labeling these words as "vulgar" is hardly a criticism at all, signifying simply that they are of "the people.")<sup>22</sup>

Regardless of how the question of vulgarity was viewed, ragtime songs became a part of the American landscape, and as such were reflected in other areas of culture. The song Under the Bamboo Tree (1902), for instance, was echoed outside the sphere of ragtime on at least two occasions. In a notable departure from the usual coon song, this piece relates, in sympathetic language, the courtship of a maid of "dusky shade" by a "Zulu from Matabooloo":

If you lak-a-me, lak I lak-a-you  
 And we lak-a-both the same,  
 I lak-a say, this very day,  
 I lak-a-change your name;  
 'Cause I love-a-you and love-a-you true  
 And if you-a love-a-me,  
 One live as two, two live as one  
 Under the bamboo tree.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Moderwell, "A Modest Proposal," p. 373.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 369.

<sup>23</sup>James Weldon Johnson (words), Bob Cole and

Being drawn beyond the orbit of the musical stage, Under the Bamboo Tree was parodied for a Yale victory song:

Oh, I'd like to win, And you'd like to win  
 We'd both like to win the same.  
 But we'd like to say This very day  
 Yale's going to win this game.<sup>24</sup>

It is also the obvious source for a minstrel scene in T. S.

Eliot's "Fragment of an Agon":

SONG BY WAUCHOPE AND HORSFALL  
 SWARTS AS TAMBO. SNOW AS BONES

Under the bamboo  
 Bamboo bamboo  
 Under the bamboo tree  
 Two live as one  
 One live as two  
 Two live as three  
 Under the bam  
 Under the boo  
 Under the bamboo tree.<sup>25</sup>

Another song that caught Eliot's attention is  
That Shakespearian Rag,<sup>26</sup> from the Ziegfield Follies of 1912.

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J. Rosamond Johnson (music), Under the Bamboo Tree (New York: Joseph W. Stern & Co., 1902); reprinted in Fremont, Favorite Songs, p. 330. The chorus of this song is a variant of the Negro spiritual Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Seen; see Edward Bennet Marks, They All Sang, from Tony Pastor to Rudy Vallée, as told to Abbott J. Liebling (New York: Viking Press, 1934), p. 97, and Southern, Music of Black Americans, p. 304.

<sup>24</sup>Levy, James Weldon Johnson, p. 89.

<sup>25</sup>T. S. Eliot, "Fragment of an Agon," Criterion 4 (January 1927); reprinted in T. S. Eliot, The Complete Poems and Plays: 1909--1950 (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1952), p. 81.

<sup>26</sup>Written by Dave Stamper, Gene Buck, and Herman Ruby.

The words

That Shakespearian Rag,  
Most intelligent, very elegant

are transferred to lines 128-30 of Eliot's The Waste Land (1922), "Shakespearian" undergoing an amusing syncopation in the process:

O O O O that Shakespeherian Rag--  
It's so elegant  
So intelligent.<sup>27</sup>

The use of ragtime lyrics in both high and popular culture reflects the pervasiveness of this genre and underlines the increased public acceptability of the non-abusive texts. But, while the declining use of offensive lyrics eliminated a major objection to the songs, criticism of ragtime continued, and even intensified. The reasons for such criticisms, therefore, must lie beyond a consideration of the words.

#### The Lowering of Musical Tastes

An antiragtime theme extending throughout the entire period expressed the apprehension and fear of the promoters of "good music" that they were being replaced. From the earliest days there were warnings that ragtime was debasing musical tastes and occupying a position in the hearts of

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<sup>27</sup>T. S. Eliot, The Waste Land (New York: Boni & Liveright, 1922); reprinted in Eliot, Complete Poems and Plays, p. 41. See also, R. B. Elderry, "Eliot's Shakespearian Rag," American Quarterly 9 (Summer 1957): 185-86.

the public which rightfully belonged to "the great masters":

You will also find the "coon" songs on your friend's piano when you go to his house, and the chances are that he will insist upon "rendering" a few of them for your edification.

This may seem trivial enough, but it has unfortunately, a far deeper significance, and little by little the people at large have forgotten the noble melodies which used to interest them and have sold themselves body and soul to the musical (?) Satan. . . . Pass along the streets of any large city of a summer evening when the windows are open and take note of what music you hear being played. It is no longer the great masters, or the lesser classicists--nor even the "Salon-componisten" that used to be prime favorites with the boarding-school misses. Not a bit of it! It is "rag time."<sup>28</sup>

This fear was noted early in the period by Rupert Hughes, who described it in succinct, perceptive, and not very flattering terms:

Rag-time music meets with little encouragement from the scholarly musician. . . . the green-eyed, blue-goggled foggy who sees in all popular music a diminution of the attention due to Bach's works; . . .<sup>29</sup>

The editor of Metronome also commented on this apprehension, specifically denying that it had any basis:

Undoubtedly it is only a fad and will wear itself out in a comparatively short time, so that our composers and arrangers of more ambitious works need not worry themselves in the least. . . .

It is not our province to decry rag-time music, for it is really harmless and does not in any way interfere with legitimate compositions. Let the people have all they want, we say, and do not attempt to restrict them.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Arthur Weld, "The Invasion of Vulgarity in Music," Etude 17 (February 1899): 52.

<sup>29</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," p. 157.

This assurance calmed few prophets of doom, and warnings of this particular danger increased in both frequency and intensity:

Louis Blumenberg, the 'cello-virtuoso, who has just returned from the Nevada Concert Tour, extending all over the country, reports to us that rag-time--a rag-weed of music--has grown up everywhere in the Union and that its vicious influences are highly detrimental to the cause of good music.<sup>31</sup>

The rag-time craze has lowered the standard of American music as compared with other countries.<sup>32</sup>

. . . this craze for "rag-time" seems to be on the wane. It is certainly to be hoped so. For it creates in the minds of the young a distaste for that which is more staid and solid . . .<sup>33</sup>

It can not be denied that the lower type of "rag-time" --and the bulk of it--has done much to lower the musical taste and standard of the whole musical public, irrespective of color . . .<sup>34</sup>

. . . between American coon songs and Viennese operettas Germany's traditional and vaunted taste for good music is rapidly being lost.<sup>35</sup>

In a series of articles in Musical America, composer Arthur Farwell (1872-1952) sought to raise the discussion

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<sup>30</sup>Amstead, "Rag-Time."

<sup>31</sup>"The Ragtime Menace," Musical Courier 40 (23 May 1900): 20.

<sup>32</sup>"War on Rag-Time," American Musician 5 (July 1901): 4.

<sup>33</sup>Gates, "Ethiopian Syncopation."

<sup>34</sup>"Our Musical Condition," Negro Music Journal 1 (March 1903): 138.

<sup>35</sup>"Rag-Time Hurts Classics," American Musician and Art Journal 28 (13 July 1912): 3.

to a more sophisticated plane and to bring the dispute to an end.<sup>36</sup> He denied that ragtime could injure the cause of classical music, or that art music could eradicate popular music. The two were presented as completely different, noncomparable and noncompeting entities, separated by a distinct psychological boundary:

The mistake has been in supposing that there is an unbroken scale of musical excellence, for all music, and that popular music pertains to the lower, and artistic to the higher degrees of this scale. . . . The scale breaks at a point, the exact position of which is yet to be determined; popular and artistic music each live in their won right in their own world, and such a thing as opposition between them, in themselves, does not exist since they can never meet at the same level.<sup>37</sup>

I do not say that ragtime is not music, but that it distinctly is not "music, the art."<sup>38</sup>

Three types of musical perception are described. The musical "Apache" perceives music as physical stimulus, a stimulus generated by popular music and expressed in dance. The "Mollycoddle" seeks music for the sensation of sound and the creation of mood and sentiment; music,

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<sup>36</sup>"The Popular Song Bugaboo," Musical America 16 (6 July 1912): 2; "The Popular Song Bugaboo: No. 2" (27 July 1912): 12; "Apaches, Mollycoddles and Highbrows" (17 August 1912): 2; "Where Professors and Socialists Fail To Understand Music" (31 August 1912): 26-27; see also summaries of Farwell's articles: "Ethics of Ragtime," Jacobs' Orchestra Monthly 3 (August 1912): 27-29; "Ethics of Ragtime," Literary Digest, 10 August 1912, p. 225.

<sup>37</sup>Farwell, "Apaches, Mollycoddles and Highbrows."

<sup>38</sup>Farwell, "Where Professors and Socialists Fail To Understand Music," p. 27.

for him, is a diffuse atmosphere. The "Highbrow" has less interest in the actual sound than in the development of a "musical thought." Farwell refused to criticize any of these types (although the choice of the term "mollycoddle" certainly assumes a judgemental flavor), saying that despite the separate character of each of the three musical processes, an individual may pass from one to another:

Whereas a man might be so broad and inclusive as to be musically triple-minded, and enjoy ragtime, mere musical sound and musical ideas, each phase in its own way, those ways would represent three different methods of musical functioning, each having its own scope and laws.<sup>39</sup>

As a composer, Farwell obviously placed himself in the "Highbrow" category, but he admitted to occasional "Apache" functioning:

I often catch my foot in the act of appreciating it [ragtime] when my higher nature is off guard.<sup>40</sup>

More important in terms of the prevailing attacks against ragtime, he denied

. . . that the gratification of the musical sense through "musical art" is "better" (in the sense of moral hygienics) or "more wholesome" than the gratification of it through popular music. It is merely more inclusive and complex. Often it is actually less wholesome, since such a large part of pretended musical art is worthless and leads away from the sanity of primitive music.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Farwell, "Apaches, Mollycoddles and Highbrows."

<sup>40</sup>Farwell, "The Popular Song Bugaboo: No. 2."

<sup>41</sup>Ibid.

He argued against the suggestion that eliminating ragtime would result in a larger audience for art music:

The masses who are enjoying ragtime would have no music to enjoy if that were taken away, unless something equally practical and sympathetic were given them.<sup>42</sup>

Further, noting that serious composers have often enriched their art through judicious use of popular materials, he concluded that popular music is even "necessary as a permanent subsoil for musical-art growth."<sup>43</sup>

Rather than instill a sense of perspective into the issue, Farwell's comments served as fuel to further intensify the controversy, at the same time making him the subject of verbal abuse. A writer with obvious socialist inclinations repeated the arguments that enjoyment of ragtime inhibits appreciation of "good music," derided Farwell for being unconcerned about the well-being of "the people," and added that ragtime was a product of exploitation as the composers, writing under economic duress and desperation, enriched only the publishers.<sup>44</sup>

A letter-writer further expressed anxieties over the seductive powers of ragtime:

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<sup>42</sup>As quoted in "Ethics of Ragtime," Literary Digest.

<sup>43</sup>Farwell, "The Popular Song Bugaboo."

<sup>44</sup>Rudolph Bismark von Liebich, "The Benighted Lover of Ragtime as a Musical 'Man With the Hoe,'" Musical America 16 (31 August 1912): 23.

It [enjoyment of ragtime] positively hinders a musically uncultured person in gaining an appreciation of higher music. Not only with people who, as Mr. Farwell so aptly expresses it, come up to one with a chip on the shoulder, saying, "You can't learn me nothing," but also with persons otherwise broadminded and open to conviction, ragtime so fascinates them that they cannot even listen to higher music, much less enjoy it--in many cases because of the absence of the syncopated rhythm, the so-called "rag." Ragtime has dulled their taste for pure music just as intoxicants dull a drunkard's taste for pure water. Ragtime becomes a habit, and like all other habits, it is very difficult if not impossible for its victims to break away from it.

Especially with young people ragtime takes up so much time and thought that they lose in higher musical cultivation. This is the harm of ragtime.<sup>45</sup>

A similar charge was made by composer Daniel Gregory Mason:

When we consider that the formula of ragtime is essentially "two thrills a beat" we cannot but realize that its power of jading the attention for less highly galvanized stimuli is fraught with danger for our appreciation of simpler, sincerer, more thoughtful music.<sup>46</sup>

Should the classical music lover of that day be undecided on the proper position to take in regard to ragtime, he might feel safe in deferring to the authority of European tastes and opinions. One prominent representative of such authority was German national Karl Muck, conductor of the Boston Symphony Orchestra. Muck, who was soon to be interned as an enemy alien, was still in good standing with the American musical public when he made this pro-

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<sup>45</sup>Herbert Sachs-Hirsch, "Dangers That Lie in Ragtime," Musical America 16 (21 September 1912): 8.

<sup>46</sup>Daniel Gregory Mason, "Prefers Demonstration to Cheers," New Republic, 4 December 1915, p. 122.

nouncement:

. . . I do not believe in popular music for the masses; I do not believe there is such a thing as good popular music. I think what you call here your ragtime, is poison. It poisons the very source of your musical growth, for it poisons the taste of the young. You cannot poison the spring of art and hope for a fresh clear stream to flow out and enrich life.<sup>47</sup>

The following month the ragtime debate was summarized in an editorial in the Musical Courier:

Is ragtime a crime? Does it debase musical tastes? Does it keep the public from buying good music? Is it debauching our children and spoiling them as future concert goers? Would symphony fare better in this country if ragtime were suppressed? Would more songs and piano pieces by MacDowell be bought if there were fewer compositions by Irving Berlin for sale?<sup>48</sup>

After examining the various arguments, the writer concluded against the above propositions. The controversy was not ended, though; the scene merely shifted. As ragtime began to fade, the same charges previously leveled against it were applied against jazz.

#### The Attack

Believing ragtime to be the veritable enemy of true art and "good music," adherents to this position took part in a relentless attack. The main lines of the offensive were: (1) ridicule; (2) appeals to racial bias;

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<sup>47</sup>Karl Muck, "The Music of Democracy," Craftsman, December 1915, p. 277.

<sup>48</sup>Liebling, "The Crime of Ragtime," p. 21.

(3) forecasts of doom; (4) attempts at repression; and, (5) suggestions of moral, intellectual, and physical dangers. Reaction to these criticisms became especially evident in the second decade of the century as prominent publications printed praises of ragtime. In response to the acclaim, additional negative arguments were formulated.

The first two categories of attack, ridicule and appeals to racial bias, require no special discussion as they are readily apparent in several of the criticisms already cited, and many yet to come. The reference to ragtime as "rag-weed" (page 74), the frequent characterization of ragtime syncopation as a distortion (page 21), the description of the music as "debased" (page 42), deriving the style from mistakes perpetuated by Negro bands (page 57), are all obvious manifestations of ridicule, the last adding a touch of racism. The racial aspect was a recurrent feature of criticism of ragtime; as late as 1924, a writer based part of his objection to the music on the premise that "the negro is a modernized savage."<sup>49</sup> This racial animosity, in fact, seems to be an underlying reason for much of the antagonism expressed toward ragtime.

#### Prophecies of Doom

One method used to combat ragtime was to deny its significance by suggesting that it was merely a passing fad.

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<sup>49</sup>Farjeon, "Rag-Time," p. 796.

In the beginning, at least, such a hypothesis was certainly believable, as indicated by Amstead's concurrence with it in an otherwise positive review (page 73 above). As time elapsed, however, this insistence upon an imminent extinction became particularly hollow and ludicrous:

[January 1900]

Thank the Lord they [ragtime pieces] have passed the meridian of their popularity and are now on the wane.<sup>50</sup>

[January 1900]

. . . the day of "coon songs," Negro "Cake Walk" and the "Rag Tag Time" song and dance is fast drawing to a close, and . . . we are coming to a line of more dignified and artistic music.<sup>51</sup>

[March 1900]

Rag-time is simply having its day. It will be forgotten as a craze in a few years.<sup>52</sup>

[July 1901]

Rag-time has passed the zenith of its popularity, musicians say, and they are now anxious to lay out the corpse.<sup>53</sup>

[October 1902]

The popular craze for "rag-time" music seems to be on the wane, and it is not probable that musicians generally will deplore its gradual departure.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>50</sup>"Musical Impurity," Etude 18 (January 1900): 16.

<sup>51</sup>"Passing of the Coon and Degrading Dance," Gazette and Land Bulletin (Waycross, Ga.), 27 January 1900, p. 2.

<sup>52</sup>"Rag-Time," Musician 5 (March 1900): 83.

<sup>53</sup>"War on Rag-Time."

<sup>54</sup>Gates, "Ethiopian Syncopation."

[July 1912]

The Chicago (Ill.) Herald says that, at last the music publishers have turned their thumbs down on rag-time.<sup>55</sup>

[March 1913]

If it were not obvious that six months at the most would see this new Tarantism in its coffin, I might be tempted to approach the member for one of my two constituencies . . . and beg him to persuade Parliament to deport Messrs. Hirsch and Melville Gideon and their various satellites . . . as highly undesirable aliens.<sup>56</sup>

[February 1918]

It is gratifying to observe that this one-time doubtful feature [ragtime syncopation] is gradually losing favor and promises to be eventually overcome.<sup>57</sup>

As suggested by Toye, a positive and aggressive alternative to waiting for the natural end of ragtime was, in some way, to ban it. This step was actually attempted by the American Federation of Musicians at the National Meeting in 1901. The musicians "swore to play no rag-time, and to do all in their power to counteract the pernicious influence exerted by 'Mr. Johnson,' 'My Rag-Time Lady' and others of the negro school."<sup>58</sup>

While the musicians' union was obviously unable to enforce a ban, there were others who, within a more restricted jurisdiction, could effectively prohibit ragtime. Thus,

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<sup>55</sup>"Rag-Time Loses Favor. Composers Now Asked by Publishers for More of the Sentimental Ballad," American Musician and Art Journal 28 (27 July 1912): 11

<sup>56</sup>Toye, "Ragtime: The New Tarantism," p. 658.

<sup>57</sup>Hubbs, "What Is Ragtime?"

<sup>58</sup>"War on Rag-Time." See also, "Origin of Rag Time,"

the Commissioner of Docks in New York City, concerned about educating "the popular taste," excluded ragtime from the free, summer pier concerts,<sup>59</sup> and the Superintendent of Vacation Schools in New York similarly banned ragtime from school music programs.<sup>60</sup>

Such restricted acts, though, could hardly satisfy those who perceived ragtime as a direct and immediate threat; therefore, calls for extermination continued:

White men also perpetuate so-called music under the name "rag-time," representing it to be characteristic of Negro music. This is also a libelous insult. The typical Negro would blush to own acquaintance with the vicious trash put forth under Ethiopian titles. If the Negro Music Journal can only do a little missionary work among us, and help to banish this epidemic it will go down in history as one of the greatest musical benefactors of the age.<sup>61</sup>

Let us take a united stand against the Ragtime Evil as we would against bad literature, the horrors of war or intemperance and other socially destructive evils.

In Christian homes, where purity of morals are stressed, ragtime should find no resting place.

Avaunt with ragtime rot! Let us purge America and the Divine Art of Music from this polluting nuisance.<sup>62</sup>

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Musician; and Gustav Kühn, "Rag Time," Die Musik 1 (August 1902): 1975.

<sup>59</sup>"Music for Piers and Parks."

<sup>60</sup>"Must Avoid Ragtime," Musical Courier 69 (12 August 1914): 10.

<sup>61</sup>"What the Concert-Goer Says of 'The Negro Music Journal,'" Negro Music Journal 1 (October 1902): 28.

<sup>62</sup>Oehmler, "Ragtime," p. 15.

One of the points Arthur Farwell made was that it would be senseless to eliminate ragtime without having something "equally practical and sympathetic" available for the masses. He was not actually calling for a replacement, but simply illustrating the futility of contemplating an injunction. Another writer, not sharing Farwell's concept of the absurd, suggested that collections of folk music be made to replace ragtime: "The pioneer work here described is recommended as fitting for the women's clubs."<sup>63</sup>

That efforts to ban ragtime were themselves doomed to failure, that the articulation of such positions was often ludicrously self-deluding, does not detract from the significance of these considerations being formulated and seriously proposed. What is reflected in the passionate denunciations and calls for eradication are the real anxieties of those who felt threatened by what was incomprehensible to them: the proximity of a music falling slightly outside the academic tradition, and the dynamics of popular music.

#### Warnings of Harmful Effects

Another line of attack attributed various unwholesome

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<sup>63</sup>"To Replace Rag-Time," Literary Digest, 22 March 1913, p. 641. See also, Philip Gordon, "Ragtime, the Folk Song and the Music Teacher," Musical Observer 6 (November 1912): 724-25; reprinted in Rag Times 6 (September 1972): 12-13; reprinted in Ragtimer (May/June 1973): 8-10.

properties and effects to ragtime: its basic degeneracy, its offenses against civilized moral values, against the intellect, and against the body.

One sin imputed to ragtime was its extreme tendencies; it was accused of abusing the accepted virtue of moderation and instilling like inclinations in youth:

This craze was a unique example of an exaggerated use of a musical idiom that in itself is not only a lawful means of musical expression, but one that, used in reasonable moderation and in proper surroundings, is full of beauty and interest, namely, the feature of Syncopation. . . .

. . . it [ragtime] creates in the minds of the young a distaste for that which is more staid and solid.<sup>64</sup>

Strictly speaking, I believe there is but one well-founded theoretical objection to ragtime, and that is the occasional excessive use of its peculiar type of syncopation. . . . when taken to excess it overstimulates; it irritates.<sup>65</sup>

Ragtime, it was warned, is also incapable of fulfilling essential functions assigned to music by prevailing aesthetic theories, the functions of intellectual enlightenment and spiritual exaltation; the resulting vacuum is a danger to both the individual and the country as a whole.

How can we regard this invasion of vulgarity in music other than as a national calamity, in so far as the mental attainments of the nation are concerned? . . .

This cheap, trashy stuff could not elevate even the most degraded minds, nor could it possibly urge any one to greater effort in the acquisition of culture in

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<sup>64</sup>Gates, "Ethiopian Syncopation."

<sup>65</sup>Hubbs, "What Is Ragtime?"

any phase.<sup>66</sup>

There is no element of intellectuality in the enjoyment of rag-time. It savors too much of the primeval conception of music, whose basis was a rhythm that appealed to the physical rather than to the mental senses.<sup>67</sup>

Aside from the dangers to the spiritual and mental qualities of humanity, there is also a more immediate incursion against conventional morality:

Can it be said that America is falling prey to the collective soul of the negro through the influence of what is popularly known as "rag time" music? . . . if there is any tendency toward such a psychological amalgamation, toward such a national disaster, it should be definitely pointed out and extreme measures taken to inhibit the influence and avert the increasing danger--if it has not already gone too far. . . .

. . . the American "rag time" or "rag time" evolved music is symbolic of the primitive morality and perceptible moral limitations of the negro type. . . . I hope you will find space to give publicity to a danger that is threatening the morals and the very life of America.<sup>68</sup>

But its greatest destructive power lies in its power to lower the moral standards. . . .

Its demoralizing power is of course greatest when its restless rhythm is coupled to immoral or suggestive words, for it has been discovered, that many ragtime songs as well as dances received their inspiration in the brothel where young sports . . . would go, with a musical chap amongst them, who, urged to play, may often begin to improvise some crazy rhythm, which later on, is tossed upon the musical market to corrupt the minds of the young. . . .

Our police authorities have informed us, that in the

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<sup>66</sup>Weld, "The Invasion of Vulgarify."

<sup>67</sup>Carr, "Abuses of Music."

<sup>68</sup>Walter Winston Kenilworth, "Demoralizing Rag Time Music," Musical Courier 46 (28 May 1913): 22-23.

dens of vice and in the vilest of the cabarets, ragtime music, sporting papers and salacious novels are always found. . . .

Such underworld productions as "The Dippy Rag," "Bunny Hug," "Devil's Ball," "Grizzly Bear," "Baboon Baby Dance," with title pages picturing contorted, partly clothed dancers in attitudes suggesting inebriated Hottentots, are out of place in respectable homes.<sup>69</sup>

As already seen, ragtime was compared with drunkenness (page 78) and epidemic (page 83). These allusions are typical, as drawing associations with the unpleasantness of disease became one of the frequently used methods of slander:

The counters of the music stores are loaded with this virulent poison which, in the form of a malarious epidemic, is finding its way into the homes and brains of the youth to such an extent as to arouse one's suspicions of their sanity.<sup>70</sup>

The country is awakening to the real harm these "coon songs" and "rag-time" music are doing, and measures are being taken to lessen their influence. . . . It is an evil music that has crept into the homes and hearts of our American people regardless of race, and must be wiped out as other bad and dangerous epidemics have been exterminated. . . . If you desire stronger, nobler and healthier children, feed them from music that is pure, elevating and enobling.<sup>71</sup>

A person once innoculated with the ragtime-fever is like one addicted to strong drink!<sup>72</sup>

Ragtime is syncopation gone mad, and its victims, in my opinion, can only be treated successfully like the dog with rabies, namely, with a dose of lead.

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<sup>69</sup>Oehmler, "Ragtime," pp. 14-15.

<sup>70</sup>"Musical Impurity."

<sup>71</sup>"Our Musical Condition."

<sup>72</sup>Oehmler, "Ragtime," p. 15.

Whether it is simply a passing phase of our decadent art culture or an infectious disease which has come to stay, like la grippe and leprosy, time alone can show. . . . What they [ragtime musicians] do with their self-respect, if they ever had any . . . is a problem for the psychologist to wrestle with . . .<sup>73</sup>

Denunciations were not limited to association and allusion. Ragtime was also accused of interference with pianistic technique and of actual attacks upon the body, mind, and nervous system:

Rag-time is not unwholesome, but rag-ged technic, which nine out of ten pupils affect, when playing for dancing, is. The difficulty is with the accent, which pupils with weak fingers insist on obtaining by a hard blow delivered from the wrist.<sup>74</sup>

Ragtime will ruin your touch, disable your technique, misuse your knowledge of pedaling, and pervert whatever sense of poetry and feeling you have into superficial, improper channels.<sup>75</sup>

A German musical professor, travelling in this country, is reported to complain that there is no music here but "ragtime." He insists that the only kind of music we hear "will eventually stagnate the brain cells and wreck the nervous system."<sup>76</sup>

Some critics expanded upon the same concept, "proving" how "unnatural" rhythms have deleterious effect on the brain

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<sup>73</sup>Edward Baxter Perry, "Ragging Good Music," Etude 36 (June 1918): 372; reprinted in Rag Times 9 (September 1975): 3. Perry (1855-1924) was a blind pianist who gained renown by presenting hundreds of lecture-recitals.

<sup>74</sup>"Questions and Answers," Etude 17 (August 1899): 245.

<sup>75</sup>Gordon, "Ragtime, the Folk Song and the Music Teacher," p. 724.

<sup>76</sup>"Music in America," New York Times, 9 October 1911, p. 10.

and nervous system:

It is all too often forgotten nowadays that rhythm has a direct effect on the brain. The Greeks knew it well enough and that is, largely, what Plato meant when he insisted on the kind of music proper to education. "Rhythm and Harmony," he writes in the Republic, "find their way into the inward places of the soul, on which they mightily fasten. . . . modern educationists and scientists are more and more coming round to the view that a proper rhythmical sense is the basis of character. . . . Could anything be more significant of the influence of some rhythms? For what is education but the training of the motor-centers of the brain to act in harmony?"

. . . Thus . . . all the authorities I chanced to light upon, agreed from various points of view, in saying . . . that there are true rhythms and true movements that are in accordance with nature, which is sanity, and false rhythms and false movements, which are allied with hysteria, neurosis and nervous instability in general. . . .

. . . I would ask any person accustomed to analyse his own and other people's emotions whether he thinks that the effects of rag-time are beneficial. I have, personally, taken the trouble to do so in the case of two or three of my more intelligent, though disreputable friends who frequent the haunts where nothing but rag-time is played. All except one are emphatically of the opinion that since the introduction of rag-time people are more given to both excitement and drink. . . . Nobody denies the rhythmical power of rag-time, and rhythm is always "stimulating." But in this case the stimulus is that of an irritant. These "crochety" accents, these deliberate interferences with the natural logic and rhythm, this lengthening of something here and shortening of something there, must all have some influence on the brain. . . . Besides, I can speak from personal experience. During the three weeks around Christmas I happened to hear no music but rag-times. I could not get them out of my head; I could not concentrate, I could hardly think. Indeed, till the advent of a respectable concert I suffered all the mental ills one is accustomed to associate with the advertisements of patent medicines. What, then, must be the effect on those who never hear anything else? . . . in a greater or lesser degree, the effects are there all the same, working, unnoticed, to the general detriment of efficiency and even sanity.<sup>77</sup>

Ragtime may aptly be termed "Diseased Music" or "Music for Paranoics," for its tendency is to befuddle the mind and excite the nervous system and lower moral conceptions.

Clear thinking can not be indulged in while one is playing it, as perversion of healthy musical factors exclude sane and healthy thought.

The word syncopation is derived from "Syncope," a medical term, meaning, "a heart beating unevenly through excessive agitation, or diseased in some way." . . .

As the heart beat is to the human organism, so is rhythm related to music.

Both constitute the pulsation of an organism, imparting either healthy or unhealthy life, according to the steadiness or unsteadiness of the pulse beat.<sup>78</sup>

### The Counterattack

Not intimidated by ragtime's detractors, its defenders put forth a number of positive arguments: ragtime is liked by most people, including European royalty and some notable European composers; its rhythms are distinctive, unique, and innovative; it is the only music that is characteristically American; it has the potential of further development in classical music and should form the basis of a national school of composition.

### Ragtime's Popularity

Some of ragtime's partisans based a defensive argument on the music's popularity. In the London Times, for example, it was asserted that ragtime musicians are the one type of musical artist that the American public "is

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<sup>77</sup>Toye, "Rag-Time: The New Tarantism," pp. 655-58.

<sup>78</sup>Oehmler, "Ragtime," pp. 14-15.

disposed to idolize and enrich," thereby meeting some of the essential qualifications for a viable art.<sup>79</sup> Hiram Moderwell estimated that ragtime "is in the affections of some 10,000,000 or more Americans,"<sup>80</sup> and critic Olin Downes (1886-1955) also used this supportive argument:

As for "rag-time," its wide acceptance by the people can only be accepted as proof that it finds an echo in their hearts. And what finds an echo in the hearts of the people I refuse to believe to be wholly insincere, superficial or meretricious. "Rag-time" in its best estate is for me one of our most precious musical assets.<sup>81</sup>

The obvious counterargument, that public taste is not a valid criterion for artistic quality, was not long in coming.<sup>82</sup> But ragtime proponents also appealed to the American tendency to defer to European tastes, suggesting that Europeans in general, and some particularly prominent individuals, liked ragtime. Composer-bandmaster John Philip Sousa (1854-1932) reported that European royalty liked ragtime: "King Edward VII of Great Britain, William of Prussia, German Emperor, and Nicholas II, Czar of All the Russias, have accorded it their approval, confess that they

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<sup>79</sup>"Rag-Time," Times (London).

<sup>80</sup>Moderwell, "Ragtime," p. 284.

<sup>81</sup>Olin Downes, "An American Composer," Musical Quarterly 4 (January 1918): 28.

<sup>82</sup>James Cloyd Bowman, "Anti-Ragtime," New Republic, 6 November 1915, p. 19; Mason, "Prefers Demonstration to Cheers."

like it . . ."<sup>83</sup> The widely-traveled James Weldon Johnson referred to the "world-conquering influence" of ragtime and to its popularity in Europe,<sup>84</sup> and Natalie Curtis recounted the dramatic impression it made on a European conductor:

I remember when the great Russian conductor Salonoff heard it for the first time. . . . With the first bars of "rag-time" the musician, who had paid scant attention before [to performances of other music], began to listen curiously, then attentively, then enthusiastically. He rushed to the leader of the band. "But what is this? It is wonderful! So original, so interesting. . . . I shall score it for orchestra and play it in St. Petersburg!"<sup>85</sup>

Moderwell similarly reported on the interest expressed by prominent European composers:

Such distinguished visitors as Ernest Bloch and Percy Grainger are delighted and impressed by American ragtime; foreign peoples accord it a jolly respect. Only the native-born, foreign-educated musician scorns and deplores it.<sup>86</sup>

Current Opinion reported that the composer "Stravinsky collects examples of it with assiduity,"<sup>87</sup> and Musical Courier quoted an interview with him:

I know little about American music except that of the music halls, but I consider that unrivaled. It is

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<sup>83</sup>"Rag Time and Royalty." See also "American Music and Ragtime," Music Trade Review 37 (3 October 1903): 8.

<sup>84</sup>Johnson, Ex-Colored Man, chap. 5 (p. 441).

<sup>85</sup>Curtis, "The Negro's Contribution to the Music of America," p. 660.

<sup>86</sup>Moderwell, "A Modest Proposal," p. 369.

<sup>87</sup>"Great American Composer," p. 317.

veritable art, and I never can get enough of it to satisfy me. I am convinced of the absolute truth of utterance in that form of American art. . . . God forbid that you Americans should compose symphonies and fugues.<sup>88</sup>

With these statements and reports ragtime enthusiasts could claim the support of the supposedly more sensitive and highly developed tastes of accepted representatives of European culture. A method so dear to the critics of ragtime--appeal to the authority of the leaders of "legitimate" music--had, in effect, been turned against them.

#### Ragtime as Innovation

Aside from claiming a wide and distinguished following, supporters argued that ragtime demands the attention of music lovers because it is something uniquely new, innovative, and possesses a technical validity of high order. On one point, at least, there was a surprising concurrence of opinion by many opponents and defenders alike: the effect of the rhythm was perceived as being remarkable, and was described, with some consistency, as possessing a "swing" or "tingle":

It has a powerfully stimulating effect, setting the nerves and muscles tingling with excitement.<sup>89</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>Liebling, "The Crime of Ragtime," pp. 21-22. The original interview is by Stanley C. Wise, "American Music Is True Art, Says Stravinsky," New York Tribune, 16 January 1916, sec. 5, p. 3.

<sup>89</sup>"Questions and Answers," Etude 16 (October 1898): 285.

. . . in essence ragtime is utterly distinct, racy, and shiftlessly chaotic. I defy the best reader in the world to catch the swing of it at first sight.<sup>90</sup>

Plötzlich machte ich die Entdeckung, dass meine Beine sich in einem Zustande der höchsten Aufregung befanden. Sie zuckten wie von elektrischen Schlägen berührt, und zeigten eine gefährliche Lust mich in die Höhe zu schnellen. Der Rhythmus, der mir so unbegreiflich schien, ward dennoch in mir lebendig. Es war nicht jenes Gefühl der Leichtigkeit in den Fussgelenken und Zehen, das wohl durch einen Straussischen Walzer verursacht wird, nein viel energischer, gegenständlicher, eigenkräftiger: wie wenn man einen scheuenden Gaul unter sich hat, der absolut nicht zur Raison kommen will.

(Suddenly I discovered that my legs were in a condition of great excitement. They twitched as though charged with electricity and betrayed a considerable and rather dangerous desire to jerk me from my seat. The rhythm of the music, which had seemed so unnatural at first, was beginning to exert its influence over me. It wasn't that feeling of ease in the joints of the feet and toes which might be caused by a Strauss waltz, no, much more energetic, material, independent as though one encountered a balking horse, which it is absolutely impossible to master.)<sup>91</sup>

It certainly has a swing to it that sends one's blood tingling . . .<sup>92</sup>

There is a certain sway and swing, a certain indescribable, sensuous something appealing and suggestive about the ring and melody, of rhythm and versification of this music.<sup>93</sup>

You simply can't resist it. I remember hearing a negro

<sup>90</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," p. 158.

<sup>91</sup>Kühl, "Rag Time," p. 1973; trans. Gustav Saenger, "The Musical Possibilities of Rag-Time," Metronome 19 (March 1903): 11.

<sup>92</sup>"Martin Ballmann's Rag-Time Philosophy," American Musician and Art Journal 28 (28 September 1912): 5. Martin Ballmann was a popular bandmaster.

<sup>93</sup>Kenilworth, "Demoralizing Rag Time Music," p. 22.

quartet singing "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee," in a café, and I felt my blood thumping in time, my muscles twitching to the rhythm.<sup>94</sup>

Other detractors, though, denied that ragtime had any unique qualities, claiming that "the great masters" used the same figurations. Commenting on the stated opinions of some noted musicians, one magazine reported that ragtime

. . . came from the great maestros of the earth. Wagner lapsed into it much after the manner of statesmen who sometimes get tired and drop into versification. Mozart also had moments of fatigue or exuberance, when he dashed off a few notes in the measure of the cake-walk melody. . . and so have Bach and Beethoven yielded to the impulse to put their thoughts into sharps and flats that would be appreciated in music hall circles. . . .

The song from "Carmen," "Love Is a Wild Bird," is one of the best examples of rag-time in modern music. In the overture to "Don Juan," by Mozart and in some compositions of Bach we have good examples of syncopation.<sup>95</sup>

Another author condescended to discuss ragtime only

. . . to correct the impression which seems to prevail among certain people, to wit: That rag-time is a musical peculiarity invented by recent makers of coon songs and other variety-hall concoctions.

Intent on demonstrating that ragtime was not new, he cited Beethoven's Piano Sonata in G, Op. 31, No. 1, as ragtime, and added that

. . . unusual rhythmic combinations and syncopations have been used so extensively by high-class composers that it is not possible for coon song composers to

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<sup>94</sup>Moderwell, "Ragtime," p. 285.

<sup>95</sup>"Rag Time," Musician.

invent anything along these lines.

Sources for ragtime, he found, are the sarabande, bolero, habanera, Scottish and English folk songs, and, ironically, Southern plantation songs. But he maintained that the most important source for ragtime plagiarists was the Hungarian csárdás:

But the rag-time "compositionners" have undoubtedly found their most direct source of supply in the Hungarian song-dances.<sup>96</sup>

A writer more sympathetic to ragtime turned the observation of its "respectable genesis" into a positive argument; quoting examples of "ragtime" from Beethoven (Leonora Overtures numbers 2 and 3, first allegro theme), Haydn (Op. 76, no. 3, second movement, variation 2), and Gregorian chant, he concluded that American ragtime must also have some merit. He even prophesized that a future music historian would study this music, finding it bound in volumes in a public library.<sup>97</sup>

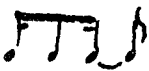
Other defenders were equally undaunted by comparisons with foreign dance music or great composers:

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<sup>96</sup> Goodrich, "Syncopated Rhythm vs. 'Rag-Time.'" Goodrich was apparently fond of denying originality to composers. On one occasion, in 1902, testifying on behalf of the Musical Courier which was being sued for accusing Victor Herbert of plagiarism, he tried to demonstrate Herbert's "thefts" from Beethoven and Fauré. Herbert was ultimately awarded damages of \$5,000. See Goldberg, Tin Pan Alley, pp. 222-24.

<sup>97</sup> C. Crozat Converse, "Rag-Time Music," Etude 17 (June 1899): 185; (August 1899): 256.

The first half of a rag-measure often resembles the

Habanera,  But though I am fairly familiar with the music of the Spanish races on this continent, I must say that rag-time bears them only the faintest possible resemblance in letter and spirit.<sup>98</sup>

The "Habanêra" (which by the way, resembles the seductive "danse du ventre" of the orient in its execution) is strangely similar in rhythm to the commonest form of ragtime.

Whether this is a coincidence or an actual importation is impossible to tell; it matters little, for they are altogether unlike in spirit. Unless set against the unvarying, even bass ragtime is not ragtime.<sup>99</sup>

The suggestion that classical composers had a prior claim to syncopation did not disturb Irving Berlin. While admitting that "the old masters" used ragtime syncopation, Berlin viewed their work as inferior:

The compositions of the old masters possess it in a stiff and stilted way. Modern ragtime is syncopation, too, but it is more euphonious and it has a more graceful rhythm.<sup>100</sup>

Moderwell, though, denied that the syncopation of classical music was the same as that of ragtime:

But the schools have their reply. "Ragtime is not new," they say. "It is merely syncopation, which was used by Haydn and Mozart, Beethoven and Brahms, and is good, like any other musical material, when used well." But they are wrong. Ragtime is not "merely syncopation." . . . Ragtime has its flavor that no definition can imprison. No one would take the syncopation of a Haydn symphony to be American ragtime. "Certainly not," replies the indignant musician. Nor the syncopation of

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<sup>98</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," p. 158.

<sup>99</sup>Burk, "Ragtime and Its Possibilities," p. 12.

<sup>100</sup>Smith, "Irving Berlin and Modern Ragtime."

any recognized composer. But if this is so, then ragtime is new.<sup>101</sup>

Moderwell did not simply stop with a defense; he asserted further that ragtime should be of musical interest to the academician:

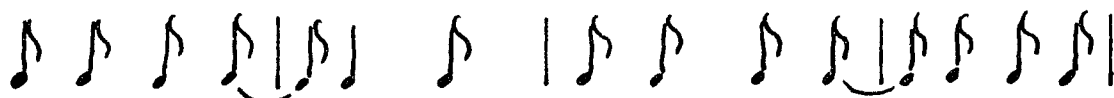
But ragtime is also "good" in the more austere sense of the professional critic. I cannot understand how a trained musician can overlook its purely technical elements of interest. It has carried the complexities of the rhythmic subdivision of the measure to a point never before reached in the history of music. It has established subtle conflicting rhythms to a degree never before attempted in any popular or folk-music, and rarely enough in art-music. . . . It has gone far beyond most other popular music in the freedom of inner voices (yes, I mean polyphony) and of harmonic modulation.<sup>102</sup>

A technical approach was also taken in the London Times, as an analysis attempts to demonstrate how the close tie between musical and textual rhythms of a song results in a pattern of changing meters:

The words as well as the music are, so to speak, syncopated. Take for example the lines of "Waiting for the Robert E. Lee" (a truly American title!):--



'Way down on the lev---ee in old A-la-bam---y, There's



dad-dy and mam---my, There's Ephraim and Sam---my, On a



moon-light night you can find -- them all

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<sup>101</sup>Moderwell, "Ragtime," p. 285.

<sup>102</sup>Ibid.



Note the alternation of the treble octaves, the first and third being on a weak and strong beat respectively, and the second and fourth being on no beats at all. The bass cleverly fills in where it is needed, and balances the whole.<sup>104</sup>

Other commentators also found worthwhile theoretical elements in ragtime. At a convention of dancing teachers, composer Arthur Farwell analyzed some ragtime to demonstrate that it was "a distinct and highly developed kind of music."<sup>105</sup> Critic Charles Buchanan, who disputed many of Moderwell's views on ragtime, was still willing to grant that the music had a technical interest:

We admit that ragtime is not only a fascinating phase of music from the standpoint of a mere sensuous enjoyableness, but, as well, a technical influence of inestimable good.<sup>106</sup>

The strongest attack on the claim of ragtime's value as an innovative force came from composer Daniel Gregory Mason, whose primary target, along with ragtime, was Moderwell:

Suppose . . . we examine in some detail a typical example of ragtime such as "The Memphis Blues" of which he [Moderwell] assures us that "In sheer melodic beauty, in the vividness of its characterization, in the deftness of its polyphony and structure, this song

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<sup>103</sup>"Rag-Time," Times (London).

<sup>104</sup>Burk, "Ragtime and Its Possibilities," p. 12.

<sup>105</sup>"Dance Puzzle Stirs Teachers to Action," New York Times, 20 April 1914, p. 9.

<sup>106</sup>Charles Buchanan, "Ragtime and American Music," Opera Magazine 3 (February 1916): 17.

deserves to rank among the best of our time.

Quoting the first four measures of the second strain of Memphis Blues (reproduced below, page 271), Mason finds nothing but "trivial, poverty-stricken, threadbare conventionality." Then, approaching the rhythmic dimension, he questions

. . . the contention of the champions of ragtime that its type of syncopation is capable of great variety, and even makes possible effects elsewhere unknown, a contention in support of which some of them have even challenged comparison of it with the rhythmic vigors of Beethoven and Schumann.

Accepting the challenge, Mason demonstrates with musical quotations the more varied and imaginative use of syncopation in Schumann's Faschingsschwank and Piano Concerto (finale).<sup>107</sup> On a theoretical level, at least, Mason easily demolished his ideological opponents.

Mason's victory was academic; it could have had no real effect on support for ragtime or the belief in its special qualities. Also, it should be recognized that Mason and his opponents were not really arguing about the same music. Moderwell repeatedly referred to actual performances; Mason, in response, would consult a printed score. In failing to consider how popular music performers tend to deviate from the score, in either subtle or drastic ways, Mason overlooked the intrinsic nature of the music.

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<sup>107</sup>Mason, "Concerning Ragtime," pp. 114-15.

Ragtime as American Music

Another defense claimed a uniquely American character for ragtime. At a time when it was generally acknowledged that American art music was a mere off-shoot of European models, ragtime was championed as the only music with a sufficiently indigenous character to reflect American society.

Such claims did not go unchallenged. When John Philip Sousa announced, after a successful European tour, that "Rag-time is an established feature of American music; it will never die," the Music Trade Review commented: "Sousa's views on the permanency of 'ragtime' . . . will hardly meet with the approbation of sincere workers in the advancement of American music." The writer readily admitted American inferiority in music, placing the blame on this nation's young age. But readers were assured that matters would improve:

When the republic of the United States has existed as many centuries as the kingdom of England, it may produce composers as learned as Sir C. H. Parry or Sir Frederick Bridge.

But ragtime, it was cautioned, should not be considered a significant feature of American music, because it is not of American origin:

We are unable to say who "invented" ragtime, but it is much older than America. When Columbus was battling with the court of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Bohemian gypsies of Hungaria were playing ragtime in its rudimentary form, and Scotch mothers in the

Highlands were singing their babes to sleep with it. . . . It "grewed" and "grewed" from the rudimentary form of the Hungarian and Scot till it became the exaggerated thing which is now supposed to be a life-like reproduction of the negro song, but is nothing of the sort. The same trick of throwing the accent into unexpected places was practiced long before the negro took it up, and he employed it in his slave songs just as the older races had before him.<sup>108</sup>

A similar response came from the editor of Musical America after receiving the report that Theodore Roosevelt had announced, in an address to Negro students, that

. . . there are but two chances for the development of schools of American music and of American singing, and these will come, one from the colored people and one from the vanishing Indian folk . . .

Again, denial of American heritage became the method of excluding black music from a part in national expression:

The so-called negro melodies, even if they be original with the colored race, cannot be considered as American, for the negro is a product of Africa, and not of America.<sup>109</sup>

Despite such detractions, by the second decade of the century ragtime was repeatedly characterized as uniquely and distinctively American:

No one who has travelled can question the world-conquering influence of rag-time, and I do not think it would be an exaggeration to say that in Europe the United States is popularly known better by rag-time than by anything else it has produced in a generation. In Paris they call it American music.<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>108</sup>"American Music and Ragtime."

<sup>109</sup>"What Is American Music?" Musical America 3 (24 February 1906): 8.

<sup>110</sup>Johnson, Ex-Colored Man, chap. 5 (p. 441).

Now of the character of "rag-time" there can be no doubt--it is absolutely characteristic of its inventors --from nowhere but the United States could such music have sprung; . . .<sup>111</sup>

Our children dance, our people sing, even our soldiers march to "rag-time." . . . This bizarre and fascinating music with its hide-and-seek accent has not only swept over the United States, but it has also captured Europe, where it is rightly known as "American Music," and is taken quite seriously as typical of this country.<sup>112</sup>

The strongest call for the recognition of ragtime as the characteristic musical idiom of the United States came in 1915, from Hiram Moderwell. Referring to it as "the one original and indigenous type of music of the American people,"<sup>113</sup> and the "folk-music of the American city,"<sup>114</sup> he concluded:

As you walk up and down the streets of an American city you feel in its jerk and rattle a personality different from that of any European capital. This is American. It is our lives, and it helps to form our characters and conditions our mode of action. It should have expression in art, simply because any people must express itself if it is to know itself. No European music can or possibly could express this American personality. Ragtime I believe does express it. It is to-day the one true American music.<sup>115</sup>

Moderwell's article was carefully scrutinized in current periodicals, various facets being summarized,

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<sup>111</sup>"Rag-Time," Times (London).

<sup>112</sup>Curtis, "The Negro's Contribution to the Music of America," p. 660.

<sup>113</sup>Moderwell, "Ragtime," p. 284.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 285.

<sup>115</sup>Ibid., p. 286.

criticized, or supported. One reader complained in a letter:

The fundamental idea seems to be that if you can pervert the taste of ten million persons in the United States--no matter how inferior they are as a class--into liking a thing, you may then . . . call the thing American and insist that it is necessarily the fullest expression of the life of the people.<sup>116</sup>

Daniel Gregory Mason often addressed himself to the subject of Americanism in music, and while he was willing to allow that a certain degree, or type, of American character is expressed in ragtime, he emphasized that this was a limited view:

The case of rag-time is rather more subtle. Here is a music, local and piquantly idiomatic, and undeniably representative of a certain aspect of American character--our restlessness, our insatiable nervous activity, our thoughtless superficial "optimism," our fondness for "hustling," our carelessness of whither, how, or why we are moving if only we can "keep on the move." If this were the whole of us, if the first impression which foreigners get of us summed up for them oftentimes in our inimitably characteristic "Step lively, please," were also the last, and there was nothing more solid, sweet or wise in America than this galvanic twitching, then indeed rag-time would be our perfect music. But every true American knows that, on the contrary, this is not our virtue but our vice, not our strength but our weakness, and that such a picture of us as it presents is not a portrait but a caricature.<sup>117</sup>

No candid observor could deny the prominence in our American life of this restlessness of which ragtime is one expression. . . . The question is whether it is really representative of the American temper as a whole, or is prominent only as the froth is prominent on a glass of beer.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup>Bowman, "Anti-Ragtime."

<sup>117</sup>Mason, "Folk Song and American Music," pp. 324-25.

<sup>118</sup>Mason, "Concerning Ragtime," p. 115.

Using Moderwell's portrayal of the American character of ragtime as a point of departure, Charles L. Buchanan, in two essays, both entitled "Ragtime and American Music,"<sup>119</sup> argued against the nationalist view. Buchanan was not opposed to ragtime; on the contrary, he considered it "rattling good fun," possessing "inherent, irresistible charm."<sup>120</sup> To avert the squandering and loss of American musical talent, he even proposed a foundation to preserve ragtime.<sup>121</sup> But he had a fundamental disagreement with Moderwell in that he emphatically denied to music the capacity of expressing nationality:

. . . a "people" does not create its own art; its art is created for it by a unique thing called genius. From a poetic standpoint it is all very pretty to think of a people winding their common joys, fears, hopes and sorrows into beautiful verse and song, but, as a matter of cold fact, if art had to depend upon this sort of thing there would be precious little art in the world today. Art is ninety-nine times out of a hundred the record of one man's emotions, nothing more, nothing less.<sup>122</sup>

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<sup>119</sup>Opera Magazine 3 (February 1916): 17-19; Seven Arts 2 (July 1917): 376-83. The second article, which is a reworking of the first, expressing essentially the same views, is paired with Moderwell's "A Modest Proposal," both being covered by the blanket title "Two Views of Ragtime." Seven years later Buchanan again repeated these arguments, in an up-dated form: "The National Music Fallacy: Is American Music To Rest on a Foundation of Ragtime and Jazz?" Arts and Decoration 20 (February 1924): 26.

<sup>120</sup>"Ragtime and American Music," Opera, p. 17.

<sup>121</sup>Buchanan, "The Prodigal Popular Composer," Opera Magazine 2 (July 1915): 15.

<sup>122</sup>"Ragtime and American Music," Opera, p. 17.

Setting aside the fallacy to which we have previously alluded--the fallacy that a people expresses itself in art--let us ask ourselves when and where music began to express the personality of people and of cities? Furthermore, is "jerk and rattle" all we have to offer in the way of a national personality? Does ragtime conclusively sum up our American temperament? . . .

The fundamental error committed by these writers on nationality in art is the assumption that art expresses and must express nationality. Will they never learn that art is a personal matter, that art is only incidentally concerned with nationality, and is in no way, shape or form under obligation to represent the character of a nation?<sup>123</sup>

Buchanan's essays on this subject reveal an apparent exasperation, and there is no indication that his arguments had significant effect. If anything, the conviction that ragtime was characteristically American seems to have been undiminished. In England, one reflection of this opinion appeared in a poem in the magazine Punch, in which American soldiers are referred to as "raggers."<sup>124</sup> In the United States, an article examining the support for ragtime reported: "Indeed, ragtime, its champions say, reflects the soul of the American people."<sup>125</sup> Lyrically expressing a firm conviction of their generation, the Gershwin brothers, in 1918, put this widely-held sentiment into song: The Real American Folk Song (Is a Rag).

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<sup>123</sup> Ibid. p. 19.

<sup>124</sup> "Ragtime in the Trenches," reprinted in Literary Digest, 8 April 1916, p. 997.

<sup>125</sup> "Great American Composer," p. 316.

Ragtime as a Source for Classical Music  
and a Basis for National Style

Taking the premise of the American character of ragtime one step further, some commentators suggested that in ragtime a basis of an American school of composition had at last been found.

One of the major aesthetic concepts retained from the nineteenth century was that "musically dependent" nations should assert a new independence, throwing off the dominance of the more mature cultures of Germany, France, and Italy. The United States was one of these dependent nations, securely in the German sphere despite the resisting efforts of some native composers. In 1895, though, a new call for native expression was inspired by Dvořák's advice to American composers to build a national style on the music of Negroes and Indians.<sup>126</sup> In addition to Dvořák's own example in nationalistic Czech music and the possibilities suggested for Americans in his "New World" Symphony (1893), the use of peasant tunes by the Russian nationalist composers was a frequently cited precedent:

A Russian folk-song was no less scorned in the court of Catherine the Great than a ragtime song in our studios today. Yet Russian folk-song became the basis of some of the most vigorous art-music of the past century.<sup>127</sup>

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<sup>126</sup>Anton Dvořák, "Music in America," Harper's New Monthly Magazine, February 1895, p. 432. See also, Chase, America's Music, pp. 385-402, and H. Wiley Hitchcock, Music in the United States: A Historical Introduction, 2d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1974), pp. 135-38,

Whether the American Negro should be considered the equivalent of a peasant (or whether he should even be considered American--see page 103 above), and whether his music had the capacity of being developed into "high art," were issues that occupied many in the following years. As Krehbiel summarized in his study on racial and national music:

. . . there has been anything but a dearth of newspaper and platform talk about songs which the negroes sang in America when they were slaves, but most of it has revolved around the questions whether or not the songs were original creations of these native blacks, whether or not they were entitled to be called American and whether or not they were worthy of consideration as foundation elements for a school of American composition.

The greater part of what has been written was the result of an agitation which followed Dr. Antonin Dvořák's efforts to direct the attention of American composers to the beauty and efficiency of the material which these melodies contain for treatment in the higher artistic forms. . . .

It was thus that the question of a possible folk-song basis for a school of composition which the world would recognize as distinctive, even national, was brought upon the carpet.<sup>128</sup>

Rupert Hughes perceived the potential of ragtime being developed into something more serious and even prophesized that the day would come when it would achieve the doubtful status of a dry, academic form:

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143-44.

<sup>127</sup>Moderwell, "Ragtime," p. 284.

<sup>128</sup>Krehbiel, Afro-American Folksongs, pp. vi-vii.

It will doubtless find its way gradually into works of some great genius, and will thereafter be canonized; and the day will come when the decadents of the next century will revolt against it, and will call it "a hide-bound, sapless, scholastic form, dead as its contemporaries, canon and fugue."<sup>129</sup>

The idea of an American classical music emerging from ragtime became especially topical in the second decade of the century, coinciding naturally with the growing conviction that ragtime was characteristically American. A heading in Musical America, "Works of American Composers Reveal Relation of Ragtime to Art-Song,"<sup>130</sup> reflects this train of thought, though the article fails to deliver the title's promise. The attitude is expressed more concretely in James Weldon Johnson's novel, the concept of a great American music emerging from ragtime forming one of the turning points of the story:

My millionaire planned, in the midst of the discussion on music, to have me play the "new American music" and astonish everyone present. The result was that I was more astonished than anyone else. I went to the piano and played the most intricate rag-time piece I knew. Before there was time for anybody to express an opinion on what I had done, a big bespectacled, bushy-headed man rushed over, and, shoving me out of the chair, exclaimed: "Get up! Get up!" He seated himself at the

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<sup>129</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," p. 159. Twenty-one years later, failing to note that some American and European "art" composers had already made use of ragtime elements, fulfilling his prophesy, Hughes was still predicting the eventual artistic use of ragtime; see Hughes, "Will Ragtime Turn to Symphonic Poems?" Etude 38 (May 1920): 305.

<sup>130</sup>Arthur Judson, Musical America 15 (2 December 1911): 29.

piano, and, taking the theme of my rag-time, played it through first in straight chords; then varied and developed it through every known musical form. I sat amazed. I had been turning classic music into rag-time, a comparatively easy task; and this man had taken rag-time and made it classic. The thought came across me like a flash--It can be done, why can't I do it? From that moment my mind was made up. I clearly saw the way of carrying out the ambition I had formed when a boy.<sup>131</sup>

But it was again in the London Times article that the idea of ragtime providing the very basis for an American school of composition was most prominently put forth, bringing into the open a controversy which continued for the rest of the decade:

Here, perhaps, then, for those who have ears to hear are the seeds from which a national art may ultimately spring. Much dross will have to be cleared away in the process, much vulgarity and senselessness will have to give place to a saner, a finer ideal. . . . We look to the future for the American composer, not, indeed, to the Parkers and MacDowells of the present who are taking over a foreign art and are imitating it with more or less success and with a complete absence of vital force, but to someone as yet unknown, perhaps unborn, who will sing the songs of his own nation, his own time, his own character.<sup>132</sup>

This article's impact, the number of written responses it induced, has already been indicated (pages 8-9 above). The national debate on ragtime had taken on intensified dimensions (characteristically, receiving a major impetus from Europe). Among the many comments which followed, either for or against the proposition, there were some

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<sup>131</sup>Johnson, Ex-Colored Man, chap. 9 (p. 471).

<sup>132</sup>"Rag-Time," Times (London).

that included informed evaluations:

The number of cases in which ragtime has found its way into reputable music, is, so far, not very large. Debussy has given us two piano pieces of this sort: his Minstrels, and his Golliwog's Cakewalk. But they are too much on the burlesque order to take seriously. The work of Henry F. Gilbert, here in Boston, is very sincere, showing at the same time great possibilities. . . .

It is a great triumph for ragtime, that, through its pliability of rhythm and its unmistakable emphasis, it can be introduced into music of entirely different character from its own without losing its identity. It is equally important that it will fit into any mood. It is characteristic of Dvořák's daring to have put it into so high a form as the symphony. . . .

Ragtime, then, is as ripe for the plucking as it ever will be. The next thing to look forward to is a real American symphony by a real American composer.<sup>133</sup>

Charles Wakefield Cadman (1881-1943), who manifested nationalistic interests through the use of Indian materials in his compositions, also saw possibilities in the development of ragtime. Despite some reservations about the mass-produced quality of ragtime, he found that it contained the folk element, and especially the syncopation aspect of folk music, that he perceived in much of the best art music. He wrote that, along with Indian, Negro, and Creole music, ragtime contains the "germ of a national expression," and "needs but intelligent guidance to lead it to fruition and development." He warned against using literal or idealized folk tunes or syncopation in every composition, but was convinced that composers could find ways of capturing the dynamics of these elements. Most important,

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<sup>133</sup>Burk, "Ragtime and Its Possibilities," p. 13.

in "idealized and dignified forms of syncopation, coupled with a proper sense of balance and sanity," he found "the beginnings of a healthy, red-corpuscled American music.

. . . The restless energy and indomitable will of America is somehow symbolized in terms of an intelligent syncopation . . ."<sup>134</sup>

Moderwell's praise of ragtime also included the provision that it be used by American art composers:

I haven't a notion whether ragtime is going to form the basis of an American school of composition. But I am sure that many a native composer could save his soul if he would open his ears to this folk-music of the American city.<sup>135</sup>

Two years later he repeated this admonition, but in stronger, more positive terms:

But here and nowhere else are the beginnings of American music, if American music is to be anything but a pleasing reflection of Europe. Here is the only original and characteristic music America has produced this far. Whether it can be made the basis for a national school of composition as great as the Russian I do not know. But I do know that there will be no great American music so long as American musicians despise our ragtime.<sup>136</sup>

The opposition to the proposal to found a national school on ragtime rested on three arguments: (1) ragtime is musically unsuitable; (2) ragtime expresses only a small, and inferior, part of the American character; and (3)

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<sup>134</sup>Charles Wakefield Cadman, "Cadman on 'Rag-time,'" Musical Courier 69 (12 August 1914): 31.

<sup>135</sup>Moderwell, "Ragtime," p. 284.

<sup>136</sup>Moderwell, "A Modest Proposal," pp. 375-76.

the very concept of musical nationalism is fallacious.

Mason, with his general aversion to ragtime, voiced the first two arguments, and hinted at the third. As a composer he actively confronted the issue of folk sources in art music; in 1919, shortly after writing the essays quoted from below, he wrote a Quartet on Negro Themes. But the black music that attracted him was that of the "old South"; he found more dignity in the slave "shouts" than in the emancipated ragtime:

We seem to discover such a richer vein in the songs of the negroes--not the debased forms found in rag-time and the "coon songs" of the minstrel shows, but the genuine old plantation tunes, the "spirituals" and "shouts" of the slaves.<sup>137</sup>

He admitted that ragtime could be used for "higher purposes," but expressed reservations about the quality of American life that this music represented:

. . . associated with this nervous energy [of ragtime] is an itch for mere stir-about, for epileptic twitching and jerking, which is almost more characteristic, and which is but the musical aspect of that unthinking restlessness, that demand for superficial excitement, which is the curse of our national temperament.<sup>138</sup>

Somewhat inconsistently--for in later years he was to call for a music to express the "American temper," an attitude that he defined as the Anglo-Saxon reserve and sobriety of New England and the "old South"<sup>139</sup>--he questioned the concept

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<sup>137</sup>Mason, "Folk-Song and American Music," p. 326.

<sup>138</sup>Mason, "Prefers Demonstration to Cheers."

of expressing nationality in music:

It [the nationalistic aesthetic] often assumes that characteristic turns of idiom, such as certain modal intervals or rhythmic figures, are of intrinsic value in making music "distinctive." You can make a tune "American" by "ragging" its rhythm, as you make a story American by inserting "I guess" or "I reckon" at frequent intervals.<sup>140</sup>

Charles Buchanan, denying the validity of any musical-nationalistic expression (see pages 106-7), predictably opposed the idea of a ragtime-based national movement. In addition, while admitting some advantages in the integration of ragtime elements into art music, he warned against the founding of a movement on this premise; the result, he felt, would be too restrictive and impoverishing.<sup>141</sup>

Ultimately, the use or nonuse of ragtime was to be determined by composers rather than by theorizing critics. It is now clear that the adoption of this resource was sporadic and of limited success. A question that was not raised in the magazine debates, but which must have occurred to at least some composers who experimented in this direction, is whether ragtime could be transferred to a "higher form"

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<sup>139</sup>Daniel Gregory Mason, Tune In America: A Study of Our Coming Musical Independence (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1931; reprint ed., Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries Press, 1969), pp. 158-59.

<sup>140</sup>Mason, "Folk-Song and American Music," p. 323.

<sup>141</sup>Buchanan, "Ragtime and American Music," Opera, p. 25; and Buchanan, "Ragtime and American Music," Seven Arts, p. 377.

without, in the process, losing its singular spirit.

### Summary

To further elucidate the contemporary perceptions of ragtime, Chapter III focuses upon the reactions to the music, as recorded and preserved in publications of the period. Because of the general public's obvious fascination with this new style, bringing it from a dubious position as a vaudeville stage curiosity to the very center of the popular musical--and for some, cultural--life of America, ragtime became a frequent topic of discussion. Response to the music and what it represented tended to be extreme, and the conflicting positions quickly became apparent. On the one side, opponents viewed ragtime as a threat to the accepted musical and aesthetic values inherited from Europe. On the other, supporters portrayed the music as a vital, innovative, artistic force. The polemics issued by the two sides developed into a controversy that raged for more than twenty years.

On one point of criticism, the song texts, there was a degree of unanimity from both camps. Most recognized the crudity of coon song lyrics and spoke out against them. While the inoffensive texts of later ragtime songs were also attacked, this protest simply seems to have been directed against the carefree slang of the time.

Beyond the question of song texts, there was another,

more profound issue lying at the roots of the animosity toward this music. Accompanying the recognition of ragtime's black origins was the perception of a variety of threats: the threat of an "alien" and barbaric, black culture infecting civilized society, destroying the taste for good music, and lowering the moral tone of America's youth. Reacting to this perceived menace, critics tried to discredit the music --through ridicule, denials of significance, warnings of harmful effects, appeals to racism--and even to ban it. While many of the attacks on ragtime were as ludicrous and inept as they were virulent, the commentators cannot be dismissed simply as cranks; as the established educators and critics of the day, the "old ladies of both sexes" (to borrow Charles Ives's apt description) exercised a degree of influence over musical life and the formation of public attitudes.

To counter the charges made by the protectors of the established musical order, spokesmen for ragtime proclaimed its virtues. The music was portrayed as not only stimulating and popular, but as musically innovative as well. Most significant was the claim that ragtime had a unique American flavor and should therefore form the basis of a distinctively national mode of composition. These last two assertions produced some of the liveliest and most perceptive commentary emerging from the ragtime debate, commentary that ranged beyond the factional claims and challenged the very concept of musical nationalism.

PART TWO

PIANO RAGTIME

## CHAPTER IV

### THE DIVERSIFICATION OF PIANO RAGTIME

Whereas Part One is a general survey of ragtime in all of its forms, as it appeared to contemporaries of the period, Part Two--comprising Chapters IV-VIII--focuses on piano ragtime. Chapter IV discusses the various applications of the piano to the ragtime manner, and Chapters V-VIII consider, in detail and in musical terms, the roots and stylistic development of published, piano rag composition.

#### The Awareness of Piano Ragtime

While overshadowed by vocal ragtime, there were thousands of ragtime publications for piano attesting to the strong interest in this genre. There were also a few writers who focused their attention primarily on the piano style, perceiving other forms of ragtime as subsidiary. A writer for the popular-music magazine Melody, for example, in arguing that ragtime could awaken and stimulate broader musical interests in piano students, suggested that it was only a superficial view that had made the term "ragtime" so broad as to embrace all types of popular music.<sup>1</sup> Jazz clarinetist

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<sup>1</sup>Zarh Myron Bickford, "Ragtime as an Introduction and

Garvin Bushell also stressed the importance of piano ragtime when he recalled that in Springfield, Ohio, around 1910-11: "Ragtime piano was the major influence in that section of the country. Everybody tried to emulate Scott Joplin."<sup>2</sup> In discussing Jazz, there was a tendency among some writers to equate, in some way, ragtime with the piano:

It would be hard indeed--practically impossible--to put one's finger on a certain song and say "This is the first jazz song. . . ." And the same is true, in piano music, of the transition from ragtime to jazz.<sup>3</sup>

Strictly speaking, jazz has nothing to do with rhythm: it is solely concerned with instrumentation, and it would be possible to have jazz music which is not syncopated at all. You cannot play jazz music as a pianoforte solo: if you perform syncopated dance music on the pianoforte it is ragtime, not jazz.<sup>4</sup>

Despite the general public's inclination to identify ragtime primarily as a vocal style, then, there were some writers who associated the term specifically with the piano. Piano ragtime, though, cannot be regarded as a single phenomenon, for it has several distinct modes: piano renditions of ragtime songs, "ragged" versions of nonsyncopated music, and original piano ragtime composition.

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Aid to Better Music, "Melody 2 (January 1918): 7.

<sup>2</sup>Nat Hentoff, "Garvin Bushell and New York Jazz in the 1920's," Jazz Review 2 (January 1959): 11.

<sup>3</sup>Henry O. Osgood, So This Is Jazz (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1926), p. 33.

<sup>4</sup>R. W. S. Mendl, The Appeal of Jazz (London: Philip Allan & Co., [c. 1927]), p. 45.

Piano Renditions of Ragtime Songs

Ben Harney's reputation as the originator of piano ragtime (see pages 48-49 and 57-60) was actually based on his playing--and singing--of ragtime songs and, as will be discussed below, his ragging of existing music. All of his known compositions are songs,<sup>5</sup> and the publication of his Cake-Walk in the Sky (1899) in both song and piano versions (see Plate VI-2) is just one illustration of the practice of rendering songs on the piano.

The ubiquitous piano--available in homes, hotels, theaters, and meeting places--was a natural medium for the performance of ragtime songs, and references to this transfer are abundant:

You will also find the "coon" songs on your friend's piano when you go to his house, and the chances are that he will insist upon "rendering" a few of them for your edification.<sup>6</sup>

Rag-time . . . is heard on every hotel piano, from the windows of private houses and in concert halls. It is the vulgar words to which it is set that make it so degrading.<sup>7</sup>

About three years ago the popularity of the ragtime song began to wane. . . . It isn't quite dead, of course. Once in a while somebody has the heartlessness to hammer out a ragtime "selection" on the piano.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See listing in Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, p. 286.

<sup>6</sup>Weld, "The Invasion of Vulgarity in Music."

<sup>7</sup>"The Ragtime Rage."

<sup>8</sup>"'Coon Songs' on the Wane."

This practice of playing coon songs at the piano was further nurtured by the publication of coon songs in syncopated piano medleys, such as Max Hoffmann's Rag Medley (1897, Example V-11), Ragtown Rags (1898), and A Night in Coontown (1899); Ben Jerome's A Bunch of Rags (1898); Adolphe Schroeder's Rag-Time Medley No. 1 (1899) and Rag-Time Medley No. 2; and "Blind" Boone's Rag Medley No. 1 (1908, Example VIII-13a) and Rag Medley No. 2 (1909, Example VIII-14).

In a related development, coon songs were published with both regular (unsyncopated) piano accompaniments and with alternative ragtime (syncopated) piano arrangements (Example IV-1). Hoffmann's rag accompaniments, published in 1896, may be the earliest piano music specifically labeled as ragtime:

It was Max Hoffman who became famous as the first white man to make successfully the first rag arrangements. The work was begun in Chicago, which still echoed with the joyousness of the World's Fair of 1893. Additional refrains in the Frank Witmark style provided with rag accompaniments as developed by Hoffman, created a nationwide stir. . . .

. . . They [the Witmarks] published the first rag arrangement he ever made, that of All Coons Look Alike to Me.<sup>9</sup>

As these examples demonstrate, there was a close link between coon songs and piano ragtime. This link survived the

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<sup>9</sup>Witmark and Goldberg, House of Witmark, pp. 169-70. Ned Wayburn contended that his Syncopated Sandy (1897) was the first rag arrangement--see "Who Was Sponsor?" Melody 2 (December 1918): 4--but the publication dates support the Witmark-Hoffmann claim.

EXAMPLE IV-1. (a) Ernest Hogan, All Coons Look Alike to Me (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1896), chorus 1-4, standard version; (b) optional rag chorus 1-4; (c) W. T. Jefferson, My Coal Black Lady. Symphony de Ethiopia (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1896), chorus 1-5, standard version; (d) optional rag chorus 1-5; e) Ned Wayburn and Stanley Whiting, Syncopated Sandy (New York: Broder & Schlam, 1897), verse 1-4.

(a)

CHORUS.

All coons look a - like to me, I've got an-oth-er beau, you see,

This musical score for the standard version of the chorus consists of a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The vocal line is written in a single treble clef with a key signature of one flat and a 2/4 time signature. The lyrics are: "All coons look a - like to me, I've got an-oth-er beau, you see,". The piano accompaniment is written in grand staff notation (treble and bass clefs) and features a simple harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

(b)

Choice Chorus, with Negro "Rag." Accompaniment, Arr. by MAX HOFFMANN.

All coons look a - like to me, I've got an-oth-er beau, you see,

This musical score for the optional rag chorus features a more complex piano accompaniment. The vocal line is identical to the standard version. The piano accompaniment is written in grand staff notation and includes a prominent, rhythmic "rag" accompaniment in the right hand, characterized by syncopated rhythms and chords. The bass line is also more active, with a steady eighth-note pattern.

(c)

**CHORUS. Not too fast.**

This coal black la - dy, She is my ba - by, You can-not blame me, No! no!

*p-2nd-f*

Detailed description: This block contains the musical score for the chorus of 'Coal Black Lady'. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo instruction is 'Not too fast'. The lyrics are: 'This coal black la - dy, She is my ba - by, You can-not blame me, No! no!'. The piano part includes a dynamic marking 'p-2nd-f'.

(d)

**Rag accompaniment to Chorus "Coal Black Lady."**

*Arr. by Max Hoffman.*

*Moderato.*

My coal black la - dy, She is my ba - by, You cannot blame me no, no,

Detailed description: This block contains the rag accompaniment for the chorus of 'Coal Black Lady'. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The tempo instruction is 'Moderato'. The lyrics are: 'My coal black la - dy, She is my ba - by, You cannot blame me no, no,'. The piano part features a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.

(e)

There's a high - tone col - ored gent, A coon with-out a cent, His  
On a night way late last Fall, The coons they hired a hall, And

**RAG TIME.**

Detailed description: This block contains the 'Rag Time' section of the music. It features a vocal line on a treble clef staff and a piano accompaniment on a grand staff. The key signature is one sharp (F#) and the time signature is 4/4. The lyrics are: 'There's a high - tone col - ored gent, A coon with-out a cent, His On a night way late last Fall, The coons they hired a hall, And'. The piano part includes a dynamic marking 'v' (fortissimo) and is labeled 'RAG TIME.' on the left side.

coon song phase of vocal ragtime, for later songs were equally amenable to piano performance. The song Alexander's Ragtime Band (1911) was issued also as a piano solo, and several publishers issued annual "dance folios," these being the year's song hits in ragtime and other dance arrangements for piano.

#### Ragging Nonsyncopated Music

The rag accompaniments for coon songs probably originated as improvisations, and in this form--that is, improvisation--the ragtime style was applied to virtually all kinds of existing musical material, from popular songs to classics. The improvised syncopation of marches was a favored practice among early ragtime pianists (see page 183 below), as was the ragged version of popular songs:

I first heard ragtime in New Orleans about 1895. . . . It was in a cafe, and there was a little negro at the piano. He would play one of the standard songs of the day, such as "Mary and John," and then he would announce: "Here's the new music, the way us plays it," and he would break into ragtime.<sup>10</sup>

Jazz pianist James P. Johnson (1894-1955), also, in recalling his early experiences with ragtime, referred to the improvised ragging of popular songs, contrasting it to the "real ragtime" he learned later:

In 1902, when I was eight, we moved to Jersey City and there I first heard early ragtime. . . .

What they played wasn't ragtime as we know it now. It was popular songs with a strong rhythm and with syncopated vamps, not a whole composition or arrangement. . . .

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<sup>10</sup>"The Origin of Ragtime," New York Times.

We moved from Jersey City to New York in 1908 when I was 14. . . . In Jersey City I heard good piano from all parts of the South and West, but I never heard any real ragtime until we came to New York. . . .

In New York a friend taught me real ragtime. . . . He played Joplin.<sup>11</sup>

The marketing of ragtime manuals, instruction books designed to teach the art of "ragging," reflects the interest that was shown in ragtime improvisation. These manuals began appearing in print as early as 1897, the first being Ben Harney's Rag Time Instructor, which presents ragtime versions of hymns, folk songs, and popular songs (Example IV-2).

EXAMPLE IV-2. Ben Harney's Rag Time Instructor, arranged by Theodore H. Northrup<sup>12</sup> (Chicago: Sol Bloom, 1897), exercise No. 2.

ANNIE LAURIE.

No. 2.

RAG TIME.

<sup>11</sup>Tom Davin, "Conversations with James P. Johnson," [Part I], Jazz Review 2 (June 1959): 16-17.

<sup>12</sup>There is a proliferation of "arrangers" in ragtime publications, and the term assumes a variety of mean-

Another kind of manual is represented by Scott Joplin's School of Ragtime (1908). This instruction booklet presents exercises illustrating and analytically dissecting typical ragtime rhythms and figurations, but contains no complete pieces. Both approaches--the presentation of rhythmic exercises and sample syncopated arrangements of well-known pieces--are used in the various pedagogical writings of Axel Christensen and Edward R. Winn. Christensen directed a chain of ragtime schools around the country--as of December 1914 there were fifty schools--and complemented this activity with the publication of a monthly magazine, the Ragtime Review,<sup>13</sup> and a variety of instructional booklets. His first manual was Christensen's Rag-Time Instruction Book for Piano (1904, 1906, 1907, 1908, 1909, 1915). The success of this volume prompted the publication of similar manuals, such as: Christensen's Instruction Books for Vaudeville Piano Playing (1912),

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ings. In some cases the arrangers did just what the term implies. Frequently, though, they were called upon simply to notate the music as performed by an illiterate musician; this may be the situation with the Rag Time Instructor, for it is known that Harney had John Biller notate You've Been a Good Old Wagon (see Witmark and Goldberg, House of Witmark, p. 153). In other instances, a famous musician might lend his name as "arranger" in order to help the sales of a piece by an unknown composer; this was true for Joplin's "collaboration" on Joe Lamb's Sensation Rag (see Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, p. 236). In a few cases, such as Joplin's Original Rags (1899), which gives credit to Charles N. Daniels, the reason for an "arranger" is not known.

<sup>13</sup>Also titled Christensen's Ragtime Review; published December 1914 to January 1918; merged with Melody in April 1918.

Picture Show Collection for Piano (n.d.), Axel Christensen's New Instruction Book for Rag and Jazz Piano Playing (1920), Saxophone Rag Jazz Instructor (1922), Axel Christensen's Instruction Book for Jazz and Novelty Playing (1927), Axel Christensen's Instruction Book for Modern Swing Music (1936).

Winn, in 1915, published an instruction manual, How To Play Ragtime (Uneven Rhythm), and in later years wrote booklets on jazz and blues. In addition, he designed an extensive monthly course, "Ragtime Piano Playing," which began appearing in magazines in 1915.<sup>14</sup> The ultimate goal of these "methods" is articulated in the introduction to Winn's monthly course:

Aside from the technic required, ragtime presents two unusual problems to the pianist, namely, the ability to harmonize offhand or enlarge upon and make adaptations to the harmony given, and then to syncopate (rag) the tones thus produced. To play a composition as arranged and written for piano is one thing; to convert a melody and accompaniment into effective ragtime is quite another.<sup>15</sup>

Illustrating the aim to be achieved by students, Winn wrote out sample "improvisations," ragged versions of such pieces as Marching through Georgia, My Old Kentucky Home, Old Black Joe, Rubinstein's Melody in F, and Mendelssohn's Spring Song.

(Copyright restrictions probably accounted for the use of

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<sup>14</sup>Cadenza (March 1915-October 1916), and Tuneful Yankee/Melody (January 1917-June 1918).

<sup>15</sup>Edward R. Winn, "Ragtime Piano Playing: A Practical Course of Instruction for Pianists," Tuneful Yankee 1 (January 1917): 42-43.

unprotected materials.) To complement these arrangements, Winn had a monthly column in the magazine Melody--"'Ragging' the Popular Song Hits"--in which he presented discussions and syncopated versions of more recent songs.<sup>16</sup>

Another manifestation of the ragging of nonsyncopated materials is found in an expanded concept of the ragtime medley. Going beyond the collection of coon songs, Ned Wayburn's Ragtime Jimmie's Jamboree (1899) presents syncopated versions of the Star-Spangled Banner, Mendelssohn's Wedding March, and Paul Dresser's popular song, On the Banks of the Wabash. Such medleys were published throughout the period and are exemplified as well by the dance folios mentioned above (page 125), by the ragged patriotic tunes in Edward Claypoole's American Jubilee (1916), and by the various bugle calls used in Eubie Blake's and Carey Morgan's Bugle Call Rag (1916) and Val Marconi's The Bugle Calls in Ragtime (1921).

A novelty technique which apparently found some favor was the quodlibet, the contrapuntal interpolation of two pre-existent melodies into a rag. James P. Johnson, for instance, reported:

In my Imitator's Rag the last strain had Dixie in the right hand and The Star Spangled Banner in the left. . . . Another version had Home, Sweet Home in the left hand and Dixie in the right.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup>Melody 2 (January 1918-September 1918), passim.

This procedure is also reflected in some sheet music. In the piano version of Irving Berlin's Alexander's Ragtime Band, following the section which (in the song version) proclaims "And if you care to hear the Swanee River played in ragtime," there is a simultaneous rendering of Stephen Foster's Old Folks at Home ("Swanee River") and Dixie (Example IV-3a). (Actually, neither of the melodies is ragged, the syncopation of this contrapuntal exercise apparently being beyond the composer's modest technical ability.) Similarly, Jay Roberts's Entertainer's Rag includes a nonsyncopated juxtaposition of Dixie and Yankee Doodle (Example IV-3b).

As already suggested, "ragging the classics" was included in the general process of syncopating well-known melodies, Mendelssohn's Wedding March and Spring Song being two of the favorite vehicles. This practice goes back to the earliest days of ragtime; discussing Ben Harney's exhibitions from around 1899, Witmark reported:

His performances included the "ragging" of such popular classics as Mendelssohn's Spring Song, Rubinstein's Melody in F, and the Intermezzo from Mascagni's "Cavalleria Rusticana," which he would first play in their orthodox form. The effect was startling.<sup>18</sup>

James P. Johnson described having a similar repertoire in

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<sup>17</sup>Tom Davin, "Conversations with James P. Johnson," [Part II], Jazz Review 2 (July 1959): 13.

<sup>18</sup>Witmark and Goldberg, House of Witmark, p. 155.

EXAMPLE IV-3. (a) Irving Berlin, Alexander's Ragtime Band (New York: Ted Snyder Co., 1911), C 1-5; (b) Jay Roberts, Entertainer's Rag (Oakland, Calif.: Pacific Music Co., 1910), break, D 1-8.<sup>19</sup>

(a)

(b)

N.B.

the early 1910s:

Once I used Liszt's Rigoletto Concert Paraphrase as an introduction to a stomp. . . .

. . . I did my variations on William Tell Overture, Grieg's Peer Gynt Suite and even a Russian Rag based on Rachmaninoff's Prelude in C Sharp Minor, which was getting popular then.<sup>20</sup>

Jelly Roll Morton, too, described how he "swung into the

<sup>19</sup>Roberts's Entertainer's Rag and hundreds of other piano rags may be seen in various anthologies. For a listing of the contents of selected anthologies, see the Appendix.

<sup>20</sup>Davin, "James P. Johnson," pp. 12-13.

Miserery [sic] and combined it with the Anvil Chorus,<sup>21</sup> and nonagenarian Eubie Blake still thrills audiences today with his ragged version of the Tannhäuser Overture.

In publications, this trend is represented by such pieces as Egbert Van Alstyne's Darkies' Spring Song (1901), Edward Laska's and Charles Eliott's Coontown's Merry Widow (1908), Clinton Keithley's Merry Widow Rag (1908), Victor Maurice's Merry Widow Glad Rags (1908), George L. Cobb's Russian Rag (1918) ("Interpolating the famous 'Prelude' by Rachmaninoff"), and Julius Lenzberg's Hungarian Rag (1913) and Operatic Rag (Example IV-4).

EXAMPLE IV-4. Julius Lenzberg, Operatic Rag (New York: Jerome H. Remick, 1914), A 1-4.



It is apparent that for some composers "ragging the classics" was a way of striking back at the academics-- a kind of musical abuse of the treasured masterworks--an intention implicit in Felix Arndt's ragtime medley, An Operatic Nightmare (Desecration No. 2) (1916). Some of the targets accepted the bait, too, publicly denouncing the practice:

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<sup>21</sup>Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll, p. 149.

We have musical unions in many of our cities, and one of the first rules they should pass is that any member found guilty of what is called "ragging" a classic should be dismissed from the organization in disgrace, and never again permitted to appear in any reputable organization.<sup>22</sup>

At times, it is true, we find sacred pieces, classical music, and even operas rendered, but these are performances to turn away from in horror--for they are "ragged," out of tune, out of time, out of key.<sup>23</sup>

Ernest Huhe is greatly exercised because musical "masterpieces" are jazzed. He cites a "ragged" version of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" . . .<sup>24</sup>

Even Rupert Hughes, amidst his general praise of ragtime, expressed reservation about this application:

The latest phase of the rag-time mania is the publication of such tunes as "The Star Spangled Banner," Mendelssohn's "Wedding March," and even the trovatore "Miserere," arranged in rag-time. Their bad taste will serve at least this use: that it will display the elasticity and energy and the captivation of rag-time.<sup>25</sup>

"Ragging the classics" also made a positive impression on some, judging by James Weldon Johnson's appropriation of the credit for this practice for his fictional ragtime pianist:

It was I who first made rag-time transcriptions of familiar classic selections. I used to play Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" in a manner that never failed to

<sup>22</sup>Perry, "Ragging Good Music."

<sup>23</sup>Sherwood K. Boblitz, "Where Movie Playing Needs Reform," Musician 25 (June 1920): 8.

<sup>24</sup>"Editorials," New Music Review and Church Music Review 22 (October 1924): 464.

<sup>25</sup>Hughes, "A Eulogy of Rag-Time," p. 159.

arouse enthusiasm among the patrons of the "Club."<sup>26</sup>

The procedure used to rag a classic was, of course, no different from that used to rag any popular material, and was of no greater musical significance. But given the hostility with which some classical music proponents regarded ragtime, this "disrespect" toward "the masters" had a shock effect yielding a far greater emotional impact.

#### Original Ragtime Composition for the Piano

Piano arrangements of ragtime songs and syncopated versions of familiar melodies comprise only a small proportion--probably less than 5 percent--of the ragtime publications for piano. The bulk of the printed output is in the form of dance music on original themes; this is the music which is today most generally recognized as ragtime, and the music that James P. Johnson referred to as "real ragtime" (see page 126 above). It is also the repertory on which the stylistic portion of the present study focuses.

As a body of musical literature, this kind of ragtime is quite amenable to systematic study. Stylistically, it is set apart from other phases of ragtime by its tie to dance conventions, and is distinguished from other dance music by its adherence to a relatively narrow, but characteristic, range of rhythmic traits. Historically, it has

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<sup>26</sup>Johnson, Ex-Colored Man, chap. 8 (p. 456).

discernable roots in earlier styles and, once established, undergoes gradual changes in perceptible patterns. Within the genre there is both a consistent language, lending itself to general imitation, and sufficient differentiation for the individual stylist. Finally, the music was produced in substantial quantities, indicating a widespread interest, despite the lack of attention given by journalists.

Publication figures are difficult to determine. Copyright listings provide little help in this area; while virtually every published rag has a copyright designation on its title page, many of these are feigned since publishers and composers sometimes did not actually apply for protection. Also, among piano rags which have legitimate copyrights, more than half, judging by the survey made for the present study, do not contain the word "rag" in the title, and are therefore not recognizable as rags simply by the registration listings.

Ragtime sheet-music collectors concur in general on the voluminous proportions of ragtime publications, but diverge widely in numerical estimations. One collector is reported to own "over 10,000 sheets of rag music,"<sup>27</sup> but there is no indication of whether this figure includes ragtime songs, novelty piano, and others not necessarily in the piano rag category. Another collector, David Jasen, estimates more modestly a total of 3,500 different publications, his own

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<sup>27</sup>"Bob Darch Unearths Treasures," Ragtimer (September/

library containing more than half of this figure.<sup>28</sup> But his estimate incorporates "novelty piano," a questionable inclusion (to be discussed in Chapter VIII), and excludes syncopated cakewalks of the late 1890s. One of the many difficulties in determining approximate publication figures, then, is in settling on a definition of the music to be included in the category.

The present stylistic study focuses upon the dance-oriented piano ragtime published between 1897 and 1920. Some consideration is given to earlier pieces exhibiting ragtime characteristics and to post-1920 rags and "novelty piano," but the detailed examination is concerned primarily with music that can most reasonably be viewed as ragtime: music that is labeled "rag" or "ragtime" in either title, subtitle, descriptive legend, or tempo indication (such as "tempo di rag"), or music that corresponds stylistically to most of the music with "rag" labels. Using these criteria, 1,004 rags are examined, the publication dates falling into the following yearly disposition:

|             |            |            |            |
|-------------|------------|------------|------------|
| 1897....10  | 1903....42 | 1909....73 | 1915....43 |
| 1898....29  | 1904....32 | 1910....84 | 1916....33 |
| 1899....124 | 1905....30 | 1911....66 | 1917....16 |
| 1900....37  | 1906....38 | 1912....48 | 1918....16 |
| 1901....31  | 1907....47 | 1913....50 | 1919....7  |
| 1902....42  | 1908....52 | 1914....54 |            |

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October 1970): 8.

<sup>28</sup>Personal communication, 23 June 1975.

The extent to which this breakdown reflects actual publications cannot be precisely determined, but from available information on the subject, the proportions in the sampling seem reasonably indicative. In 1897 the term "rag" was still a novelty and was used tenuously by publishers; Metro-nome magazine, for example, did not carry any ragtime advertisements until January, 1898 (see page 18 above). The response to the increased production of 1898 must have been encouraging, for 1899 witnessed a virtual flood of ragtime compositions, an obvious exploitation of a successful fad. Following the overproduction of rags in 1899, a leveling-off occurred, accompanied by a more or less steady production for the next nine years. Another peak was reached during the years 1909-1911, followed again by a plateau and a gradual decline. By 1917 "jazz" was becoming the motto of popular music, and the decrease in pieces designated as "rags" was correspondingly steep.<sup>30</sup>

The faith placed in this sample is further justified by the highly stereotyped nature of ragtime; within chronological and stylistic subgroupings, most pieces present the

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<sup>30</sup>In light of these figures, the frequent assertion that ragtime was declining in numbers by 1910 should be questioned; see Chase, America's Music, p. 447, and John Rublowsky, Black Music in America (New York: Basic Books, 1971). p. 118. Apparently this mistaken idea stems from Winthrop Sargeant's statement that a qualitative decline was in effect by that time; see Sargeant, Jazz: Hot and Hybrid, 3d ed., enl. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1975), p. 141.

same patterns with an uncommon persistence. A few distinctive rags do occur, but these are easily recognized as exceptions. Ironically, the tendency in recent years to reprint the more original and unique rags (What editor, after all, would anthologize the most ordinary, pedestrian pieces?) has resulted in some distorted views and misguided writings about ragtime. The present study was at first also heavily weighted in favor of the more accessible, reprinted rags; as the statistical population broadened, however, growing to include the "forgotten," unreprinted works of the era, traits manifested by common, stereotyped rags became overwhelmingly dominant. Consequently, the statistical proportions cited in the following chapters tend to generalize the mediocre and unexceptional; as such, the conclusions appear to reflect the real world of ragtime and serve as a background of measurement for comparing and understanding the more original and extraordinary samples of the genre.

Given the abundance of ragtime publications for piano, it seems strange that this genre did not receive greater recognition from contemporary writers. While composers and specific pieces are referred to in articles, the same names rarely recur. For the most part, composers or works praised by one writer were ignored by others; there is little indication of a broad following comparable to that enjoyed by some song writers.

In all of the literature surveyed, only two names stand out: Kerry Mills and Scott Joplin. Mills is mentioned mostly in connection with his 1897 cakewalk At a Georgia Campmeeting. Discussions, however, are usually in the context of band music, and there is not a single reference to this work as a piano piece. Consistent with the nonpiano concept of Georgia Campmeeting is the lack of a single piano recording made of this piece during the ragtime era, even though in band versions it was one of the most frequently recorded works.<sup>31</sup>

Scott Joplin's music was also played by bands, but he was clearly regarded as a composer for the piano. Joplin unquestionably enjoyed a special reputation and was referred to with more praise and respect than any other composer of piano ragtime. Yet, this acclaim did not delude him into thinking that his work was sufficiently acknowledged by the public. As his wife recounted:

I used to wonder sometimes whether Scott would ever receive recognition during my lifetime. You know, he would often say that he'd never be appreciated until after he was dead.<sup>32</sup>

A probable reason for his dissatisfaction was that, while ragtime musicians often knew several of his pieces, his fame with the general public rested upon a single work, the Maple

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<sup>31</sup>Jasen, Recorded Ragtime, s.v.

<sup>32</sup>Kay C. Thompson, "Lottie Joplin," Record Changer 9 (October 1950): 18.

Leaf Rag.

James P. Johnson, in discussing his repertory from 1912, recalled playing only two other Joplin rags--Sunflower Slow Drag (1901) and Euphonic Sounds (1909); to the reference of Maple Leaf Rag he appended the comment: "Everybody knew that by then."<sup>33</sup> Apparently everyone did know Maple Leaf Rag. One critic, decrying the coon-song type of popular music, contrasted it with "the 'rag' dance [which] is always a fairly welcome addition to modern music--such as the 'Maple Leaf Rag,' . . ."<sup>34</sup> Another, discussing the positive aspects of ragtime, cited "the once famous 'Maple Leaf Rag' . . ."<sup>35</sup> The ragtime pedagogues Axel Christensen and Edward R. Winn both held Joplin in high regard. Christensen, in writing about ragtime publisher John Stark (1841-1927), praised him primarily for bringing Joplin before the public:

It was he who discovered Scott Joplin, who put on paper for the first time that wonderful composer of classic ragtime. It was he who gave to the public the famous and never dying "Maple Leaf Rag," the "Cascades Rag," and the like, numbers that will outlive many generations.<sup>36</sup>

Winn, in an advertisement for his ragtime manual, introduced an endorsement from Joplin with the following description:

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<sup>33</sup>Davin, "James P. Johnson," [Part II], p. 11.

<sup>34</sup>"Scores of Popular Songs Coming Out."

<sup>35</sup>Burk, "Ragtime and Its Possibilities," p. 12.

<sup>36</sup>Axel Christensen, "Chicago Syncopations: John Stark, Pioneer Publisher," Melody 2 (October 1918): 8.

Scott Joplin, the world's greatest composer of Ragtime, who wrote the celebrated "Maple Leaf Rag," "Mint Leaf Rag," "Treemonisha," opera in ragtime, and many other famous ragtime compositions, says: . . .<sup>37</sup>

Even Jelly Roll Morton, who was inclined to downplay the accomplishments of others, referred to Joplin as "the greatest ragtime writer who ever lived and the composer of Maple Leaf Rag."<sup>38</sup>

But the Maple Leaf Rag was a singular case; no other piano rag--by Joplin or anyone else--repeated its unique success. This was the observation of ragtime-dixieland pianist J. Russel Robinson (1892-1963), and the evidence supports his view:

One of the tunes I played a lot while touring the South [circa 1908] was Scott Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag." . . . I think it is one of the finest tunes ever written . . . the King of Rags, and in my way of thinking, nothing that Joplin or any other rag writers wrote ever came close to it.<sup>39</sup>

Perhaps it is the experience of Walter Harding (c. 1883-1973) which most accurately reflects the state of public recognition of Joplin, and of ragtime composers in general. During his active days as a ragtime pianist he did not know of Joe Lamb or James Scott, the two composers linked with

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<sup>37</sup>Edward R. Winn, Undated advertisement, reprinted in Rag Times 7 (January 1974): 8. The reference to a "Mint Leaf Rag" is intriguing as this piece is otherwise unknown.

<sup>38</sup>Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll, p. 149.

<sup>39</sup>J. Russel Robinson, "Dixieland Piano," as told to Ralph auf der Heide, Record Changer (August 1947): 7.

Joplin by present day writers, and after singling out Maple Leaf Rag, ranked other Joplin rags below unnamed pieces by other "popular" composers:

I don't recall hearing any rags by Lamb or Scott in those days and of Joplin, aside from the Maple Leaf Rag there were few that attained popularity. I played his Pineapple, Cascades and a few others, but for the most part it was rags by Wenrich, Bernard, Snyder, and similar composers . . .<sup>40</sup>

That there was only one spectacular success in the piano ragtime canon seems remarkable. Certainly the publication of thousands of piano pieces must have been supported and encouraged by substantial sales. But there is a dearth of printed commentary about this music. At a time when the public was going wild over ragtime songs, there is no indication of a similar widespread infatuation with any piano rag other than Maple Leaf Rag. With this additional evidence of the subservient position of piano rags to vocal rags the puzzle is not so much as why more piano pieces did not

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<sup>40</sup>Walter N. H. Harding, Untitled letter, Ragtime Society 3 (April 1964): 25. Harding played ragtime professionally from 1909 to 1914, and was personally acquainted with several of the more celebrated composer-performers of the day--Mike Bernard (Barnett, 1881-1936), Percy Wenrich (1880-1952), and Joe Jordan (1882-1971). Harding later amassed a collection of sheet music and antiquarian books and music dating back to the seventeenth century which, upon his death at the age of ninety as a "penniless recluse" in a ramshackle Chicago apartment, was valued at an estimated one-to-three million dollars. His entire estate went to the Bodleian Library of Oxford University. See "Organist Dies at 90, Leaving Fortune in Rare Sheet Music," New York Times, 14 December 1973, p. 34; and "'Penniless' Ragtime Pianist Leaves Fortune in Books," Ragtimer (January/February 1975): 13.

capture the popular imagination, as it is how and why this feat was accomplished by the Maple Leaf Rag.

### The Score Versus Performance

There is little doubt that much ragtime piano music heard in performance was never captured in notated form. James Weldon Johnson's depiction of a ragtime improvisation, for one, "sounds" far more involved and free-wheeling than samples preserved in publication:

The barbaric harmonies, the audacious resolutions, often consisting of an abrupt jump from one key to another, the intricate rhythms in which the accents fell in the most unexpected places, but in which the beat was never lost, produced a most curious effect. And, too, the player--the dexterity of his left hand in making rapid octave runs and jumps was little short of marvelous; and with his right hand he frequently swept half the keyboard with clean-cut chromatics . . .<sup>41</sup>

While the probable poetic license of this passage might justify some skepticism, the description is not without parallels in accounts of actual ragtime performances. Hughie Woolford, in his employment of fast passage-work in both hands, has been likened to later jazz virtuoso Art Tatum,<sup>42</sup> and James P. Johnson, judging by his own reports of his improvisational style, similarly went far beyond the limits of printed ragtime:

I played rags very accurately and brilliantly--running chromatic octaves and glissandos up and down with both hands. It made a terrific effect.

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<sup>41</sup>Johnson, Ex-Colored Man, chap. 6 (p. 447).

<sup>42</sup>Fletcher, Tom Fletcher Story, p. 164.

I did double glissandos straight and backhand, glissandos in sixths and double tremolos.<sup>43</sup>

The extent to which the sheet music represents the composer's true intent is, in some cases, also open to question. Eubie Blake has testified that composers were urged by publishers to simplify difficult passages that might discourage sales,<sup>44</sup> and Luckey Roberts's Junk Man Rag (1913) even bears the label "Simplified."

While much of the music-buying public probably did play the music as written (or at least made an attempt to do so), it is unlikely that professional ragtime musicians, accustomed by training and inclination to ragging all kinds of musical material, would slavishly adhere to a printed score. The lone exception found to this assumption, underlining the validity of the generalization, is in J. Russel Robinson's comment that he played the Maple Leaf Rag as written, being one of the few pianists capable of reading the music.<sup>45</sup> James P. Johnson has also referred to the casual way in which Joplin's music was played:

Scott Joplin's pieces were popular. They got around the country, but the ticklers I knew just played sections of them that they heard someplace. I never knew they were Joplin until later.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Davin, "James P. Johnson," [Part II], p. 12.

<sup>44</sup>Max Morath, "A Personal Observation," Max Morath's Giants of Ragtime (New York: Edward B. Marks Music Co., 1971), p. 6.

<sup>45</sup>Robinson, "Dixieland Piano," p. 7.

Others, too, spoke directly on the lack of faithfulness to the score:

In Chicago in those days, if you could only play what was printed you had little chance of a future.<sup>47</sup>

Some ragtimers say ragtime should be played as written --note for note--wrong. Classical music--yes. Ragtime --never. There are good ragtimers and bad ragtimers. If you don't use imagination and don't take liberties, and play as written--that's bad ragtime . . .<sup>48</sup>

None of the original pianists played ragtime the way it was written, they played their own style.<sup>49</sup>

The practice of improvising on a rag composition is probably well illustrated by Jelly Roll Morton's two recordings of Maple Leaf Rag, made at the Library of Congress in 1938.<sup>50</sup> Though Morton's concern with historical accuracy may be suspect, and while his performances may have been influenced by later jazz developments, these renditions do appear as plausible samples of the improvisatory art of the competent ragtime pianist.

With some ragtimers there does seem to have been at

<sup>46</sup>Davin, "James P. Johnson," [Part I], p. 16.

<sup>47</sup>Harding, Untitled letter, p. 24.

<sup>48</sup>Percy Franks, Untitled letter, Ragtimer (January/February 1971): 12. Franks played ragtime professionally in New York in theaters and in a publishing house from 1912 to 1918.

<sup>49</sup>Paul E. Affeldt, quoting Brun Campbell in liner notes to The Professors, vol. 2, Euphonic ESR 1202. Campbell (1884-1953) studied with Joplin in 1898.

<sup>50</sup>Re-released on They All Played the Maple Leaf Rag, Herwin 401.

least an intent to have their own written scores respected. Early Saint Louis ragtimer Tom Turpin (1873-1922) is reported to have played his rags exactly as written,<sup>51</sup> and Artie Matthews (1888-1959) wrote at the head of several of his Pastime Rags, "Don't Fake,"<sup>52</sup> Scott Joplin, in his School of Ragtime, gave warnings against imprecise performance, suggesting that the music be played as written, and summarized in the last exercise:

We wish to say here, that the "Joplin ragtime" is destroyed by careless or imperfect rendering, and very often good players lose the effect entirely by playing too fast. They are harmonized with the supposition that each note will be played as it is written . . .<sup>53</sup>

Joe Lamb played his own pieces as written<sup>54</sup> and assured a researcher that Joplin, with whom he was acquainted, did the same:

Personally, I don't think there was any difference between Joplin of 1914 and Joplin of 1908. . . . I don't think he would add any notes in 1914 to any piece he wrote in, say, 1908. To my recollection he played his rags the way he wrote them. That's the way I always did.<sup>55</sup>

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<sup>51</sup>Trebor Tichenor, "'The Real Thing' As Recalled by Charles Thompson," Ragtime Review 2 (April 1963): 5; reprinted in Rag Times 5 (November 1971): 3. Charles Thompson (1891-1964) was a Saint Louis ragtime pianist and composer.

<sup>52</sup>Numbers 1 (1913), 2 (1913), and 4 (1920).

<sup>53</sup>Scott Joplin, School of Ragtime (New York: Scott Joplin, 1908), Exercise No. 6.

<sup>54</sup>Cf. recording of Lamb playing, Joe Lamb: A Study in Classic Ragtime, Folkways FG 3562.

<sup>55</sup>Michael Montgomery and Trebor Tichenor, Liner notes to Scott Joplin--1916, Biograph BLP 1006Q.

Other witnesses recalled that Joplin might make some slight changes in his playing, but nothing of substance:

Joe [Jordan] never heard him [Joplin] play any rags other than his own, and he played them almost exactly like the sheet music. . . .

I asked Joe how Joplin rags sounded when they were played in the old days. He assured me that all one would have to do to get the sound would be to read and play them as written in the indicated tempos.<sup>56</sup>

He [Joplin] didn't appear to add any notes [to the Maple Leaf Rag] outside of what was in the music, except that he added an introduction and a fill at the end.<sup>57</sup>

The piano rolls made by Joplin, as recorded on Biograph BLP 1006Q, reveal alterations greater than those suggested by the above quotations, although they are still of a minor nature, consisting mostly of chord arpeggiations and passing- and neighbor-note embellishments. Trebor Tichenor, one of the producers of this record, analyzed the rolls and, finding some altered passages physically impossible to perform, has concluded that the rolls were edited.<sup>58</sup> Most of the embellishments, though, make no extraordinary demands on a moderately competent performer, thus leaving open the question of the extent of editing.

The issues of performance practice--of the degree of adherence to the score, of stylistic trends in improvi-

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<sup>56</sup>Dick Zimmerman, "Joe Jordan and Scott Joplin," Rag Times 2 (November 1968): 5.

<sup>57</sup>Dick Zimmerman, "Ragtime Recollections: An Interview with Dai Vernon," Rag Times 2 (26 May 1968): 7.

<sup>58</sup>Montgomery and Tichenor, Liner notes.

sation--will probably remain obscure, although some enlightenment undoubtedly could be derived from systematic studies of piano rolls and recordings of the period.<sup>59</sup>

To be sure, the notated music is at least of equal importance for an understanding of the period, for it was in the sheet music form that millions became familiar with the style. Amateurs played the music essentially as written, professionals used it as a common starting point for a variety of improvisatory styles, and composers--whether depicting rough guidelines or precise, formal intent--provided models on which others worked, contributing to, or further developing, the syncopated language. More clearly than any other source, the published sheet music chronicles the evolution of tastes and ideas in piano ragtime. Based on analyses of these publications, the following chapters outline the substance of the piano ragtime style and trace its evolution.

#### Summary

While the general public was apparently more attracted

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<sup>59</sup>Those with access to these rare materials are certainly urged to consider such a project. The rarity of ragtime piano recordings is itself a problem. David Jasen argues that the questionable sound quality of early piano recordings is not a feasible explanation for this rarity since the piano was recorded frequently as an accompanying instrument. His counter-suggestions, though--the poor pay scale for recording artists and a geographic separation between Midwestern ragtime pianists and Eastern-based recording studios--lack conviction. See Jasen, Recorded Ragtime, p. 9.

to vocal ragtime, there is evidence that piano ragtime was also an important genre. Some writers and musicians even considered the piano form the primary manifestation of ragtime, and the thousands of ragtime publications for piano testify to a buying public of significant proportions.

Piano ragtime is divided into three different categories: piano renditions of coon and other ragtime songs, ragged versions of nonsyncopated music, and original piano ragtime composition. The first category includes simple piano renditions or improvisations on ragtime songs, published song medleys, and syncopated accompaniments for coon songs. It is in this last subgroup, with the special "rag" accompaniment provided for the song All Coons Look Alike to Me (1896), that the term "rag" first appeared on a music publication.

The second category--ragged versions of nonsyncopated music--is comprised of syncopated improvisations and publications based on any pre-existent, nonrag source: popular songs, marches, hymns, folk music, and classical music.

The third category is of original, dance-oriented, ragtime compositions specifically for piano. This is the music that is generally recognized as ragtime today, and the music on which the next four chapters concentrate. Although this music was issued in substantial quantities--the present study considers over one thousand compositions

published between 1897 and 1920--only one piece seems to have achieved wide recognition and popularity, this being Scott Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag. Even this piece, though, apparently did not have the success enjoyed by numerous ragtime songs.

The subject of performance and its relationship to printed music is complicated by the broad variety of approaches, but there is clear evidence that most professional ragtime pianists were inclined to improvise rather than play the music as written. There were some composer-pianists who played their own music essentially as published, and those who attempted to discourage inordinate freedoms with their scores, but these seem to be exceptions. The fact that some of the more meticulous composers, such as Joplin and Matthews, warned against "faking" would tend to support the claim that this practice was prevalent.

Despite the importance of improvisation in the musical life of ragtime, a study of the printed sheet music is justified because this was one of the formats by which the style was dispersed throughout the country, and because this format possesses a unique capacity to preserve in enormous quantities a record of the evolving traits associated with ragtime.

## CHAPTER V

### EARLY PIANO RAGTIME

Chapter II, "Origins and Early Manifestations," examined the contemporaneous commentary on the emergence of ragtime. It was concerned more with what was thought to be true than what actually was. In contrast, the next four chapters, Chapters V-VIII, will consider the musical evidence as opposed to the speculation of contemporaries, and, in addition, will be restricted to piano music.<sup>1</sup> Chapter V outlines the characteristics of the early style in order to establish precisely what piano ragtime is. This accomplished, Chapter VI examines the musical sources that contributed to the style's formation. Chapters VII and VIII trace the evolution of ragtime, describing its main features and the extraneous elements that eventually eroded its distinctive qualities.

#### The Category of "Early Rags"

Many of the identifying traits of ragtime are already present in samples from its earliest years of publication,

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<sup>1</sup>As the study now will concentrate on piano music, the term "ragtime," unless specified to the contrary, will be understood as meaning "piano ragtime composition."

and most of the basic conventions are well established by 1900. But there are also stylistic features emphasized in early rags that are discarded in later compositions. Because of this unmistakable evolutionary trend in ragtime, the earlier rags will be discussed as a separate subcategory.

There is no distinct break, no single year separating "early rags" from later types, but, based on the statistical analyses of various trends (to be discussed below), this category has been confined in the present study to works published before 1901. (A total of two hundred "early rags," published between 1897 and 1901, have been examined; see the chronological listing on page 136.) In addition, two other qualifications are required for the "early rag" classification. First, the piece must be primarily for piano. This qualification thereby excludes coon songs, but includes works that have a single vocal chorus along with several piano sections. Second, the piece must, in some way, be identified as a rag. Some of the means of identification have already been outlined on page 136: use of the term "rag" on the sheet music and stylistic correspondence to most pieces with "rag" labels. Another identification should be recognized, this being the serious, contemporaneous acceptance of a piece as a rag. This final guideline allows some interesting findings. For one, it establishes that contemporaries applied the term to piano pieces published before 1897, the year that the term

first appeared in piano titles. The popular song writer R. M. Stults, for instance, referred to Kerry Mills's Rastus on Parade (1895) and Happy Days in Dixie (1896) as rags:

And who will venture to say that the author of this widely-known piece [At a Georgia Campmeeting (1897)] is not a genius in his line. It was this same composer who also created "Rastus on Parade," "Happy Days in Dixie," and "Whistling Rufus" [1899]--four consecutive "rag-time" hits.<sup>2</sup>

In another case, the first ragtime anthology, Brainard's Ragtime Collection (1899), presents an even earlier work as a rag, E. A. Phelps's The Darkies' Patrol (1892). This collection, to be sure, does include several compositions which, totally lacking any semblance to ragtime, must be rejected as rags. Darkies' Patrol, however, in addition to having been identified as a rag by the publisher, exhibits the rhythmic traits of ragtime (see discussion below, page and Example V-7); it thereby qualifies as one of the earliest, if not the earliest, published rag.

#### Ragtime Syncopation

As already demonstrated, almost all writers of the period thought of ragtime as a syncopated music. These impressions notwithstanding, there are early pieces, accepted by contemporaries as rags, which are unsyncopated, and many with syncopation in only one (frequently the first) of the three or four melodic strains; such unsyncopated strains are

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<sup>2</sup>Stults, "Something about the Popular Music of Today."

essentially marches (Example V-1).

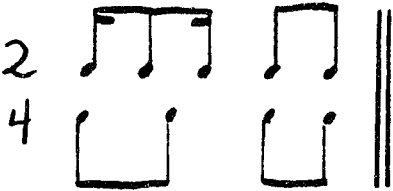

EXAMPLE V-1. Kerry Mills, Whistling Rufus (New York: F. A. Mills, 1899), B' 1-16.

Syncopation, though, is clearly the dominating and distinctive element in the evolution of the style. It is most often presented in the treble melody, against a metrically accented march accompaniment bass (such as the bass in Example V-1), with syncopations involving rhythms of one-half the usual duration of a bass note, or on durations equal to one-eighth of a measure. Thus, bass motion in eighth-notes accompanies treble syncopations in sixteenths, and a bass in quarter-notes supports treble syncopations in eighths (Examples V-2 and V-3).

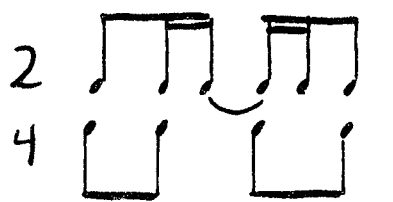
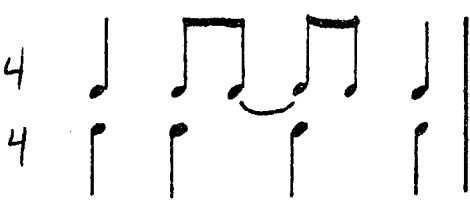
In early ragtime, two types of rag syncopations emerge as most important, these being the foundation for most variants and later developments: untied syncopations,

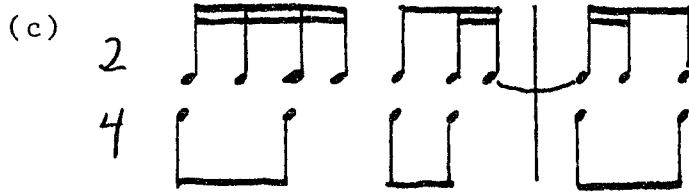
restricted to separate halves of a measure (Example V-2),<sup>3</sup> and tied syncopations, connecting the halves of a measure (Example V-3a, b). Although a tie across the bar line (Example V-3c) would appear to be a small and logical development, it is rare in the early period.

EXAMPLE V-2. Untied Syncopations.

(a)  (b) 

EXAMPLE V-3. Tied Syncopations.

(a)  (b) 

(c) 


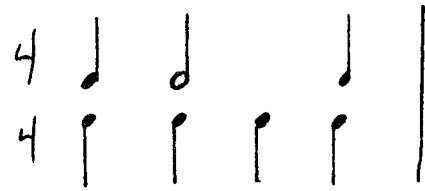
A third kind of rhythm is prominent, and while the syncopation does cross the middle of the measure, the figure appears to be related more closely to the untied syncopation than to the tied, perhaps as a higher level or augmentation.

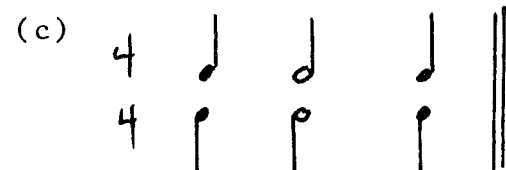
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<sup>3</sup>Some literature refers to this rhythm as a "cakewalk figure," but as cakewalk music is frequently unsyncopated, this association will be avoided. See Sargeant, Jazz, pp. 120, 131-32, 138; and Die Musik in Geschichte und Gegenwart, s.v. "Gesellschaftstanz," cols. 29-30.

But this augmented syncopation is different from the others as the bass and treble rhythms have a one-to-one relationship, the basic unit of motion being one-quarter of a measure; therefore, the syncopated portions of the rhythm, instead of falling between the left-hand articulations, coincide with them, producing a syncopated effect that is relatively weak (Example V-4). This rhythm is common in early rags, especially in second and third themes (Example V-5), but is not characteristic of rags after the early period. Because ragtime composers showed such a temporary interest in augmented syncopation, in this study it is excluded from the blanket term of ragtime syncopation.

EXAMPLE V-4. Augmented Syncopation.

(a)  (b) 

(c) 

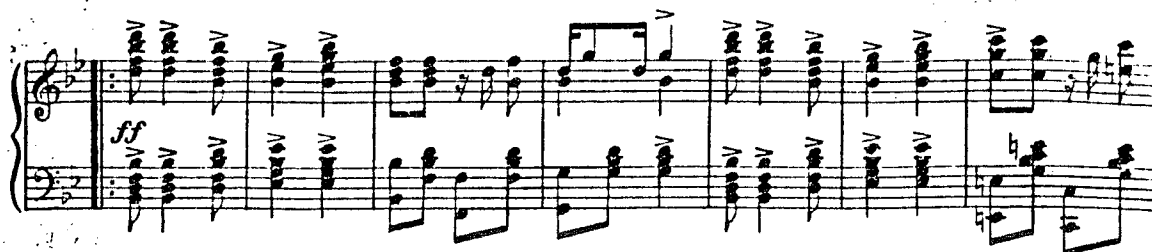
Untied Syncopation Rags

Rags using untied syncopation as the exclusive type of ragtime syncopation, without a single appearance of tied syncopations, constitute the majority of early rags.<sup>4</sup>

Such early pieces as Mills's Rastus on Parade and

EXAMPLE V-5. (a) W. H. Krell, Mississippi Rag (New York: S. Brainard's Sons, 1897), B 1-7; (b) G. M. Blandford, The Black Venus (Boston: Vivian Music Publishing Co., 1899), C 1-6.

(a)

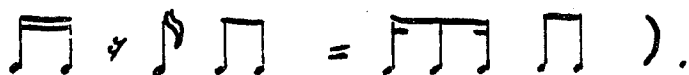


(b)



Happy Days in Dixie actually have little ragtime syncopation at all (as opposed to augmented syncopation), and that appearing only in the introductions and measures 13 and 13-14 respectively of the opening strains (Example V-6).

In contrast, the earlier Darkies' Patrol makes extensive use of UTS (Example V-7; note that



With the introduction of the term "rag" in piano titles, the incidence of syncopations, of both the untied and the tied varieties, increases markedly. The UTS,

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<sup>4</sup>The symbols UTS and TS will be used to designate the terms "untied syncopation" and "tied syncopation."

however, is still the commonest understanding of ragtime.

Ben Harney's Rag Time Instructor, the first work to formerly present the principles of ragtime, has arrangements that are entirely devoid of TS (Example IV-2, page 126). Similarly,

EXAMPLE V-6. (a) K. Mills, Rastus on Parade (Detroit, Mich.: F. A. Mills, 1895), Introduction, A 1-16; (b) K. Mills, Happy Days in Dixie (New York: F. A. Mills, 1896), A 1-16.

(a)

The musical score for 'Rastus on Parade' is presented in four systems. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The time signature is 2/4. The first system begins with a forte (ff) dynamic and includes accents (>) over several notes. The second system features a forte (f) dynamic. The third system begins with a piano (p) dynamic. The fourth system concludes with a forte (f) dynamic. The music is written for piano with treble and bass staves.

(b)

The image shows three systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. The first system begins with a dynamic marking of *mf* and has several 'V' symbols above the treble staff. The second system also has 'V' symbols above the treble staff. The third system has a '7' above the treble staff and 'L.H.' written below the bass staff.

EXAMPLE V-7. E. A. Phelps, The Darkies' Patrol (New York: S. Brainard's Sons, 1892), A 7-12.

The image shows a single system of musical notation for piano accompaniment, consisting of a treble clef staff and a bass clef staff. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present in the first measure of the treble staff.

in some of the most prominent pieces of the period, such as Mills's At a Georgia Campmeeting, Holzmann's Smoky Mokes (1898), and Howard and Emerson's song Hello! Ma Baby--which is syncopated only in the section using the word "ragtime"--UTS is the exclusive type of ragtime syncopation (Example V-8).

Tied Syncopation Rags

Whereas the category of rags based on untied rhythms is defined partially by the complete absence of tied syncopations, the category now under consideration includes both

EXAMPLE V-8. (a) K. Mills, At a Georgia Campmeeting (New York: F. A. Mills, 1897), Introduction, A 1-16; (b) Abe Holzmann, Smoky Mokes (New York: Feist & Frankenthaler, 1898), Introduction, A 1-16, B 1-6; (c) [Joseph] Howard and [Ida] Emerson, Hello! Ma Baby (New York: T. B. Harms & Co., 1899), chorus 1-5.

(a) **Not fast.**

The musical score is written for piano in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It consists of four systems of music. The first system is marked '(a) Not fast.' and includes a first ending bracket. The second and third systems are continuous piano accompaniment. The fourth system includes a first ending bracket and a second ending bracket. The notation features syncopated rhythms and tied notes characteristic of ragtime.

(b)

The musical score consists of five systems of piano accompaniment. The first system is marked with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The second system contains a repeat sign. The third system also contains a repeat sign. The fourth system features first and second endings, marked with '1' and '2' respectively. The fifth system is marked with fortissimo (*ff*) dynamic. The score is written in treble and bass clefs with various musical notations including notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

(c)

The image shows a musical score for a song. It consists of two systems of music. Each system has a vocal line (treble clef) and a piano accompaniment (grand staff). The first system contains the lyrics: "Hel - lo! ma ba - by, Hel - lo! ma hon - ey,". The second system contains the lyrics: "Hel - lo! ma rag - time gal,..... Send me a kiss by". The piano accompaniment features a steady eighth-note bass line and chords in the right hand.

types of rhythms, for tied syncopations usually occur in conjunction with those that are untied.

Despite the greater prominence in early ragtime of UTS, both rhythms are present in pieces from the beginning of the period. The songs from 1896 that are appended with ragtime accompaniments use TS (see My Coal Black Lady, Example IV-1d, page 124), as does Harney's You've Been a Good Old Wagon (Example V-9a). Tied syncopation is absent in an untexted portion labeled "dance" (Example V-9b), but it is possible that measures 2-3 contain a typographical error: the slur curve connecting A to the second B may have been intended as a tie connecting the two Bs. The present configuration seems slightly awkward and untypical, and when

EXAMPLE V-9. Ben Harney and [John] Biller, You've Been a Good Old Wagon but You've Done Broke Down (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1896): (a) verse 1-9; (b) dance 1-5.

(a)

1. I was standing in a crapgame doing no harm, Baby!  
 2. The Judge asked me what had I done Baby! Said

When a Coppergrabbd me by my arm, Honey! Took me down to the  
 standing in a crapgame getting my gun, Hot stuff! The Judge and Ju - ry

(b)


*DANCE.*


this passage was adapted by Max Hoffmann the following year for his Rag Medley, the Bs were, in fact, tied (Example V-10). If the typographical error is assumed, or, more simply, if the Hoffmann adaptation is considered, two kinds of tied syncopations are evident. The first, represented in Example

EXAMPLE V-10. Max Hoffmann, Rag Medley (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1897), measures 1-4.



V-9a, ties together syncopated and unsyncopated halves of

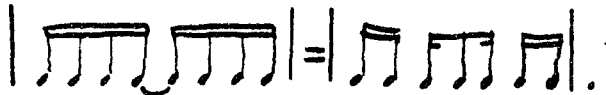
the measure:  ; an extension of this type, the

tying together of two syncopated halves--  --

is possible but less frequent. The second kind of tied syncopation, illustrated in Example V-10, creates its effect by

joining together two unsyncopated halves:  .

This second kind is actually similar to UTS, but with an

important metrical accent shift:  <sup>5</sup>

The first kind is used in the final section of Harney's

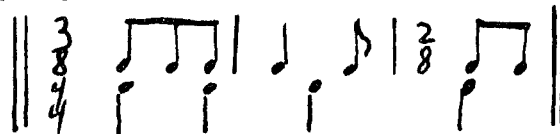
Cake Walk in the Sky, while both figures appear in Tom

Turpin's earliest published rag, the 1897 version (different

from another published arrangement from 1899) of Harlem Rag

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<sup>5</sup>Composer Aaron Copland (b. 1900) has described this figure as a polyrhythm:



See Copland, "Jazz Structure and Influence," pp. 10-11.

(Example V-11).

EXAMPLE V-11. (a) B. Harney, The Cake Walk in the Sky, arr. by F. W. Meacham (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1899), F 1-5; (b) Tom Turpin, Harlem Rag, arr. by D. S. De Lisle (St. Louis, Mo.: Robert De Young & Co., 1897), A 1-4.

(a)

Musical score for 'The Cake Walk in the Sky' (Example V-11a). The score is written for piano in 2/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with many eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The bass staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The tempo marking 'marcato.' is present in the first measure of the bass staff.

(b)

Musical score for 'Harlem Rag' (Example V-11b). The score is written for piano in 2/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The treble staff contains a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, often beamed together. The bass staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The dynamic marking 'mf' is present in the first measure of the bass staff.

While both UTS and TS appear in early ragtime, the pre-eminence of the untied is quite evident from the following supporting statistics. Of the two hundred early pieces surveyed, 59 percent use untied rhythms as the exclusive rag syncopation; only 17 percent use TS, or tied in conjunction with untied. The balance consists of pieces called rags that are totally unsyncopated or use only the augmented rhythm (19 percent), and those pieces that emphasize dotted rhythms (5 percent).

Ragtime Melodies

Ragtime melodies do not bear any distinctive traits except in regard to rhythm; were the syncopations smoothed out, the melodies would be indistinguishable from those used for other dances of the time. One modern writer has endeavored to demonstrate the existence in "classic rags" (a term to be discussed in Chapter X) of traditional black musical characteristics in the form of pentatonic melodies, but, relying on such theories as a diatonic melody being a "filled in" pentatonic structure, the argument is unconvincing.<sup>6</sup> While there are occasional pentatonic melodies in early (non-"classic") ragtime (Example V-12), there does not seem to be any significant pentatonic influence in the melodies of either black or white composers.

It must be concluded that in the writing of rags, aside from the rhythmic patterns, composers remained within the safe, recognizable confines of conventional, popular melody.

FormBasic Design

One of the most consistent features of ragtime composition--the principle of form--was seldom, if ever, remarked

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<sup>6</sup>A. R. Danberg Charters, "Negro Folk Elements in Classic Ragtime," Ethnomusicology 5 (September 1961): 174-83; reprinted in Ragtime Review 4 (July 1965): 7-12.

EXAMPLE V-12. K. Mills, Whistling Rufus (New York: F. A. Mills, 1899), Introduction and A 1-16.

PIANO.

upon by its contemporaries. No doubt this omission was because ragtime has no unique form, but inherits its design from earlier dance music, most notably the march.

Following the formal principle established by the march, ragtime composition is almost invariably constructed according to an additive process in which several complete, independent sixteen-measure sections (each referred to as a

"theme" or "strain") are joined without transitional connection. The actual number of different themes may vary from two to ten, but rags composed of three or four themes are in the overwhelming majority, accounting for 62 percent and 29 percent respectively of all the early rags surveyed.

These sixteen-measure themes are ordered in various patterns, resulting in compositions with from three to ten distinct sections (excluding consideration of introductions, breaks or interludes, and immediate repeats), such as ABAC, ABACD, ABACDA, etc. The variety is such that thirty-one different patterns have been detected, and other patterns would probably emerge should the search continue.

Despite the great variety of patterns, most rags (80 percent) fall into a few major categories. The most frequently used pattern opens with two themes in the tonic key, forming two or three sections: A B , or A B A .  
I I I I I

This opening is followed by a "trio" consisting of one or two themes in the subdominant: C , or C D. Typical pat-  
IV IV IV

terns for complete rags are: A B A C , or A B C D ;  
I I I IV I I IV IV


25 percent of the early rags fall within this first group.

A second, closely related type, comprising 17 percent of the sample, has a tonic da capo ending, either A, AB, or ABA; thus, for example, A B C D A B .  
I I IV IV I I

A third category (13 percent of the total) is characterized by a transposed repeat. This group consists almost entirely of pieces in which the B theme is repeated, without the A theme, as part of the trio. A typical configuration is

|   |   |   |    |    |   |
|---|---|---|----|----|---|
| A | B | A | C  | B  | . |
| I | I | I | IV | IV |   |

A fourth important type (25 percent of the total) consists of rags with minor key openings. Almost invariably, the B theme is in the relative major; in almost two-thirds of the cases the trio (C) is also in this key, and in over one-third, the trio is in the subdominant of the relative major.<sup>7</sup> Examples of patterns for minor keys are:

|   |     |   |     |   |   |   |   |    |   |   |
|---|-----|---|-----|---|---|---|---|----|---|---|
| A | B   | A | C   | A | , | A | B   | C  | A | . |
| i | III | i | III | i |   | i | I   | IV | i |   |
|   |     |   |     |   |   |   |  |    |   |   |
|   |     |   |     |   |   |   | III   |    |   |   |

The remaining rags unaccounted for (20 percent) include many unique, one-of-a-kind examples, and range from conventional structures with atypical tonal plans, to unpatterned successions of up to ten different strains.

In almost all rags, whether they fit the four major categories or not, there is a system of immediate repeats, usually indicated by repeat bars. Including this consideration, common patterns are:

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<sup>7</sup>The term "subdominant of the relative major" might appear to be an awkward designation of a key that could be described simply as VI. With the strong preference for subdominant trios, though, "IV of III" is more faithful to the conception of key relationships.

//: A ://: B :// A //: C :// C' //  
 I I I IV IV

//: A ://: B :// A //: C ://: B ://  
 I I I IV IV

//: A ://: B ://: C :// A //  
 i III III i

It is natural for those accustomed to the convention of tonic endings to question whether, in fact, da capo repeats of the opening tonic material are implied even when not explicitly stated. The evidence, however, is clear that nontonic endings were intended. In much of the sheet music, da capo repeats are specifically ruled out by the "Fine" designation. Early recordings and piano rolls also confirm the practice of nontonic endings. In this, as in other aspects of structure, the rag was simply following the patterns established in the contemporary march, in which both tonic and subdominant endings are found in abundance.

### Introductions and Breaks

Additional features affecting the larger concepts of ragtime structure are introductions and breaks. Introductions, consisting almost always of four measures, occur in 88 percent of the sample. Most frequently, they are thematically unrelated to the rest of the piece, this being true for 64 percent of the introductions examined; the balance--i.e., those related to one of the main themes of the piece--are usually based upon the A strain, either the opening phrase or the

final phrase. Slightly more than half of all introductions have at least two measures of unharmonized, octave passages (see introductions in Examples V-6a, V-8a-b, and V-12).

Breaks, also called interludes by some writers, are linking passages that occasionally occur between strains. Breaks appear in 47 percent of the early rags examined, with 47 percent of the breaks falling within the trio, after the C theme. (Breaks preceding the C theme become prominent a little later, and will be discussed in Chapter VII.) While the pattern ". . . C break D" is not uncommon, ". . . C break C" is much more frequent. (The second C is often varied to a slight extent with fuller chords or octave reinforcement.)

Breaks are usually recognized by their shorter or irregular lengths of four, eight, ten, or twelve measures, but 16-measure breaks are also possible. A frequent characteristic of the shorter break is a prolonged dominant harmony, often with neighbor- and grace-note embellishments of the dominant tone against dominant and diminished chords (Example V-13). An extension of this "dominant break" is the "vi-V break," whereby the dominant prolongation is preceded by four or more measures sustaining the submediant (Example V-14a-b). A further development has applied dominants preceding each harmonic area, with the dominant prolongation being longer than the submediant (Example V-14c-d). In both

EXAMPLE V-13. "Dominant Breaks." (a) Bernard Franklin, Blackville Society (Boston: G. W. Setchell, 1899); (b) James W. Casey, Little Alligator Bait (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1900); (c) K. Mills, At a Georgia Campmeeting; (d) A. Holzmann, Bunch o' Blackberries (New York: Leo Feist, 1899).

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

EXAMPLE V-14. "vi-V Breaks." (a) E. E. Huston, At an Alabama Corn Shuckin' (Birmingham, Ala.: Southern Music Co., 1900); (b) R. J. Hamilton, Alabama Hoe Down (New York: S. Brainard's Sons Co., 1899); (c) A. Pryor, A Coon Band Contest; (d) W. H. Tyers, Barn Yard Shuffle (New York: Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1899).

(a)

Two systems of piano accompaniment for 'vi-V Breaks' (a). The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat and a 2/4 time signature. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes. Dynamics include *p* and *mf*. A first ending bracket is shown above the first measure. The second system continues the piece, featuring a *ff* dynamic and a *rit.* marking. A common time signature 'C' is indicated above the staff.

(b)

Two systems of piano accompaniment for 'vi-V Breaks' (b). The first system consists of two staves (treble and bass clef) with a key signature of one flat and a 2/4 time signature. The right hand features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system continues the piece, featuring a common time signature 'C' indicated above the staff.

(c)

Two systems of piano music. The first system starts with a *ff* dynamic. The second system includes a *cresc.* marking, a *ff* dynamic, and a first ending bracket labeled *C'*.

(d)

Three systems of piano music. The first system includes a *break* marking and a first ending bracket labeled *C'*. The second system features *fz* and *mf* dynamics. The third system includes a second ending bracket labeled *C''* and a *ff* dynamic.

of these formats, the "vi-V break" is retained through the entire ragtime period, and beyond into later styles.

#### The Sixteen-Measure Strain

Each of the main sections of a rag follows the same

basic organization, and each is complete and independent. While there are some notable exceptions, the various themes of a piece are not related, and motivic resemblances, to whatever extent they exist, are usually insignificant and reflect the overuse of some characteristic cliché rather than a conscious attempt at organic unity.

The internal structure of each strain is usually an even division into four four-measure phrases, forming a symmetrical double period. These double periods are completely traditional, falling into a variety of evenly balanced, antecedent-consequent patterns, with the second phrase closing on a dominant semicadence, and the final phrase ending with a masculine, authentic--frequently perfect authentic--cadence. (Examples V-6b, V-8a, and V-15, A').

A major exception to the dominant cadence of the second phrase occurs when the first phrase starts on a nontonic chord, and is paralleled by the same opening in the third phrase. The most prevalent nontonic opening chord is the V4/3, which appears in at least one section in 30 percent of the rags surveyed (Examples V-8b, V-16, and V-17a). As it is the B section that most often opens with the V4/3 chord, one might mistakenly conclude that the B strain is an organic continuation of the A, suggestive of the binary structure of a Baroque dance. But the lack of thematic connection, and the occasional use of this opening chord in

EXAMPLE V-15. G. Blandford, The Black Venus, A 14-16, A' 1-16.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. Each system consists of a treble staff and a bass staff. The first system is labeled 'A'' and contains dynamic markings 'f' and 'mp'. The second system continues the piece. The third system also contains dynamic markings 'f' and 'mp' and concludes with a double bar line.

other strains as well (as in Smoky Mokes, Example V-8b), mitigates against such an assumption.

In general, harmonic motion tends to be slow, with a single harmony frequently spanning two measures (Example V-8b), and at times extending over a complete four-measure phrase, and even beyond (Example V-15, A' 1-7). A notable exception to this slow harmonic motion is found in the final phrase which, occasionally, is marked by increased harmonic activity, strongly directed progressions rich in applied dominants, and other contrasting chromaticisms (Examples V-16, V-17).

Measure 13, which opens the final phrase, is par-

EXAMPLE V-16. Scott Joplin, Maple Leaf Rag (Sedalia, Mo.: John Stark & Son, 1899), B 1-16.

ticularly favored with special treatment. It is the location of the most frequent appearance of augmented sixth chords and flat VI chords<sup>8</sup> (Example V-18). More common than these chromatic approaches is a device that produces an opposite, but still notable, effect: the sudden replacement of the prevailing harmonic texture with bare octaves (Examples V-6a, V-8a-b, V-12, V-15, V-19).

These climactic final phrases do not occur in every

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<sup>8</sup>The term "flat VI chord" refers to the major triad built on the lowered sixth degree of a major scale. It functions like an augmented sixth chord in that it usually moves to a dominant chord.

EXAMPLE V-17. (a) Fred S. Stone, The Bos'n Rag (Detroit: Whitney Warner Publishing Co., 1899), B 1-16; (b) Bos'n Rag, A 11-16; (c) B. Harney, Cake Walk in the Sky, F 12-16.

(a)

Musical score for 'The Bos'n Rag' (a). The score is in 2/4 time and consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system begins with a piano (*pp*) dynamic marking. The second system continues the piece. The third system features a first ending bracket over the final two measures, with a second ending bracket over the final measure. A dynamic marking of *f* is present in the first measure of the third system. The text '(No Bos'n)' is written in the right hand of the third system.

(b)

Musical score for 'Bos'n Rag' (b). The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second system continues the piece. The text '(No Bos'n)' is written in the right hand of the second system.

(c)

Musical score for 'Cake Walk in the Sky' (c). The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking. The second system continues the piece. The text '(No Bos'n)' is written in the right hand of the second system.

EXAMPLE V-18. (a) A. Holzmann, Smoky Mokes, C 13-16;  
 (b) Paul Cohn, Honolulu Rag Time Patrol (Chicago: Sol  
 Bloom, 1899), D 12-16.

(a)



(b)



EXAMPLE V-19. (a) George Elliott, Happy Little Nigs (St.  
 Paul, Minn.: W. J. Dyer & Bro., 1897), B 12-16; (b) Max  
 Dreyfus, A Carolina Cake Walk (New York: T. B. Harms & Co.,  
 1898), A 13-16; (c) A. Holzmann, Bunch o' Blackberries,  
 A 13-16.

(a)



(b)



(c)



rag, and rarely occur more than once in a single rag; that they are more than isolated phenomena, however, and the consistent choice of measure 13 for emphasis, qualifies these events as characteristic features.

#### Summary

The present chapter begins the detailed examination of the music of piano ragtime. The term "early rags" is used to designate piano pieces identified as rags that were published before 1901. Two hundred pieces in this category have been surveyed analytically and statistically, and most have been found to follow a few basic conventions. It is therefore possible to construct a generalized model of the "typical early rag." This model is characterized primarily by two types of ragtime syncopation: (1) untied syncopation (UTS), which is restricted to each half of a measure, and (2) tied syncopation (TS), which is tied across the center of a measure. Of the two, UTS is far more common in early ragtime. Syncopation need not occur in all of the three or

four sixteen-measure themes of a rag, but it typically appears in the first theme. Preceded by a four-measure introduction, the first two themes (called A and B) are in the tonic key, and there may be a reprise of the first theme after the second (ABA). The third and--if there is one--fourth themes are in the subdominant key. Should there be no fourth theme, the third may be repeated after a break or interlude--a passage of four, eight, ten, twelve, or sixteen measures, characterized by either a sustained dominant harmony ("dominant break"), or a dominant prolongation preceded by a submediant area ("vi-V break"). The main sixteen-measure themes are evenly divided into four-phrase double periods. The fourth phrase of a theme may be more prominent than the others due to some special harmonic treatment, such as an increased harmonic rhythm, the use of an augmented sixth chord or some other chromatic harmony, or, in contrast, the complete absence of harmonic texture in favor of unsupported octaves.

By 1900 many of the conventions of piano ragtime were firmly established; alternate structures continued to appear, but few deviated from the principles evolved in the early, formative years of the style.

## CHAPTER VI

### MUSICAL SOURCES OF EARLY RAGTIME

Contemporary speculations about the origins of ragtime often treated the subject as if it were a completely new, unprecedented phenomenon; or, when sources were suggested, they frequently were highly improbable, ranging from Hungarian folk music to Beethoven. Ragtime, though, can be shown to have evolved from certain elements of published music popular in the late 1880s and early 1890s. These publications may be of limited value in tracing the ultimate sources--some of which probably existed only in an unnotated tradition--but they do clarify the immediate musical lineage of ragtime; they are the real materials from which the style emerged.

#### The March

As already suggested, the march is one of the major sources of ragtime composition. The most explicit connection is found in cover descriptions, titles and subtitles (such as Honolulu Rag Time Patrol. March and Two-Step; The Cake Walk in the Sky, "March a la Ragtime," and the like), and tempo indications ("Tempo di Marcia") appearing on about

30 percent of the publications. Further confirmation of this relationship between the march and ragtime is found in testimony of contemporary witnesses. Eubie Blake and James P. Johnson have both referred to early ragtimers as "march kings,"<sup>1</sup> and Blake has related how "One-Leg" Willie Joseph would "bring the house down with The Stars and Stripes Forever in march time, ragtime, and 'sixteen' [boogie-woogie]."<sup>2</sup> The ragging of marches, and in particular, of Sousa marches, was apparently widespread. Poet Paul Laurence Dunbar has already been quoted in an early reference (page 16 above), and Louis Chauvin (1881-1908), one of the Saint Louis ragtimers associated with Joplin, is reported to have played Sousa regularly: "When he would sit down he always played the same Sousa march to limber up his fingers, but it was his own arrangement . . ."<sup>3</sup>

Sousa, while not a composer of ragtime, was an advocate, praising it and programming it at his concerts. (The Sousa Band also recorded many ragtime numbers, but without Sousa's participation.)<sup>4</sup> His name was also frequently attached

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<sup>1</sup>Rudi Blesh, "Scott Joplin: Black-American Classicist," introduction to Collected Works of Scott Joplin, p. xvi; Davin, "James P. Johnson," [Part II], p. 12.

<sup>2</sup>Blesh, "Scott Joplin," p. xvi. Blake, keeping the tradition alive today, still "brings the house down" with his own version of this Sousa march.

<sup>3</sup>Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup>Smart, The Sousa Band, pp. 2-3.

to advertisements for rags ("The latest Cake-Walk, as played by Sousa's Band," "As played by John Philip Sousa . . . ,"  
and so on),<sup>5</sup> publishers obviously seeing advantage in claiming association with him.

In terms of function, the march and the rag shared common ground in providing music for the two-step, a dance with sufficient flexibility to permit both syncopated and nonsyncopated accompaniment. It is significant that in the quotation below (page 185), Sousa uses the terms "march" and "two-step" synonymously; in fact, his Washington Post March (1889) is credited with having launched the two-step dance, the dance even being referred to as the "Washington Two-step."<sup>6</sup>

The most conclusive substantiation must be with the music itself, and in this respect the evidence is abundant. When early rags are compared with marches of the same and immediately preceding years, the parallels are so close that significant distinctions can be found in only two areas: meter and rhythm. Marches were written in meters of C,  $\phi$ ,

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<sup>5</sup>Respectively: advertisement for Honey in the Cornfield, appearing on p. 3 of Blandford, Black Venus; cover banner for John Rastus Topp, The Shuffling Coon, arr. Monroe H. Rosenfeld (1897).

<sup>6</sup>"Decadence of the Waltz. Sousa's Marches Held Responsible by Dancing Masters for the Reign of the Two-Step," New York Times, 10 September 1899, p. 16; Paul E. Bierly, John Philip Sousa (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1973), pp. 7, 48.

2/4, and 6/8; rags were written in all of these except 6/8. The normal rhythm of marches excludes the tied and untied syncopations of ragtime; if, indeed, these syncopations are used, the march becomes a rag.

In other respects, even in most details, each characteristic of ragtime composition has its counterpart in the march. The conception of form and tonal design is identical, and an explanation by Sousa of the nontonic ending to a march is equally applicable to the rag:

In reply to your question, "Is it proper that a two-step ending in a trio should end in a key foreign to the one it begins in," permit me to say this:

In the accepted form of compositions of march order it was always customary to make the third part go to the subdominant, the most usual, and the dominant, the most unusual form. In my childhood in Washington I noticed that the bands parading with the regiments in nearly every instance, although the composition called for a da capo, would finish playing on the last strain of the march; therefore, if it was done practically in the use of the march I could not understand why it should not be done theoretically in the writing of the march. Accordingly, in composing my marches I ignored the old established rule and wrote with the idea of making the last strain of the march the musical climax, regardless of the tonality.<sup>7</sup>

By the time rags were being published, subdominant endings

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<sup>7</sup>John Philip Sousa, "A Letter from Sousa," Etude 16 (August 1898): 231. Twenty years later Sousa was still referring to this topic, but had developed a more whimsical presentation: "The old method ended the march in the tonality of the original key. . . . Speaking gastronomically, when they got to the ice cream, they went back to the roast beef. And the beef had no new sauce on it, no new flavor . . ." (The Boston Post, 10 March 1918, as quoted in Bierly, John Philip Sousa, p. 124.

were an accepted part of the musical language, both in performance practice and in composition.

March introductions are frequently of eight measures rather than the four measures favored by rags. In other respects, though, the introductions are similar, including the extensive use of unharmonized octaves (Example VI-1).

Breaks are also a regular feature of marches, frequently occur within the trio between repeats of the C strain,

EXAMPLE VI-1. (a) John Philip Sousa, Semper Fidelis (New York: Carl Fischer, 1888), Introduction and A 1-2; (b) George Rosey, The Chinatown March (New York: Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1896), Introduction.

(a)

By John Philip Sousa.

(b)

and fall into the "dominant" or "vi-V" categories (Example VI-2).

As with the rag, the normal march theme is of sixteen measures, forming a four-measure double period. While Sousa during this period frequently wrote A themes that modulate and end in the dominant key (the B theme being back in the tonic), this practice of modulation was not especially prevalent among other march composers. Other details, such as the V4/3 opening (Example VI-1a, VI-3a), the appearance at measure 13 of flat VI and augmented sixth chords (Example VI-3b-c) and unharmonized octaves (Example VI-3d) are as prominent in marches as in rags.

EXAMPLE VI-2. (a) "Dominant Break." J. P. Sousa, The Washington Post (Philadelphia: Harry Coleman, 1889); (b) "vi-V Break." J.P. Sousa, The Stars and Stripes Forever (Cincinnati: John Church Co., 1897).

(a)

The musical score for Example VI-2(a) is presented in two systems. The first system, labeled "break", shows a piano accompaniment in 2/4 time with a key signature of one sharp (F#). It begins with a dynamic marking of *ff*. The melody in the right hand consists of eighth and quarter notes, while the left hand provides a bass line with chords and single notes. The second system, labeled "C'", continues the piece with a dynamic marking of *ff*. It features a similar melodic and harmonic structure, with a key signature change to one flat (Bb) in the final measure. The score includes various musical notations such as slurs, accents, and dynamic markings.

(b)

break

*f*

*ff grandioso.*

*marcato il bassi*

C'

EXAMPLE VI-3. (a) Harry C. Smith, Admiral Dewey's March (Boston: Oliver Ditson Co., 1898), A 15-16, B 1-3; (b) J. P. Sousa, Washington Post, B 13-16; (c) J. P. Sousa, The High School Cadets (Philadelphia: Harry P. Coleman, 1890), B 13-16; (d) J. P. Sousa, Semper Fidelis, A 13-16.

(a)

(b)

(c)

(d)

It is clear that all of the structural and harmonic practices of ragtime stem from the march. The rhythmic character of the rag, too, except for the one defining factor of syncopation, has its precedents in the march.

### The Cakewalk

Shortly before the establishment of ragtime, there was a dramatic revival of the cakewalk, a grand promenade type of dance of plantation origins in which the slave couple performing the most attractive steps and motions would "take the cake."<sup>8</sup> Spurred by exhibitions and contests in the early 1890s, interest in the cakewalk eventually brought this plantation dance to the ballrooms of the United States and Europe, where it retained a following into the first decade of the twentieth century.<sup>9</sup> The basic music for

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<sup>8</sup>For background on the cakewalk, see: Marshall Stearns and Jean Stearns, Jazz Dance (New York: Macmillan Co., 1968), pp. 22-23, 117-24; Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, pp. 96-100; and Fletcher, Tom Fletcher Story, pp. 103-16. According to Fletcher, the cakewalk was also known as the "chalkline-walk" and the "walk-around" (p. 103).

<sup>9</sup>Some brief items in the New York Times present a sketchy, but nonetheless revealing running chronology of contemporary reactions toward the resurgence of this dance: "The Cake Walk," 28 February 1892, p. 4; "The Cake Walk a 'Fake' Walk," 28 February 1892, p. 5; "Theatrical Gossip," 26 April 1892, p. 8; "An Old Time Cake Walk," 2 March 1895, p. 6; "The Farrells Took the Cake," 3 March 1895, p. 5; "Fun at the Cake Walk," 4 May 1895, p. 6; "'Black America' at the Garden," 17 September 1895, p. 10; "Walking for the Cake," 7 February 1897, p. 2; "Cake Walk Broken Up," 13 February 1898, p. 2; "Cakewalk Trust the Latest," 26 November 1900, p. 3; "The Cake Walk in Vienna," 1 February 1903, p. 5. For a sample of German dismay over the continental acceptance

the cakewalk was the march, and while one might like to think that the marches were syncopated in performance, evidence on this point is slight. On at least one occasion, at an early cakewalk jubilee held at Madison Square Garden, the music was provided by a white band (led by a black conductor). The unsympathetic report describes the cakewalk as "a series of dreary marches" and the music as "wretched"; there is no indication that the music was syncopated.<sup>10</sup>

The growing popularity of this dance naturally led to the publication of music written specifically as cakewalk marches (Plate VI-1). Musically these pieces are distinguished from other marches of the period by several ethnic-identifying conventions: opening strains are frequently in a minor mode (Example VI-4a); strains B or C may be slightly syncopated with the augmented syncopation figure (Example VI-4b); and, the final strain may include, or be replaced by, a coon song chorus. All three of these traits are found in varying degrees in early ragtime, but are short-lived and die out in the early twentieth century as ragtime loses its ethnic flavor.

Once ragtime and the term identifying it gained currency, the distinction between cakewalk and rag was by no means clear. As Stults's reference to Mills's cakewalks

---

of this dance, see "Der Cakewalk," Illustrirte Zeitung (Leipzig), 5 February 1903, pp. 202-3.

<sup>10</sup>"The Cake Walk a 'Fake' Walk."

A SOUTHERN MELODY

# REMUS TAKES THE CAKE



Characteristic March  
& Two Step Dance  
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**JACOB HENRY ELLIS**

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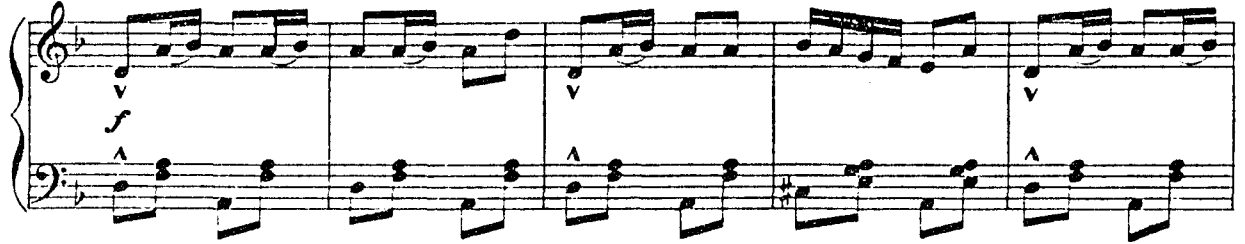
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PLATE VI-1. A cakewalk march from 1896.

EXAMPLE VI-4. Jacob Henry Ellis, Remus Takes the Cake (New York: Willis Woodward & Co., 1896): (a) A 1-5; (b) B 1-5.

(a)



(b)




as "ragtime hits" (page 153 above) indicates, for contemporaries there was no real differentiation at all. Indeed, as cakewalks adopted the smaller rhythmic divisions of ragtime syncopation, syncopated cakewalks, syncopated two-steps, and ragtime became one and the same. Certainly the titles, subtitles, and cover descriptions say as much--Cake Walk in the Sky. Ethiopian Two-Step, "March a la Ragtime"; The Bos'n Rag. Cake Walk, "A Rag Two Step with Catchy Singing Chorus"; Southern Hospitality. Rag-Time Cake-Walk--as does the music (Examples V-8a-b, V-11a, V-15, V-17b).

#### Black Character Pieces and Patrols

As detractors of ragtime were wont to point out, the rhythmic configurations constituting ragtime syncopation

were not new; such rhythms had long been part of the language of Western music. What was significant, though, was that these rhythms were used with sufficient consistency to define the ragtime idiom, and that the intent of such rhythms, an intent made abundantly clear from the sheet music covers and titles, was to reproduce the character of "quaint" black music.

The reasons for the black identification of these rhythms can be found in earlier Afro-American music and in minstrelsy, as described in various publications.<sup>11</sup> As the ragtime era approached, the identifying rhythmic conventions were well established and could be found in "character pieces" depicting blacks, or by extension, the South. As composer R. Nathaniel Dett specifically noted: "The rhythmic figure, --  -- . . . is of most frequent occurrence in the music of the ante-bellum [black] folk-dances, and its marked individuality has caused it to be much misused for purposes of caricature . . ."<sup>12</sup> Often, such characterization was imparted to the "patrol," a march with a crescendo-decrescendo dynamic contour. Patrol Comique (1886) and The Hottentots:

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<sup>11</sup>Southern, Music of Black Americans, pp. 185, 206-8, 313-14; Chase, America's Music, pp. 255-57, 307-11, 429-36; Hitchcock, Music in the United States, pp. 107-8, 119-22; Hans Nathan, Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy (Norman, Okla.: University of Oklahoma Press, 1962), pp. 189-213.

<sup>12</sup>Dett, Program notes to In the Bottoms.

Patrol Characteristic (1889) both fit the category of black-oriented patrols. The ethnic meaning of the latter is obvious from the title; for the former, the intent is indicated by a cover caricature of banjo-playing and dancing, uniformed blacks (Plate VI-2). Musically, the attempt to suggest racial character is found in the use of pentatonic (Patrol Comique, theme B) and minor modes, and in an occasional use of untied syncopation (Example VI-5). As the amount of "black-suggesting" syncopation increased in works of this type, the threshold of ragtime was reached (as in The Darkies' Patrol, Example V-7).

These developments were not unique to the patrol. The Darkie's Dream (1891), a "parlor" piece, has untied syncopations along with dotted rhythms (Example VI-6), and Aunt Dinah's Wedding Dance. An Ethiopian Melange (1895) exhibits several ragtime traits. The latter is constructed from a succession of seven 8-measure dance themes (and one vocal chorus), supposedly representing dances typically found at Negro weddings; some of the dances bear labels: "Break down," "Wing dance," and "Cake walk." Musically, most sections are indistinguishable from a march, the exceptions being the two "Break down" strains; the first features untied syncopations, while the second uses the occasional ragtime figuration of "stop time" (Example (VI-7a-b). The break (Example VI-7c), with its octave and grace note embellish-

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for Piano by  
**THOMAS HINDLEY.**

MILITARY BAND \$ 1.00

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PLATE VI-2. Cover for a "black" patrol.

EXAMPLE VI-5. (a) Thomas Hindley, Patrol Comique (New York: New-York Publishing Co., 1886), A 1-18, B 1-5; (b) Fred Neddermeyer, The Hottentots. Patrol Characteristic (New York: J. Schott, 1889), A 2-7.

(a)

ppp

cresc.

pp

3

(b)

ments of the dominant tone against dominant and diminished harmonies, has direct parallels with the "dominant breaks" of ragtime (cf. Example V-13c-d).

EXAMPLE VI-6. G. L. Lansing, The Darkie's Dream (New York: Hitchcock & McCargo Publishing Co., 1891), B 5-8.

EXAMPLE VI-7. Dan Emerson, Aunt Dinah's Wedding Dance (New York: T. B. Harms, 1895): (a) C 1-6; (b) H 1-4; (c) break.

(a) Break down.

(b) Break down.

(c) break

"Serenade." Allegro moderato.

After the advent of ragtime, the black character piece had a brief continued existence. Unavoidably, it resembled ragtime, but, in vying for the more "respectable" parlor side of the popular music market, the disreputable label of "ragtime" was avoided.

In two pieces typical of this genre, An African Reverie (1900) and African Dreamland. Intermezzo (1903), the racial evocation, the syncopated treble rhythm against the metrically regular bass, and the basic phraseology are suggestive of ragtime (Example VI-8). Equally noteworthy, though, are the obvious genteel pretensions. Each piece is prefaced with a poetic quotation: "'Play, music, then.' Shakespeare" (African Reverie); "Music, which gentler on the spirit lies / Than tired eyelids on the tired eyes." (African Dreamland). The titles, too, seek to associate with the relatively respectable position of the black African rather than with the lowly status of the black American (see above, page 52). As an additional gesture toward refined musical culture, African Dreamland makes extensive use of precious expressive indications: zeffiroso, ben cantando, dolce, risolutto, furioso. Musically, too, there are reflections of the parlor tradition rather than that of ragtime. In African Reverie the romantic feminine cadence at measure 4 is uncharacteristic of ragtime, as is the fussiness of the rhythmic distinctions between UTS and triplets in measures 5-7. In African Dreamland, the pauses in the rhythmic momentum at

EXAMPLE VI-8. (a) H. B. Newton, An African Reverie (New York: F. A. Mills, 1900), A 1-10; (b) George Atwater, African Dreamland (New Haven, Conn.: Chas. H. Loomis, 1903), A 8-18.

(a)

(b)

measures 15-17 are more suggestive of the refined drawing-room than the ragtime dance-floor. Unable to completely avoid the pervasive influence of ragtime, music of this kind assumes an air of dignity by grafting some gestures of gentility onto the structure of the "less cultured" popular idiom.

Coon Songs

While many coon songs are unsyncopated, the genre as a whole--as shown in the first three chapters--was perceived as one of the major manifestations of ragtime. Some particularly notable pieces, too, are the first publications to carry the label "ragtime," at the same time making the link with syncopations explicit (Examples IV-1a-c, V-9).

In its later phase the coon song becomes a contemporary of piano ragtime, and while each develops along individual lines, the two genres often merge. This intermixing is evident in the multiple publications of pieces in song and instrumental arrangements, the piano versions often being available in both ragtime and schottische styles. This is true for such prominent songs as Howard and Emerson's Hello! Ma Baby, Harney's Cake Walk in the Sky, and Hogan's All Coons Look Alike to Me (Plates VI-3, 4, 5). Similarly, the merger is complemented by coon songs that have dance sections (such as You've Been a Good Old Wagon, Example V-9b) and instrumental pieces that include coon song choruses. Finally, the ragtime medleys, such as those by Max Hoffmann, being piano arrangements of the year's coon song hits, also reflect the proximity between the two genres.

Caribbean Dance Rhythms

Another possible source of ragtime rhythm is dance music of the Caribbean or South America, from pieces variously

**HOWARD & EMERSON'S**

# HELLO MA BABY


|   |     |
|---|-----|
| SONG.   | 50. |
| RAG-TIME MARCH.                                     | 50. |
| SCHOTTISCHE.  | 50. |
| 1 <sup>st</sup> & 2 <sup>d</sup> MANDOLIN & GUITAR. | 40. |
| BANJO.  |     |
| ORCHESTRA.  |     |
| BAND.   |     |

NEW YORK  
PUBLISHED BY F. D. HARRIS & CO. EAST 22<sup>nd</sup> ST.

PLATE VI-3. Cover listing editions available in different styles and mediums.

MARCH A LA RAGTIME.

# THE CAKE-WALK IN THE SKY.



Words  
& Music BY

## BEN. HARNEY

AUTHOR OF  
MR. JOHNSON TURE ME LOOSE

WITMARK & SONS

5

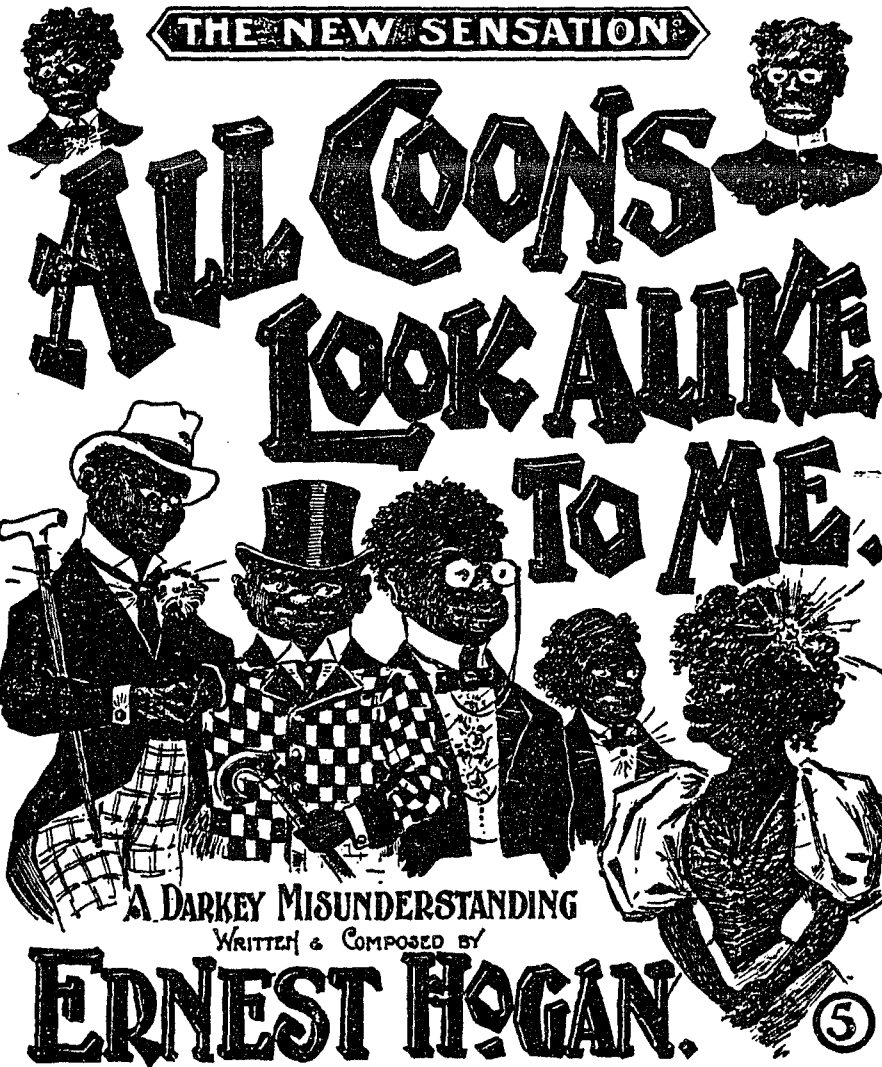
PLATE VI-4. The addition of a "march a la ragtime" banner across the top and the crude deletion of "Words" adapted this coon song cover for an instrumental edition.

"ALL COONS LOOK ALIKE TO ME" MEDLEY-SCHOTTISCHE.

By THE COMPOSER OF THE FAMOUS

"PAS-MA-LA"

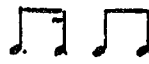

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 LONDON, ENGL. TORONTO, CAN.

PLATE VI-5. Cover for the schottische version of a famous coon song.

referred to as danzas, habaneras, and tangos. Characterized by bass figurations of either  or , the treble melodic rhythms are often identical to untied and tied rag syncopations.

In the danza context these rhythms predate written ragtime, a notable use being by mid-nineteenth century composer Louis Moreau Gottschalk (Example VI-9). It is

EXAMPLE VI-9. Louis Moreau Gottschalk, Souvenir de Porto Rico (1857), measures 173-77.



inviting to speculate that Gottschalk, in such pieces, was invoking the sounds of the slave-inhabited plantations of his native Louisiana, that he was influenced by an embryonic ragtime of black origins. His specific references, though, mitigate against this assumption. These rhythms do not appear in his characterizations of the southern United States, but only in those of the Caribbean. Racially, too, the music fails to match the ragtime hypothesis; his Souvenir de Porto Rico, for example, is subtitled Marche des gibaros, referring to the white peasantry of that island. While Gottschalk's danza pieces are apparently derived from an unnotated folk

music, it does not seem that this music is the direct descendent of ragtime.

Yet, during the ragtime era, no less a figure than Ben Harney declared ragtime's debt to Latin American music: "Ragtime means dance time, and takes its imitation steps from Spanish music, or rather from Mexico . . . being nothing but syncopated consecutive music . . ."13 While Harney's opinion found much support, especially among those more willing to grant an innovative role to Spanish culture than to Afro-American (see page 96 above), others, such as Rupert Hughes and John Burk, specifically denied that there were significant musical resemblances between Spanish music and ragtime, despite notational similarities (see page 97 above).

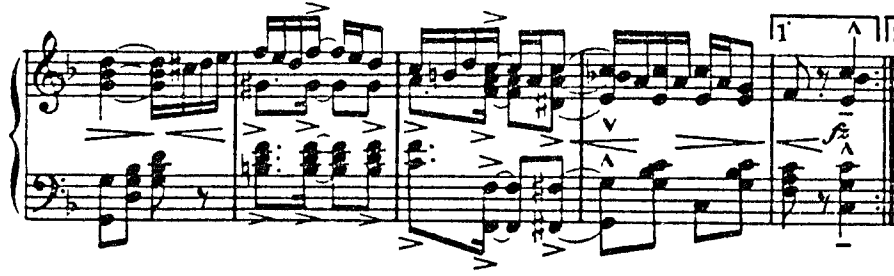
The danza rhythms do appear in later instructional writings on ragtime<sup>14</sup> (perhaps reflecting a performance practice), but its use in published piano rags is infrequent except for an occasional one or two measures (Example VI-9). The more extensive appearance of these rhythms in the Joplin-Chauvin Heliotrope Bouquet (1907) and Artie Matthew's Pas-time Rags numbers three and five (1916 and 1918) are clearly exceptions, unrepresentative of ragtime publications in general (Example VI-10).

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<sup>13</sup>"Preface," Ben Harney's Rag Time Instructor.

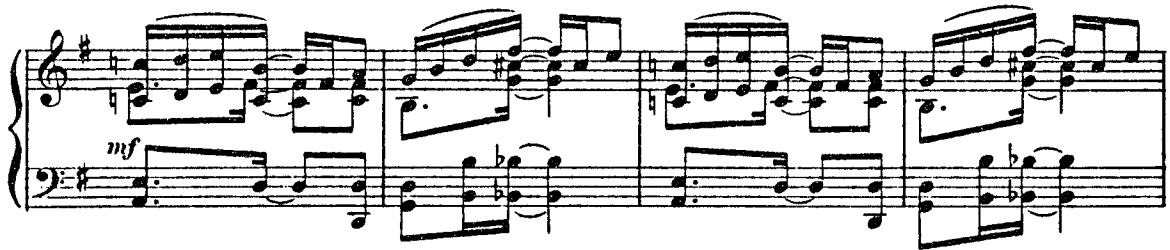
<sup>14</sup>Edward R. Winn, How To Play Ragtime (Uneven Rhythm), (n.p., 1915), p. 25; Winn, "Ragtime Piano Playing," Melody 2 (April 1918): 23; Joplin, School of Ragtime, Exercises 2, 3, and 6.

EXAMPLE VI-10. F. Henri Klickman, Smiles and Chuckles  
(Chicago: Frank K. Root, 1917), A 12-16.

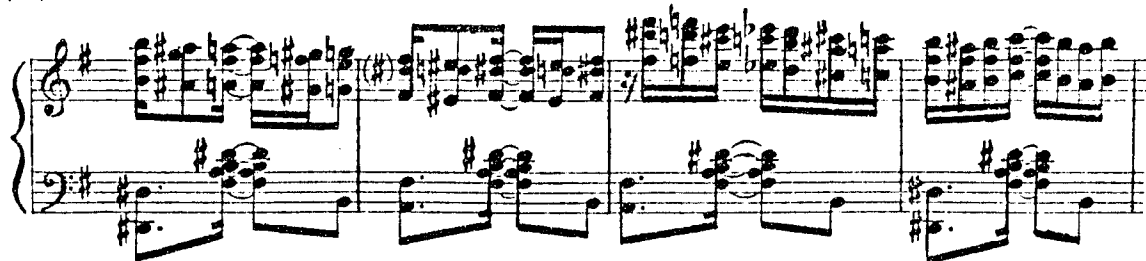


EXAMPLE VI-11. (a) S. Joplin and L. Chauvin, Heliotrope Bouquet. A Slow Drag Two Step (New York: Stark Music Co., 1907), A 1-4; (b) A. Matthews, Pastime Rag No. 5 (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1918), A 3-6.

(a)



(b)



Actually, for composers working in both ragtime and Caribbean dance styles, influence seems to flow more strongly to rather than from the latter. The Latin American dances are almost invariably presented within the structural and harmonic framework of the two-step (Example VI-12) and at times are indistinguishable, except in name, from rags or

EXAMPLE VI-12. (a) Neil Moret [Charles N. Daniels], Cubanola (Cuban Danza), (St. Louis, Mo.: Daniels, Russell & Boone, 1902),<sup>15</sup> C 1-5; (b) S. Joplin, Solace. A Mexican Serenade (New York: Seminary Music Co., 1909), A 1-4.

(a)



(b)



other non-Latin dances. Joe Jordan, for example, an accomplished and knowledgeable musician, wrote a piece--The Tango: Two-Step--that is not unusual in the way it bridges both styles. The music, reflecting the title's vacillation, includes sections in both tango and rag styles (Example VI-13). Other pieces exist that exploit the tango fad of the 1910s by using the word in a title, but without providing the musical characteristics of the dance. E. Lorenz Barber's My Tango Queen (Tango--One Step--Two Step or Trot), for instance, while also trading upon the many earlier

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<sup>15</sup>This piece was subsequently reissued under a different name by the Whitney-Warner Publishing Co., Detroit. As the latter firm had already published a piece with a similar title--H. B. Blanke, Cubanola (A Spanish Serenade)--Daniels's work was retitled Dolores.

"ragtime queen" titles, claims to fit almost every dance category, but fails to fulfill its main title designation (Example VI-14).

EXAMPLE VI-13. Joe Jordan, Tango: Two-Step (Chicago: Will Rossiter, 1913): (a) C 5-10; (b) B 1-5.

(a)

Musical score for Example VI-13(a), measures 5-10. The score is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The right hand features a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand plays a steady bass line with eighth notes.

(b)

Musical score for Example VI-13(b), measures 1-5. The score is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The right hand has a melodic line with slurs and accents, and the left hand provides a bass line with slurs and accents. A dynamic marking of *mf* is present at the beginning.

EXAMPLE VI-14. E. Lorenz Barber, My Tango Queen (New York: John T. Hall Publishing Co., 1914), A 1-8.

Dance.

Musical score for Example VI-14, measures 1-8. The score is in 2/4 time, key of B-flat major. The right hand features a complex rhythmic pattern with slurs and accents, and the left hand plays a bass line with slurs and accents.

Thus, ragtime and Latin American dance music do touch upon one another and have brief moments of convergence and blending, but the two seem to be distinct strains with essentially separate developments.

#### Other Source Attributions

Other music proposed as sources for ragtime are such contemporary dances as cotillions (or cotillons), quadrilles, polkas, and schottisches. Most often these attributions are made in a general way, without any effort to illustrate the supposed derivations. In one of the rare instances in which there is an attempt to trace the influence of these dances on rags, the procedure is defective.<sup>16</sup>

It is true that all of these dances share with the rag a common sectional format, an additive structure joining complete musical units. But as these dances do not, in this respect, add to the rag anything that was not obtained from the more direct source of the march, any indebtedness must be regarded as slight.

It is possible that certain melodies were transferred from one dance to another, especially in the improvised ragging of an existing piece; Jelly Roll Morton has claimed to have evolved Tiger Rag from a quadrille,<sup>17</sup> and

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<sup>16</sup>Schafer and Riedel, Art of Ragtime, pp. 63-64, 87. For a specific criticism of the authors' efforts in this regard, see the present writer's review in Black Perspective in Music 3 (Spring 1975): 105-7.

James P. Johnson has referred to similar ragtime transformations during the first decade of the twentieth century:

"Most East Coast [ragtime] playing was based on cotillion dance tunes, stomps, drags and set dances . . ."18 But even if a rag should be based on a borrowed cotillion melody, this is a shallow reason on which to attribute "influence"; one might just as well cite Mendelssohn as a ragtime influence by way of his Spring Song.

Examination of other aspects of the cotillion--or of the similar quadrille--reveals even less justification for considering it, as a genre, a significant source of ragtime. Both the cotillion and quadrille are sets of dances in five musical sections. Each section, in either a 2/4 or 6/8 meter, is built from smaller segments of eight measures, the total number of measures being designed to match prescribed dance steps. The rhythms have no distinguishing characteristics other than a march-like evenness. (There are also hybrids with more pronounced rhythmic traits, such as waltz, polka, and redowa quadrilles.) Each section is usually in a different key, but there is no consistent tonal design paralleling the tonic-subdominant relationship

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<sup>17</sup>The claim was made on Morton's Library of Congress recordings (1938); see Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, p. 176. Morton's veracity in this regard has been disputed; see Ian Whitcomb, "Shelton Brooks Is Alive & Strutting," Jazz Report, vol. 7, no. 2 [c. 1970, no pagination].

<sup>18</sup>Davin, "James P. Johnson," [Part II], p. 17.

of the march and the rag. The melodies may be original, but are often borrowed from various popular, folk, or operatic sources, borrowings that are reflected in such titles as Operatic Cotillion, Il Trovatore Quadrille, Julien's American Quadrille, and the like. Under these circumstances, it is difficult to justify calling either of these dances an important source for ragtime.<sup>19</sup>

The claims proposing the polka as a source for ragtime are equally without basis. It is true that in the 1890s the polka was occasionally listed on two-step dance music, along with other dances: Impecunious Davis. Characteristic Two-Step March, Polka, & Cake-Walk (1899); Happy Mose. Cake Walk, Two Step or Polka (1899); At a Georgia Campmeeting, "A Characteristic March which can be used effectively as a Two-Step, Polka or Cake Walk" (1897); Ash-Cake Shuffle. A Characteristic March and Two Step, "Can also be used as a Polka or Rag-Time Cake Walk" (1899). But this inclusion of the polka simply reflects the apparent loss or disregard of earlier rhythmic conventions associated with the polka, such as figurations of fast triplets and pairs of sixteenth notes followed by an eighth note. As the rag did not draw upon these traditional polka rhythms it would seem that the rag had a greater effect on the contemporary polka than the other way around.

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<sup>19</sup>In addition to the above description, the term "cotillion" was used simply to designate a formal ball.

Finally, a consideration of the schottische also fails to reveal any derivative relationship with ragtime. As schottische versions of coon songs were sometimes offered as alternatives to ragtime versions (see Plates VI-3 and VI-5), one might mistakenly assume that the two dances are related. But it is the differences between the schottische and the rag that made the dual publications practical. Schottisches, unlike rags, are characterized by dotted rhythms, and it is therefore the dotted sections of coon songs that are featured in schottische editions (Example VI-15).

EXAMPLE VI-15. (a) Representative schottische. J. A. Hardy, Banjo. Schottische Characteristic (New York: Howley, Haviland & Co., 1896), A 1-3; (b) and (c) Schottisches based on coon songs: E. Hogan, All Coons Look Alike to Me. Schottische, arr. F. W. Meacham (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1897), A 1-3; Howard & Emerson, Hello! Ma Baby, arr. Max Dreyfus (New York: T. B. Harms & Co., 1899), A 1-3.

(a)

(b)

(c)



One suspects that theories attributing significant influence to the above dances have been developed on insufficient data, perhaps on nothing more than an off-hand remark by a ragtimer. There has been no adequate demonstration of a derivative role, and the evidence examined suggests that none exists.

#### Summary

The immediate sources of ragtime can be found in published music from the late 1880s and early 1890s. The march was clearly a major source, providing all formal, textural, and harmonic elements, including such details as unaccompanied octaves in introductions, "dominant" and "vi-V breaks," and special harmonic treatments given to final phrases of sixteen-measure themes.

The characteristic syncopation of ragtime, the only element absent from the march, was an ethnic-linked feature associated with American blacks and found in a variety of black "character pieces." The joining of these rhythmic traits in novelty, "black" patrols resulted in the first

instrumental rags.

The coon song was another genre in which ethnic-identifying syncopations were used, and while these songs preceded piano ragtime, their development continued into the early years of the ragtime era, and the two styles often merged. As shown in earlier chapters, the coon song was closely allied with piano ragtime by way of ragged piano song accompaniments, medleys arranged for piano, and the occasional use of coon song choruses in piano rags.

Other source attributions that are made have less justification. Latin American dance rhythms--danzas, habaneras, and tangos--do resemble those of ragtime, especially in the treble syncopations. But the bass rhythms of those dances are not typical of ragtime publications, and there is little evidence of Latin American music exerting a significant influence on ragtime. Claims made for other dances, such as cotillions, quadrilles, polkas, and schottisches, are without musical basis.

It was the merging of black and white musical cultures, the superimposition of certain black-derived syncopations on march dance music, that is responsible for the genesis of ragtime, a genre that is conspicuously and uniquely American.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE GROWTH OF A COHESIVE STYLE

Many of the conventions established during the early years of ragtime remained virtually unchanged as the style matured. There were, though, some important shifts in emphasis and new elements that affected the character of the music, kept it viable and growing, and averted its immediate waning as the prophesied "passing fad." The present chapter examines the elements that were most characteristic of ragtime during the first two decades of the twentieth century.

#### The Loss of Ethnic Identity

The public acceptance of ragtime, as evidenced by the enormous increase in commercial publications in 1899, was coupled with the gradual absorption of the name and style into the mainstream of American popular music. Ragtime as an exoticism, as a quaint music from the fringes of society, was replaced by ragtime the white American popular music. Through 1902 the vast majority of rag publications still made obvious reference to the music's black origins, usually by the title or cover picture (Plates VII-1 and VII-2), and sometimes with the inclusion of a coon song chorus. In 1903



# A TENNESSEE TANTALIZER

A RAGTIME TICKLER.

BY  
**CHARLES HUNTER**  
COMPOSER OF  
THE GENUINE RAGTIME SUCCESS  
**POSSUM AND TATERS**  
PUBLISHED BY  
**H.A. FRENCH, NASHVILLE, TENN.**

5

PLATE VII-1. A cover from 1900, depicting various racial stereotypes, such as thievery, dancing, and a love for watermelon.

# AUNT MINCRVY

(A Dusky Belle)

# ANN

## Ragtime

## Two-Step

By Fred Brown

|                             |     |
|-----------------------------|-----|
| Four Steps                  | 10c |
| Single and Double           | 10c |
| Marches and Polkas          | 10c |
| Marches and Songs           | 10c |
| Two Marches and Cakes       | 10c |
| Two Marches and Polkas      | 10c |
| Colours, 16 parts and Plans | 10c |
| Two Marches                 | 10c |
| Marches Solo                | 10c |
| March Solo                  | 10c |

**HOWLEY, HATFIELD & DRESSER**  
 125 E 23d Street, New York  
 Sole U.S. Retail Books, America. Copyright © 1903.

PLATE VII-2. The cakewalking "belle," as pictured on this 1903 cover, was soon to be displaced as the typical representative of ragtime.

there was a substantial reduction in the percentage of ethnic depictions, to about 50 percent, and by 1904 blackness in ragtime appeared in only a minority of publications, about 20 percent, the proportions growing smaller in following years (Plates VII-3 and VII-4). Probably as a result of the same trend, there was a sharp decrease in modal, "folksy," minor key openings, falling from a proportion of 25 percent in the period from 1897 to 1901 to less than 5 percent in any year after 1904.

Paralleling the decrease in black references in titles and cover depictions was the fading popularity of the cakewalk, the plantation-derived dance of obvious racial implications. Although one-third of the early rags made some reference to cakewalks, either in the title or subtitle, use of this term greatly decreased in 1903 and was practically nonexistent, except as a conscious anachronism, after 1904.

#### Rhythmic Changes

The concept of ragtime rhythm undergoes a marked shift in the first decade of the twentieth century, and the distinction between early and later phases of ragtime history is based largely on this shift. The main alteration is in the sudden decrease in the use of untied syncopation as compared with tied syncopation. While 59 percent of the rags through 1900 use UTS as the exclusive type of ragtime



PLATE VII-3. The new image of ragtime: 1905.



PLATE VII-4. Ragtime reaches the salon; cover from 1912.

syncopation, with only 17 percent being based on TS, the proportions shift dramatically in the first decade of the twentieth century. The ratio between UTS rags and TS rags from 1900 is about 3:1; the following year the proportion shifts 1:2 in favor of TS rags. A sampling of the next few years reveals the irreversible trend away from UTS: 1902, 1:3; 1905, 1:7; 1908, 1:20. After 1906 UTS is rarely used as the exclusive type of syncopation, and while its presence is retained to some degree in the majority of rags, it often appears in only three or four measures.

An important trait strongly, but not exclusively, linked with TS is the textural emphasis of a syncopation, an increased density that highlights the agogic accents of a figuration.<sup>1</sup> Whereas the UTS most often has an undifferentiated texture, such as all single notes, TS tends to feature a more complex mixture of simultaneous intervallic densities, with the heavier--and thereby louder--sonorities underlining the syncopated effect. Examples VII-1a-c illustrate the distinctions, the final excerpt presenting both approaches.

It must be emphasized that this trait is a tendency, not an ironclad rule; TS does occur in single-note textures (Example VII-2a), and mixed textures may be used effectively

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<sup>1</sup>This feature was recognized by at least one commentator during the ragtime era. See John Burk's remarks on the Maple Leaf Rag, pp. 99-100 above.

EXAMPLE VII-1. (a) Nellie Brooks Ransom, The Climax (Toledo, Ohio: McCormick Music Co., 1900), A 3-8; (b) Harry C. Thompson, A Black Bawl (Chicago: W. C. Polla & Co., 1905), A 1-7; (c) Charles Hunter, Why We Smile (Nashville: Frank G. Fite, 1903) A 5-8.

(a)

Musical score for Example VII-1(a), titled "The Climax" by Nellie Brooks Ransom. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves: a treble staff and a bass staff. The melody in the treble staff is characterized by eighth-note patterns and rests. The bass staff provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes.

(b)

Musical score for Example VII-1(b), titled "A Black Bawl" by Harry C. Thompson. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves. The treble staff features a melody with eighth-note runs and rests, marked with accents (>) and dynamic markings such as *mf* and *f*. The bass staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes, also marked with accents and dynamics.

(c)

Musical score for Example VII-1(c), titled "Why We Smile" by Charles Hunter. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two staves. The treble staff contains a melody with eighth-note patterns and rests, marked with accents and dynamics like *f*. The bass staff provides a rhythmic accompaniment with chords and single notes.

with UTS (Example VII-2b). The heavier density may also be used to support a nonagogic, tonic (pitch) accent on a weak beat, thereby giving it a syncopated effect (Example VII-3). As a general rule, though, textural emphasis accompanies TS, and

EXAMPLE VII-2. (a) Henry Lodge, Black Diamond Rag (New York: M. Witmark & Sons, 1912), A 1-4; (b) Arthur Marshall, The Pippin (New York: Stark Music Co., 1908), C 9-12.

(a)

Not too fast.

(b)

EXAMPLE VII-3. Percy Wenrich, The Smiler (Chicago: Arnett-Delonais Co., 1907), A 1-2.

as this rhythm attained favor in the first decade of the century, there was a corresponding and most significant development in textural variety, a development that affected the entire flavor of ragtime. More will be said later on the subject of textural variety.

Equally striking in its conclusiveness was the reduced use of the augmented syncopation figure. Through 1899 this figure dominated at least one strain of almost every

rag published. In 1900 its use was drastically diminished as it appeared in only about one-third of the pieces, and rarely in more than a single section of a work. After 1903 its use as the dominating rhythm of a section of a rag became relatively rare.

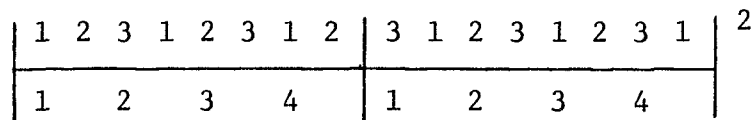
### Secondary Ragtime

Along with the reversed emphasis in established rhythms came the prominence of a new rhythm, labeled by a writer in 1925 as "secondary ragtime":

A Negro guitar-player once asked me, "You know the difference between primary rag and secondary rag?"

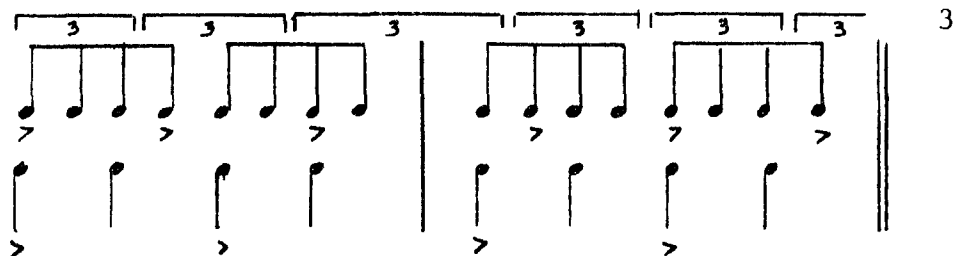
His primary rag was syncopation; his secondary rag was the superimposition of one, two, three upon the basic one, two, three, four.

Graphically it may be expressed thus:



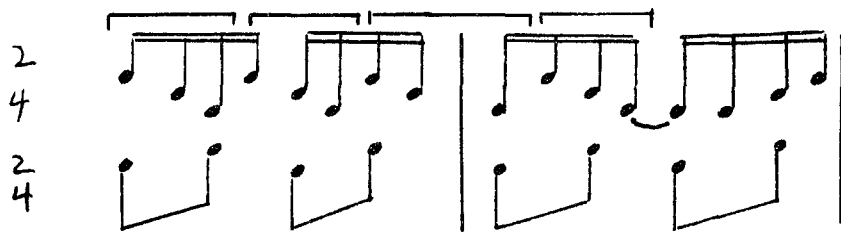
Winthrop Sargeant further described this rhythm as

. . . the superimposition of a rhythm of different phrase-lengths, but of identical units, upon the prevailing rhythm of the music. Usually the superimposed rhythm falls into phrases of three eighth-note units which are set against a background of the normal four-quarter rhythm of jazz.



<sup>2</sup>Knowlton, "Anatomy of Jazz," p. 581. See also, Ollly Wilson, "The Significance of the Relationship between Afro-

Extending the examination of this rhythm further, it can be noted that the pattern usually repeats the same three notes in either an ascending or descending line, and that the pattern is most often produced four times (Example VII-4; see also VII-15a, c). This is not syncopation, for there is no displacement of the normal metric accents. Within the repeating three-note motif, however, there is a continual accentual shift; when the motif is presented four times, each presentation is in a new metric context:



If, for example, we consider the changing context of the first note of each three-note group, it will be observed that it occurs: (1) on the primary strong beat; (2) before the secondary strong beat; (3) on a weak beat; (4) before a weak beat. Should the pattern be heard a fifth time, as in

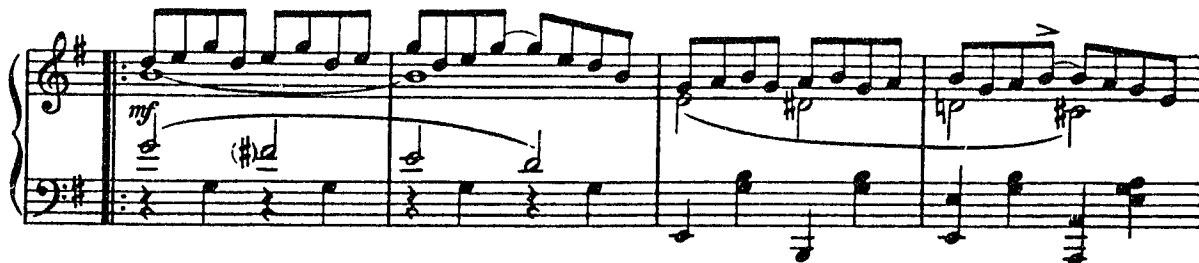
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American Music and West African Music," Black Perspective in Music 2 (Spring 1974): 7-9.

<sup>3</sup>Sargeant, Jazz, pp. 58-59. The concept of secondary ragtime is generally recognized among ragtime enthusiasts today, but the term has not been accepted. Instead, many writers refer to "three over two." Although it is understandable why this descriptive terminology has been chosen and accepted, it is musically inaccurate, suggesting a totally unrelated figuration:



EXAMPLE VII-4. Charles L. Johnson, Dill Pickles Rag (Detroit: Whitney-Warner Publishing Co., 1907), A 1-4.



EXAMPLE VII-5. Joseph Northup, The Cannon Ball (Chicago: Harold Rossiter Co., 1905), A 5-6.



Northup's Cannon Ball (Example VII-5), the first note on the secondary strong beat (measure 6, second beat) is too reminiscent of the opening of the pattern, which probably accounts for the greater preference for the shorter groupings.

The ragtime composer's attraction to the secondary rag idea is apparent in the frequency of its use and the number of variant forms in which it was cast. The three-note grouping, for example, could be extended beyond three pitches without losing the polyrhythmic effect (Example VII-6a). Or, the secondary rag pattern could be presented without accompaniment, the normal pulse being sufficiently strong to stand temporarily without explicit bass re-enforce-

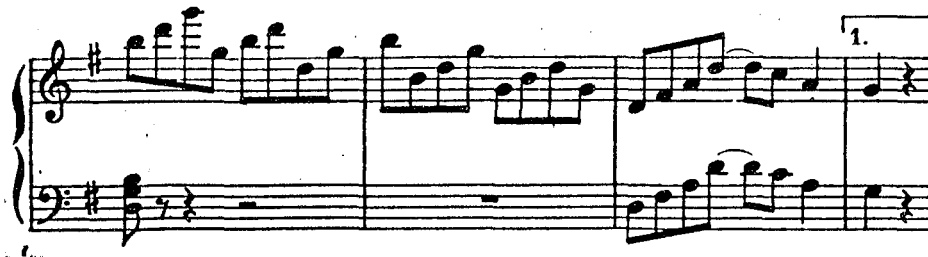
ment (Example VII-6b-c).

EXAMPLE VII-6. (a) George Botsford, Black and White Rag (Detroit: Whitney-Warner Publishing Co., 1908), B 1-3; (b) B 13-16; (c) Paul Pratt, Hot House Rag (St. Louis, Mo.: John Stark & Son, 1914), A 1-2.

(a)



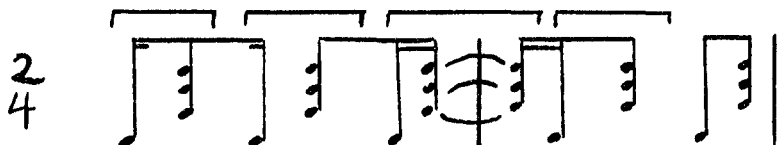
(b)



(c)



An important variant reduces the three-note group to two notes while retaining the three-unit rhythmic pattern:



As in Example VII-7 (measures 5-8), the characteristic of a repeating group of three rhythmic units--here sixteenths--is retained, creating the same essential effect as the main form of secondary ragtime.

Invariably, in this type of formation harmonic sonorities alternate with single notes. Occasionally, as in Example VII-8a, the harmonic effect is enhanced by juxtaposing an "inverted pedal" against a moving inner voice. It is also possible, although less frequent, to have some melodic motion in both outer and inner parts (Example VII-8b).

EXAMPLE VII-7. C. Hunter, Why We Smile, B 1-8.

The image shows two systems of musical notation for piano accompaniment. The first system consists of two staves, treble and bass clef, with a key signature of one flat and a common time signature. The second system continues the piece. A note above the second measure of the first system is marked "N.B.".

Sargeant suggests that secondary rag began with Northup's Cannon Ball in 1905 (see Example VII-5) and gained popularity in the years immediately following.<sup>4</sup> The latter contention is supported by our findings, as this procedure

EXAMPLE VII-8. (a) S. Joplin, Gladiolus Rag (New York: Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1907), D 1-6; (b) S. Joplin, Pine Apple Rag (New York: Seminary Music Co., 1908), B 3-6.

(a)

(b)

seems to have been rare until 1907, at which time it began to appear in about one piece in six. But secondary ragtime was known prior to 1905, the date of origin designated by Sargeant. In its three-note form it is found in Charles Mullen's Levee Rag (1902), and in the two-note form it appears in Joplin's Original Rags (1899), (Example VII-9).<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup>Sargeant, Jazz, p. 135.

EXAMPLE VII-9. (a) Charles E. Mullen, Levee Rag (Chicago: Will Rossiter, 1902), B 1-8; (b) S. Joplin, Original Rags, arr. Charles N. Daniels (Kansas City, Mo.: Carl Hoffman, 1899), E 1-4.

(a)

N.B.

(b)

Once introduced, the secondary ragtime figure extended through the entire period under investigation, and beyond, becoming an important element of the "novelty piano" style of the 1920s.

#### Form

The shift in rhythmic impulses is the most defini-

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<sup>5</sup>Hans Nathan traces the two-note variant back to some mid-nineteenth century minstrel pieces, but the evidence is not conclusive. See Nathan, Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsy, pp. 209-20, ex. 88..

tive change distinguishing the second phase of piano ragtime. Alterations in other areas are less immediate and striking, but still have an effect on the style.

The conception of outer form, the arrangement of three or four sixteen-measure themes in tonic-subdominant relationship--with three-theme rags having a 60 percent greater frequency than those with four themes--remains essentially as it was established in the earlier years. The only structural change of any significance is the increased use of a break before the trio (such as A B break C). Up to 1901, almost all breaks occurred within the trio (such as A B C break C); after that date the number of trio-introducing breaks--and they are, in fact, introductions<sup>6</sup>--increased gradually. By 1906 the practice stabilized; thereafter, trio-introducing breaks occur in about 21 percent of the rags, approximately equaling the number of inner-trio breaks. Unlike the latter, though, introductory breaks generally do not exceed a length of four measures, and do not present the vi-V harmonic design; instead, they follow the patterns set by the regular introductions. In addition, while they fall between strains in different keys--tonic and subdominant--they usually are not modulatory, but simply begin in the

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<sup>6</sup>In a recorded interview, ragtime composer Joe Lamb used the term "introduction to the trio"; cf. his discussion of The Ragtime Nightingale, on A Study in Classic Ragtime, Folkways Records, FG 3562.

later key.

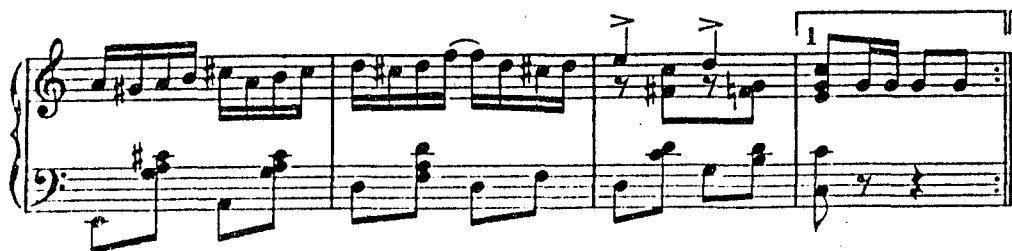
### Unifying Relationships

The relationship between themes within a piece is not a major concern in ragtime, but with the increasing sophistication of some composers, this does become a factor of some interest.

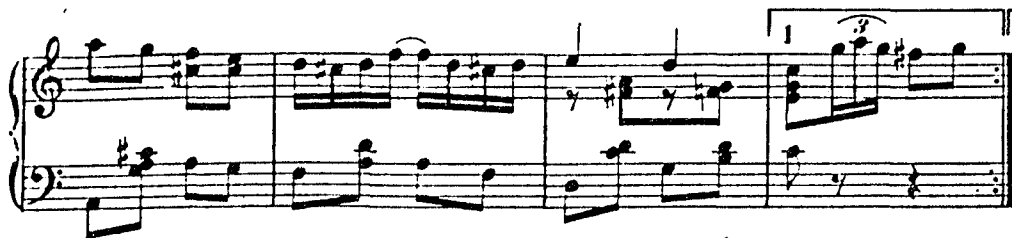
Occasionally, several themes of a work may have a common cadence pattern (Example VII-10), but the significance of this device should not be exaggerated. It occurs in compositions of no particular merit and is of no more consequence than similar or identical cadential formulas in various movements of a baroque suite.

EXAMPLE VII-10. Leo Berliner, Africana. A Rag-Time Classic (New York: Jos. W. Stern & Co., 1903): (a) A 13-16; (b) B 13-16.

(a)



(b)



There are instances, revealing a little more skill, in which a single motive is used to generate thematic material for several strains. In Joplin's Original Rags, for example, melodic identity obviously links the introduction and the B strain (Example VII-11); less apparent is the motivic connection, by virtue of the appoggiatura  $\sharp 2-3$  ( $a\sharp-b$ ) motion, with the E strain (Example VII-9b).

EXAMPLE VII-11. S. Joplin, Original Rags: (a) Introduction 1-4; (b) B 1-5.

(a)



(b)



A sense of continuity joining adjacent strains is also present in other Joplin pieces. In his Pine Apple Rag, for instance, the two-note secondary rag formula ending the A section leads directly into the B section, where it becomes the dominating motive (Example VII-12).

While such devices as melodic inversion are not

EXAMPLE VII-12. S. Joplin, Pine Apple Rag, A 13-B 2.

really part of the ragtime language, sporadic gestures do exist. In Irene Giblin's Chicken Chowder (1905), ascending and descending chromatic scales are used to simulate inversion, thereby tying together the A and C strains (Example VII-13).

The inversion relationship between the B and C strains of Joplin's Nonpareil (1907) is far more subtle; it even may have been unintentional. The two strains are noticeably similar in their atypical openings: sixteenths in the bass and quarter-notes in the treble. That the melodic  $g$  to  $e^b$  at the beginning of theme B is mirrored by the  $e^b$  to  $g$  in the first measure of theme C is easily perceived, and suggests an affiliation between the two strains. Confirmation is found in an apparent inversion, whereby the melody of B 1-2 is inverted forming not the melody, but the melodic

EXAMPLE VII-13. Irene Giblin, Chicken Chowder (New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1905): (a) A 1-8; (b) C 1-8.

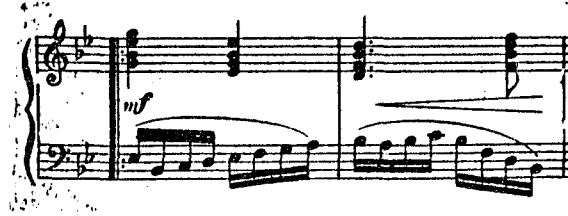
(a)

(b)

outline of C 1-4 (Example VII-14). If one accepts this analysis as plausible, the parallel between the sustained *d* in B 2 and the prolongation of its inversion (*a<sup>b</sup>*) in C 2-3 is an intriguing re-enforcement of the hypothesis. Unfortunately there is nothing else in this piece to add more definitive support.

EXAMPLE VII-14. S. Joplin, The Nonpareil (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1907): (a) B 1-2; (b) C 1-4.

(a)



(b)

A unification of all sections is achieved by George Botsford in his Black and White Rag. This rare sense of continuity is effected by tying all strains together with a common rhythmic formula: a secondary rag pattern plus a single type of tied syncopation (Example VII-15). The A strain opens with four measures of a repeated three-note secondary rag pattern, followed by two measures of tied syncopation (  $\text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩} = \text{♩} \text{♩} \text{♩}$  ) in a lower neighbor-note arrangement. Strain B begins with the same rhythms, but in a varied manner: two measures of secondary rag with changing pitches, followed by two measures of TS, the first being in the lower neighbor-note arrangement.

EXAMPLE VII-15. G. Botsford, Black and White Rag: (a) A 1-6;  
(b) B 1-3; (c) C 1-9.

(a)

Musical notation for section (a) A 1-6. The score is in G major (one sharp) and 2/4 time. It consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system has four measures, with a mezzo-forte (*mf*) dynamic marking in the first measure. The right hand features a continuous eighth-note melody, while the left hand provides a steady bass line with chords and single notes.

Musical notation for section (a) A 1-6 (continued). The second system has two measures. The right hand continues the eighth-note melody, and the left hand maintains the bass line.

(b)

Musical notation for section (b) B 1-3. The score is in G major and 2/4 time, consisting of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system has three measures, with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking in the first measure. The right hand features a more active melody with eighth and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a bass line with chords.

(c)

Musical notation for section (c) C 1-9 (first system). The score is in G major and 2/4 time, consisting of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system has five measures, with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking in the first measure. The right hand features a complex melody with many accidentals and sixteenth notes, while the left hand provides a bass line with chords.

Musical notation for section (c) C 1-9 (second system). The second system has four measures. The right hand continues the complex melody, and the left hand maintains the bass line.

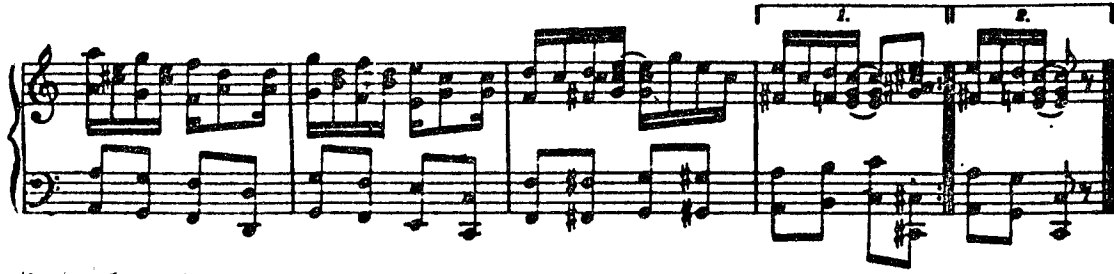
The C strain reverses the order, presenting the TS, lower neighbor-note arrangement in the first four measures and the repeated note secondary rag pattern in the next four. In each strain the same basic material is used, but is changed sufficiently to create variety; the result is an unusually convincing integration.

Interesting as this example of Botsford's is, it is atypical; the organic connection of ragtime strains is a feature that occurs only occasionally.

#### Development of "Measure 13" Conventions

The increasing sophistication in harmonic usage in ragtime is particularly noticeable around the final, climactic phrase of each strain (see discussion above, pages 176-80). One result of this trend is that unaccompanied octaves, while remaining as a typical trait of introductions, are either discarded or modified for use at measure 13. One approach retains the bare sound--most often as single notes rather than as octaves--but adds interest either through secondary ragtime rhythm or the outline of a diminished seventh chord (Examples VII-6b and VII-18c). A new dimension also may be added by harmonizing the octaves; the resulting "parallel octaves" should be viewed here not necessarily as untutored or careless musicianship, but as the enrichment of an older convention (Example VII-16).

EXAMPLE VII-16. Joe Jordan, Double Fudge (St. Louis, Mo.: Joseph F. Hunleth Music Co., 1902), C 13-16.



Another development of this convention, one particularly favored by Joplin, replaces the octaves with harmonically richer parallel sixths or tenths (Example VII-17a-b). In Fig Leaf Rag, he goes one step further and varies the idea of parallel tenths by concluding each figuration in contrary motion (Example VII-17c).

The practice of chromatic enrichment at the opening of the final phrase increases, especially with the use of diminished seventh chords and, as earlier, flat VI and augmented sixth chords of all types. The diminished seventh chords appear in measure 13 in about 10 percent of the rags after 1901, and are used both in block formations (Example VII-18a-b) and in chord outlines (Example VII-18c-d). The flat VI and augmented sixth chords also appear at measure 13, or sometimes at measure 14, in 10 percent of the rags surveyed (Example VII-19). The "incorrect" spellings in the Johnson and Wiley examples--(a) and (c)--are typical of rag publications. In contrast, Joplin's careful notation of the flat VI of  $D^b$  as a  $B^{bb}$

EXAMPLE VII-17. S. Joplin: (a) The Easy Winners (St. Louis, Mo.: Scott Joplin, 1901), B 13-16; (b) The Sycamore (New York: Will Rossiter, 1904), C 13-16; (c) Fig Leaf Rag (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1908), B 13-16.

(a)

(b)

(c)

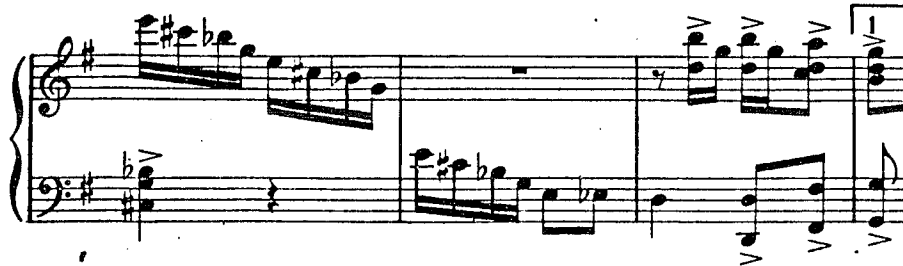
EXAMPLE VII-18. (a) Bess Rudisill, Aint I Lucky? (Detroit: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1905), A 13-16; (b) H. Thompson, Black Bawl, C 13-14; (c) Harry J. Lincoln, Beeswax Rag (Williamsport, Pa.: Vandersloot Music, 1911), B 13-16; (d) S. Joplin, Sugar Cane (New York: Seminary Music Co., 1908), C 13-16.

(a)

(b)



(c)



(d)



EXAMPLE VII-19. (a) Charles L. Johnson, Cum Bac Rag (New York: Jerome H. Remick & Co., 1911), B 12-16; (b) Tom Turpin, St. Louis Rag (New York: Sol Bloom, 1903), A 12-16; (c) Clarence Wiley, Car-Barlick-Acid (Oskaloosa, Iowa: Clarence C. Wiley, 1903), A 13-16; (d) S. Joplin, Gladiolus Rag, D 13-16.

(a)



(b)

Musical score (b) showing a piano piece with a treble and bass clef. The treble clef has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, and the bass clef has a rhythmic accompaniment. A "N.B." annotation is placed above the treble staff. The piece ends with a first ending bracket.

(c)

Musical score (c) showing a piano piece with a treble and bass clef. The treble clef features a series of chords, some marked "ff" (fortissimo). The bass clef has a rhythmic accompaniment. The piece ends with a first and second ending bracket.

(d)

Musical score (d) showing a piano piece with a treble and bass clef. The treble clef has a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes, and the bass clef has a rhythmic accompaniment. The piece ends with a first ending bracket.

triad is characteristic of his meticulous workmanship and his concern with chords of this type. His exceedingly frequent use of flat VI and augmented sixth chords goes back to his prerag marches (see, for example, his Combination March, 1896, E 13) and extends throughout his career. One could even surmise that his Breeze from Alabama (1902) is a unique experiment in expanding the flat VI idea to the tonal organization of an entire piece. After a conventional opening with two themes in the tonic Key (C major), the trio

opens not in the anticipated subdominant, but in the key of the flat VI ( $A^b$  major). In this section (theme C) there then occurs what is probably the most startling modulation in ragtime literature--a sudden shift to  $F^b$  major (notated as E major)--the flat VI of the flat VI ( $C-A^b-F^b$ ). This new key extends from measures 9 to 13 of theme C (measures 45-48 of the entire ninety-two-measure piece--the exact center of the work!), at which point the tonic E major triad once again functions as a more conventional flat VI chord going to the cadential  $I6/4$  in A (Example VII-20). The traditional subdominant key is used for the second trio theme, and the piece ends with a reprise of the B theme in the original tonic key of C major, which may now be interpreted as  $D^{bb}$ , the flat VI of  $F^b$ , or, the flat VI of the flat VI of the flat VI ( $C-A^b-F^b$  [ $E$ ]- $D^{bb}$  [ $C$ ]; Example VII-21). In addition, the piece is virtually saturated with flat VI and augmented sixth chords, occurring not only in theme C, but also at B 7, D 13, and twice in the first break.

There is no indication of Joplin's ever returning to the thought processes that produced this work, nor is there evidence that anyone recognized the significance of this novel tonal plan. Although unusual key relationships sometimes occur in rags, they usually appear to be sloppy pastiches; from what is known of Joplin, and what we can deduce from his music, he was too conscientious for such a haphazard

procedure. The most logical conclusion is that this piece represents a structural extension of an attractive ragtime convention.

EXAMPLE VII-20. S. Joplin, A Breeze from Alabama (St. Louis, Mo.: John Stark & Son, 1902), C 5-16, break 1.

The image displays three systems of musical notation for the piano accompaniment of "A Breeze from Alabama" by Scott Joplin. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble and bass clef. The first system shows the initial four measures. The second system is marked with "N. B." (Nota Bene) at the beginning and end, indicating a key signature change to one sharp (F#) in the second measure. The third system also features a key signature change, marked with "N. B." above the staff, and includes a first ending (1.) and a second ending (2.) in the final measures.



patterns become widely used; (3) augmented syncopation, once a regular feature, virtually disappears as a prominent figure. There is also a heightened awareness of the possibilities of texture, resulting in several enriching features: (1) contrasts in density to emphasize syncopated accents; (2) occasional use of inner voices; (3) abandonment of unharmonized octaves at measure 13 and replacement by parallel sixths and tenths. The concept of form remains essentially as it was in the 1890s, with one exception: in addition to "inner-trio" breaks, there is an increased use of "trio-introducing" breaks.


Ragtime from the first--and part of the second--decade of the twentieth century is based on the conventions established for the genre in the 1890s. But these conventions are not accepted intact; they are modified, altering the character of the music and making it responsive to changes in society and to aesthetic demands.

## CHAPTER VIII




### THE DISSOLUTION OF A DISTINCTIVE STYLE

Along with the continued output of conventionally designed rags, the second decade of the twentieth century marked the significant incursion into ragtime of traits-- primarily rhythmic--that were previously outside the genre's usual sphere. The familiar and almost exclusively used patterns of tied and untied syncopations and secondary ragtime gradually lost domination as other figures became prominent. However justifiable and necessary this broadening of the ragtime concept may have been on evolutionary and aesthetic grounds, an inevitable result was a weakened identity and an erosion of the style's most distinctive qualities.

#### Dotted Rhythms

The most noticeable shift in ragtime of the 1910s is in the increased use of dotted rhythms, such as  For the first decade of the century this figure was rarely more than incidental, appearing in less than 6 percent of the published piano rags. Beginning in 1911, however, there was a sudden and dramatic upsurge in the use of this rhythm, the prominent occurrences almost doubling for each of the next

few years: 1911, 12 percent; 1912, 23 percent; 1913, 46 percent. A high level of use continued to the end of the ragtime period, going as high as 58 percent in 1916.

While dotted figures and ragtime syncopations commonly occur in the same passages, the dotted figures themselves are usually unsyncopated:  (Example VIII-1). In some instances, syncopated and dotted segments are connected by a tie:  (Example VIII-2); least frequent are passages in which dotted notes are syncopated:  (Example VIII-3). The apparent reluctance to fully adapt the traditional ragtime rhythms (UTS and TS) to the new trend favoring dotted rhythms did not apply to secondary ragtime, which seems to have been transformed more completely (Example VIII-4; also, compare VIII-6b and d).

The rhythmic animation inherent in dotted figures evidently reduced the need for syncopation in ragtime; as a result, there was a corresponding, though not quite so steep, rise in the number of dotted but substantially unsyncopated rags (Example VIII-5).

One can only speculate on the reasons for the new prominence of dotted rhythms. It is possible that the shift in notation was merely a reflection of prevailing performance practices, although a sampling of piano rolls on recently released recordings argues against this theory. (Undoubtedly, a thorough study of performance practices as represented on

EXAMPLE VIII-1. (a) George P. Howard, Sam Fox Trot. Rag Two-Step (Cleveland: Sam Fox Publishing Co., 1915), B 1-4; (b) Sam Fox Trot, D 1-4; (c) Luckey Roberts, Music Box Rag (New York: Jos. W. Stern, 1914), A 1-4.

(a)



(b)



(c)



EXAMPLE VIII-2. (a) Henry Lodge, Silver Fox. A Raggy Fox Trot (New York: Jerome H. Remick, 1915), A 1-4; (b) Artie Matthews, Pastime Rag No. 5 (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1-18), D 1-4; (c) Joseph Lamb, Cleopatra Rag (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1915), A 1-4.

(a)



(b)

Musical score for example (b), showing a piano accompaniment in G major. The right hand features a complex, rhythmic melody with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand provides a steady bass line with chords. The dynamic marking is *mf-f*.

(c)

Musical score for example (c), showing a piano accompaniment in G major. The right hand has a more melodic line with some grace notes. The left hand has a simple bass line. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

EXAMPLE VIII-3. (a) James Scott, Dixie Dimples (Kansas City: Will L. Livernash, 1918), A 6-7; (b) Edward B. Claypoole,<sup>1</sup> Ragging the Scale (New York: Broadway Music Corp., 1915), A 1-4.

(a)

Musical score for example (a), showing a piano accompaniment in G major. The right hand has a melodic line with some grace notes. The left hand has a simple bass line. The dynamic marking is *cresc.*

(b)

Musical score for example (b), showing a piano accompaniment in G major. The right hand has a complex, rhythmic melody with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand provides a steady bass line with chords. The dynamic marking is *mf*.

<sup>1</sup>Eubie Blake claims authorship for Ragging the Scale, asserting that Claypoole stole it from him. Blake, in turn, "got the idea" from Hughie Woolford. See Mike Montgomery,

EXAMPLE VIII-4. Wilbur C. S. Sweatman, Down Home Rag  
(Chicago: Will Rossiter, 1911), A 1-4.



EXAMPLE VIII-5. (a) Harry Belding, Good Gravy Rag (St. Louis, Mo.: Buck & Lowney, 1913), A 1-8; (b) Eugene Platzmann and Ted Eastwood, Kee-to-Kee (A Modulating Rag). Fox-Trot (New York: Artmusic, 1918), B 1-8; (c) Claypoole, Ragging the Scale, B 1-8.

(a)

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"The Story of 'Ragging the Scale,'" Ragtime Society 2  
(May/June 1963): 6-7.

(b)

Musical score for section (b), consisting of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system begins with a dynamic marking of *mf-f*. The music is written in a key with one flat (B-flat major or D minor) and a 2/4 time signature. The right hand features a complex, syncopated melody with many beamed eighth and sixteenth notes, often marked with accents (>). The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes. The second system continues the piece, ending with a triplet of eighth notes in the right hand.

(c)

Musical score for section (c), consisting of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system starts with a dynamic marking of *mf*. The right hand has a melodic line with fingerings (3, 5, 3, 5, 2, 1) indicated above the notes. The left hand consists of chords and single notes. The second system continues the piece, featuring dynamic markings of *f* and *mf*. The right hand includes a triplet of eighth notes and other syncopated rhythms. The left hand continues with chordal accompaniment.

piano rolls and early recordings could bring some much needed enlightenment to this issue.) It is also plausible that ragtime composers were seeking new rhythmic combinations in reaction to the conventional patterns which, by 1911, may have appeared hackneyed and stereotyped. A third hypothesis would link the shift to a merging of rags with the new dances

that appeared at the beginning of the 1910s, the fox and turkey trots; one article from 1916 does make this connection, referring to "Some of the latest ragtime numbers in fox trot rhythm . . ."2 The significance of these dances is that, syncopated or not, trots were usually dotted (see Examples VIII-1, 2a, 4, and 5b--all labeled as fox trots). There are also a few published pieces that explicitly illustrate the transformation from standard rag to fox trot. Euday Bowman's 12th Street Rag was originally published in 1914 as an undotted rag; in 1919 it was reissued in a dotted version, labeled "Fox Trot Arrangement" (Example VIII-6). In another piece, Clarence Woods's Sleepy Hollow Rag (1918), a footnote explains that the designated dance character--a "slow drag" rag--can be altered to accommodate other dances by dotting the rhythms (Example VIII-7).

Whatever the initial impulse, the success of a few dotted rags in 1911 probably encouraged imitations, and in this regard one must consider the effect of Irving Berlin's spectacularly popular song, Alexander's Ragtime Band (1911). Although heavily dotted and virtually unsyncopated, this song was almost universally accepted--however mistakenly--as an archetype for ragtime. (That the piano version is notated without dots would seem to indicate that at the time of publication this rhythmic shift was still not fully

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<sup>2</sup>Liebling, "The Crime of Ragtime," p. 21.

EXAMPLE VIII-6. (a) Euday Bowman, 12th Street Rag (Ft. Worth, Texas: Euday L. Bowman, 1914), Introduction 1-5; (b) A 1-4; (c) 12th Street Rag, arr. C. E. Wheeler (Kansas City, Mo.: J. W. Jenkins Sons, 1919), Introduction 1-5; (d) A 1-4.

(a)

Musical score for (a) showing the introduction of '12th Street Rag' by Euday Bowman. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature, and a bass clef staff. The music features a series of chords in the right hand and a rhythmic accompaniment in the left hand.

(b)

Musical score for (b) showing the first four measures of the A section of '12th Street Rag' by Euday Bowman. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature, and a bass clef staff. The right hand features a melodic line with some grace notes, while the left hand provides a steady accompaniment.

(c)

**12th STREET RAG**

EUDAY L. BOWMAN  
*Arr. by C. E. Wheeler*

Slow

Slow Fox Trot Arrangement'

Musical score for (c) showing the introduction of '12th Street Rag' by C. E. Wheeler. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature, and a bass clef staff. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* and *r.h.* (right hand). The tempo is marked 'Slow'.

(d)

Musical score for (d) showing the first four measures of the A section of '12th Street Rag' by C. E. Wheeler. It consists of two staves: a treble clef staff with a key signature of two flats and a common time signature, and a bass clef staff. The score includes a dynamic marking of *mf* (mezzo-forte).

EXAMPLE VIII-7. Clarence Woods, Sleepy Hollow Rag (Kansas City, Mo.: Will L. Livernash, 1918): (a) A 1-4; (b) footnote.

(a)

Slow Drag. tremolo

*Plegato*  
(\* See Foot Note)

*mp*

The musical score for (a) is a piano arrangement of the first four measures of the A section. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a 2/4 time signature. The tempo is marked 'Slow Drag' and 'tremolo'. The dynamics are 'Plegato' and 'mp'. The score includes a note to 'See Foot Note'.

(b)

\* This number can be played for anything except a waltz by slightly altering the style and tempo as illustration. This illustration also gives an example of a simplified movement for measures containing tremolo effect.

*etc.*

The musical score for (b) is a simplified piano arrangement of the first four measures of the A section, illustrating a tremolo effect. It features a treble and bass clef with a key signature of one flat and a 2/4 time signature. The score includes a note to 'etc.'.

acceptable for piano rags; compare song and piano versions in Example VIII-8.) It is likely that the unprecedented success of this song played an important part in changing attitudes, in gaining acceptance for dotted notes and nonsyncopated rhythms in ragtime. Similarly, the success of other 1911 rags featuring dotted rhythms can be cited. Down Home Rag (Example VIII-4), for instance, had three printings between 1911 and 1913<sup>3</sup> and therefore can be assumed to have exercised some influence. With the precedents established by successful dotted rags in 1911, the exclusive rights held by earlier ragtime conventions were broken.

Despite the wide acceptance of dotted notes in

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<sup>3</sup>Elliott Shapiro, "'Ragtime' USA," Notes 8 (June 1951): 460.

ragtime in the 1910s, there was some resistance to this trend. A critic in 1913 protested the incorporation of nonsyncopated rhythms in the ragtime category (see above, page 26), and ragtime pedagogue Edward Winn, writing as late as 1918, managed to ignore dotted rhythms in his otherwise

EXAMPLE VIII-8. Irving Berlin, Alexander's Ragtime Band:

(a) song version: Verse 1-6; (b) piano version: A 1-6;  
 (c) song version: Chorus 1-7; (d) piano version: B 1-5.

(a)

*Till ready*

Oh, ma hon-ey, Oh, ma hon-ey,  
 Oh, ma hon-ey, Oh, ma hon-ey,

Bet-ter hur-ry and let's me - an - der, Aint you go - in', Aint you go - in'  
 There's a fid-dle with notes that screeches, Like a chick-en, Like a chick-en,

(b)

*mf*

(c)

CHORUS

Come on and hear,..... Come on and hear..... Al - ex - an - der's rag-time

band,..... Come on and hear,..... Come on and hear,..... It's the best band in the

(d)

copious surveys of ragtime techniques.<sup>4</sup> James Scott and Joe Lamb, two composers who continued writing rags after--and in the case of Lamb, long after--it ceased to be fashionable, experimented briefly with dotted rhythms (see Examples VIII-3a and VIII-2c), but then returned to the earlier conventions. This return is especially noticeable in the later works of

<sup>4</sup>How To Play Ragtime and "Ragtime Piano Playing."

Lamb, works that were first published in 1964.<sup>5</sup> More directly, composer-performer Mose Gumble explicitly denied dotted notes to ragtime: "Dotted notes and rests do not constitute rag. On the other hand, the tying of notes over the subsequent bars does."<sup>6</sup>

This demonstrated opposition notwithstanding, the incursion of dotted rhythms was accomplished. More than any other single factor, dotted notes changed the character of ragtime.

#### Other Expansions of the Ragtime Language

Perhaps as a side effect to the acceptance of non-syncopated, dotted passages, the spectrum of musical gestures going under the ragtime label became broader and more inclusive. In the rhythmic sphere, this tendency is observable in an increased proportion of complete strains without either dotted notes or a single--or sometimes, just one--syncopation, and a wider use of triplets (Example VIII-9; see also, Example VIII-5c).

Textural divergences are also noticeable, such as a greater prominence of various alternating hand patterns, often combined with chord arpeggiations (Example VIII-10),

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<sup>5</sup>Joseph F. Lamb, Ragtime Treasures, Forward by Rudi Blesh (Rockville Centre, N.Y.: Belwin Mills, 1964).

<sup>6</sup>Monroe Rosenfeld, "'Ragtime'--A Musical Mystery: What It Is and Its Origin," Tuneful Yankee 1 (January 1917): 10.

EXAMPLE VIII-9. (a) A. Matthews, Pastime Rag No. 4 (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1920), B 10-16; (b) Charles Thompson, Lily Rag (St. Louis, Mo.: Syndicate Music Co., 1914), B 1-6.

(a)

(b)

and an increased use of left-hand tenths, occasionally replacing the more conventional octaves (Example VIII-11; see also Example VIII-7a). The rarity of tenths in early ragtime publications was undoubtedly a concession made by composers toward the real or assumed limitations of the music-buying public. As indicated in Chapter IV (page 144), at least some pieces were deliberately simplified to encourage sales. Undoubtedly, some composers did utilize tenths regularly in performance without reflecting this

EXAMPLE VIII-10. (a) E. J. Stark, Billikin Rag (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1913), A 1-7; (b) Robert Hampton, Cataract Rag (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1914), D 1-3.

(a)

The image shows two musical staves for piano. The first staff, labeled (a), contains the notation for 'Billikin Rag' by E. J. Stark. It features a treble clef with a key signature of one flat (B-flat) and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is characterized by eighth-note patterns. The bass clef part provides a harmonic accompaniment with chords and single notes. A dynamic marking of 'mf' is present. The second staff, labeled (b), contains the notation for 'Cataract Rag' by Robert Hampton. It also has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is more complex, featuring sixteenth-note runs and triplets. The bass clef part consists of chords and rhythmic accompaniment.

(b)

The image shows a single musical staff for piano, labeled (b), for 'Meadow Lark Rag' by Thomas Pitts. It has a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is highly rhythmic, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The bass clef part provides a steady accompaniment with chords and rhythmic patterns.

EXAMPLE VIII-11. Thomas Pitts, Meadow Lark Rag (San Francisco: Chas. N. Daniels, 1916), C 5-7.

This image shows a second musical score for 'Meadow Lark Rag' by Thomas Pitts, labeled (b). It is a piano accompaniment with a treble clef, a key signature of one flat, and a 2/4 time signature. The melody is highly rhythmic, featuring many sixteenth and thirty-second notes. The bass clef part provides a steady accompaniment with chords and rhythmic patterns.

practice in publications. Luckey Roberts's published rags in the early and middle 1910s make little use of tenths, although James P. Johnson has testified that they were a

regular feature of Roberts's performing style during those same years.<sup>7</sup> Johnson has also placed the development of the use of tenths in New York, reasoning that it was part of the more demanding technical standards required to compete with the superior, classically-oriented musicians present in the metropolitan area:

The other sections of the country never developed the piano as far as the New York boys. . . . The people in New York were used to hearing good piano played in concerts and cafés. The ragtime player had to live up to that standard. . . .

New York developed the orchestral piano--full, round, big, widespread chords and tenths--a heavy bass moving against the right hand. The other boys from the South and West at that time played in smaller dimensions--like thirds played in unison. We wouldn't dare do that because the public was used to better playing.

. . . In the rags, that full piano was played as early as 1910. Even Scott Joplin had octaves and chords, but he didn't attempt the big hand stretches.<sup>8</sup>

The evidence is contradictory--on the extent to which tenths were used in ragtime performance in Saint Louis during the first decade of the century. Joe Jordan has said that it was "quite common,"<sup>9</sup> while Charles Thompson's remark about Louis Chauvin, who died in 1908, suggests that it was unusual: "He was stretching tenths way ahead of his time."<sup>10</sup>

While there is no definitive answer of this issue as

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<sup>7</sup>Davin, "James P. Johnson," [Part II], p. 12.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., [Part I], p. 17.

<sup>9</sup>Dick Zimmerman, "A Visit with Joe Jordan," Rag Times 2 (September 1968): 6.

<sup>10</sup>Tichenor, "The Real Thing."

applied to performance, the evidence is clear in regard to published ragtime. Left-hand tenths become more prevalent in the second decade of the century, but they still are not a major factor in the style.

### Bluesy Rags and Raggy Blues

It is natural that ragtime and blues, emerging from the same cultural and social milieu, should be related. In a few pieces this relationship is strikingly close; in some others it is more distant, but nevertheless unmistakable. In the majority of cases, though, blues presence in published ragtime is only slight until the second decade of the twentieth century. With the unveiling of blues in published form in 1912, that presence increases substantially, and blues becomes another important factor in the disintegration of ragtime as a distinctive type.

The precise genesis of blues is obscure, but the style clearly existed as a recognizable type prior to its surfacing in print as popular music in 1912. Jelly Roll Morton, for one, referred to hearing some form of blues in New Orleans earlier than 1900,<sup>11</sup> and although his Jelly Roll Blues, his first publication, was not issued until 1915, it

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<sup>11</sup>Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll, pp. 6, 20-21. For other testimony and evidence, see: Handy, Father of the Blues, p. 99; Southern, Music of Black Americans, pp. 332-33; Chase, America's Music, p. 456; William Ferris, "Blues Roots and Development," Black Perspective in Music 2 (Fall 1974): 123.

is supposed to have been composed in 1905.<sup>12</sup>

The search for blues elements in ragtime has been an integral part of the analysis of all rags used in this study. For the most part these elements are in the form of "blue notes,"<sup>13</sup> although occasionally other features are present. In two cases, to be discussed below, rags have been found with strains that may be the earliest published blues choruses.

The frequency with which blues elements appear in rags increases chronologically, indicating that even before 1912 there was a growing awareness of the blues style. In pre-1912 rags the presence of blue notes is found most often--but not exclusively--among rags by black composers. Joplin's first published rag, Original Rags, uses the characteristic blues motion of #2-3 (Examples VII-9b and VII-11, pages 231 and 234 above), an inflection also present in a vocal chorus in Boone's<sup>14</sup> Rag Medley No. 1

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<sup>12</sup>Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll, p. 292.

<sup>13</sup>Blue notes are certain chromatic alterations superimposed on the major scale. The most common scale steps for these alterations are the sharpened second (or flatted third), sharpened fourth (or flatted fifth), and sharpened sixth (or flatted seventh). These tones are used primarily by the right hand and frequently form dissonant clashes with the unaltered scale steps used in either right- or left-hand harmonies.

<sup>14</sup>Blind since infancy, John W. Boone (1863-1927) had the ability to duplicate any piano performance he heard. He concertized widely for some thirty years, programing classics, folk music arrangements, and ragtime.

(1908), (Example VIII-12a). Use of blue notes by white composers can also be cited, such as in Charles Johnson's A Black Smoke (1902) and J. Russel Robinson's Minstrel Man (1911), (Examples VIII-12b-c). A close approximation of the "blues break," which typically occurs in the second half of a blues phrase, is presented in several pieces, such as Joplin's Paragon Rag (1909) and Scott's Ragtime Oriole (1911), (Example VIII-12d-e).

The most exceptional appearance of blues in ragtime from the early 1900s is in One o' Them Things? (1904). Sub-

EXAMPLE VIII-12. (a) "Blind" Boone, Rag Medley No. 1 (Columbia, Mo.: Allen Music Co., 1908), A 1-5; (b) C. Johnson, A Black Smoke (Kansas City, Mo.: Carl Hoffman, 1902), B 7-8; (c) J. Russel Robinson, Minstrel Man (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1911), C 1-4; (d) S. Joplin, Paragon Rag (New York: Seminary Music Co., 1909), B 1-4; (e) J. Scott, Ragtime Oriole (St. Louis, Mo.: Stark Music Co., 1911), A 5-8.

(a)

The musical score for Example VIII-12(a) is a piano-vocal piece in 4/4 time. It consists of two systems of music. The first system shows the piano accompaniment in the left hand and the vocal line in the right hand. The lyrics for the first system are: "I got a chick - en on my back . There's a". The second system continues the piano accompaniment and the vocal line. The lyrics for the second system are: "bull dog on my track But I'll make it to my". The score includes various musical notations such as notes, rests, and dynamic markings.

(b)

Musical notation for section (b), consisting of two staves (treble and bass clef) in a key signature of one sharp (F#). The melody in the treble clef features eighth-note patterns and slurs. The bass clef provides a simple accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.

(c)

Musical notation for section (c), labeled "TRIO." and marked with a forte dynamic (*ff*). It consists of two staves in a key signature of two flats (Bb). The treble clef has a complex melody with many slurs and ties. The bass clef has a steady accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.

(d)

Musical notation for section (d), consisting of two staves in a key signature of one sharp (F#). The treble clef features a melody with slurs and a fermata over a measure. The bass clef has a steady accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.

(e)

Musical notation for section (e), consisting of two staves in a key signature of two flats (Bb). The treble clef has a melody with slurs and ties. The bass clef has a steady accompaniment with chords and eighth notes.

titled "Rag Time Two-Step," it nevertheless departs from the usual sixteen-measure strain pattern and opens with a twelve-bar blues chorus; in doing so, it may be the first actual

publication of a blues<sup>15</sup> (Example VIII-13). While the first

EXAMPLE VIII-13. (a) James Chapman and Leroy Smith, One o' Them Things (St. Louis, Mo.: Jos. Placht & Son, 1904), A 1-12; (b) Standard Blues Pattern.

(a)

The musical score for 'One o' Them Things' is presented in four systems, each with a grand staff (treble and bass clefs). The first system begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The second system continues the melody and accompaniment. The third system includes a first ending bracket labeled '1.' and ends with a piano (*p*) dynamic. The fourth system includes a second ending bracket labeled '2.' and ends with a forte (*f*) dynamic. The piece is in 12/8 time and features characteristic blues phrasing and accompaniment.

(b)

Standard Blues Pattern

|   |    |   |         |   |   |   |                  |   |
|---|----|---|---------|---|---|---|------------------|---|
| / | I  | / | I       | / | I | / | I <sup>b</sup> 7 | / |
|   |    |   |         |   |   |   | (V7 of IV)       |   |
| / | IV | / | IV      | / | I | / | I                | / |
| / | V  | / | V       | / | I | / | I                | / |
|   |    |   | (or IV) |   |   |   | (or V7)          |   |

ending does not correspond exactly to what became the standard blues pattern, the second ending does. Another important feature typical of blues is the parallel melodic structure of the first two phrases (measures 1-4 and 5-8).

Another possible "first" is the "Alabama bound" chorus of Boone's Rag Medley No. II (1909), which may be the earliest publication of "boogie-woogie"<sup>16</sup> (Example VIII-14). The

EXAMPLE VIII-14. "Blind" Boone, Rag Medley No. II (Columbia, Mo.: Allen Music Co., 1909), "I'm Alabama bound."

Slower.

The musical score is written in 2/4 time with a key signature of three flats (B-flat, E-flat, A-flat). It consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system includes the lyrics "I'm Alabama bound." The second system continues the accompaniment. The third system includes the lyrics "I'm Al - a - bam - a bound." The score features a variety of piano textures, including chords and moving lines in both the treble and bass staves.

<sup>15</sup>This point is made by Trebor Tichenor, who includes this piece in his ragtime anthology; see Ragtime Rarities, comp. and with Introduction by Trebor Tichenor (New York: Dover Publications, 1975), p. vii.

<sup>16</sup>Boogie-woogie is a type of blues characterized

usual twelve-measure structure of blues is here compressed to eight measures, but such variants are not uncommon. More significant than this deviation is the piece's adherence to the basic blues harmonic pattern, the extensive use of blue notes, the parallel melodic pattern between the first two phrases (measures 1-2 and 3-4), and the boogie-woogie bass.

To retain perspective, it must be recognized that these passages are exceptions; generally, the blues influence in ragtime prior to 1912 was slight. Proportionally, about 3 percent of the rags of this period have been found to exhibit blues characteristics.

The emergence of blues from the musical subculture in 1912 and its formalization and dispersion through publication altered its relationship with ragtime. The public's growing awareness of blues made it part of the common language of popular music, and as there developed an almost indiscriminate mixing of blues and ragtime, distinctions between the two were frequently clouded.

That W. C. Handy's Memphis Blues was accepted as ragtime (see above, pages 9-10) might seem surprising today, but there was a basis for this perception. Blues were considered to be rags. The cover of the nonvocal, piano version of Memphis Blues designates the piece as "A Southern  

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by a broken-octave bass.

Rag,"<sup>17</sup> and this is not an isolated instance; other publications also indicate a blues-rag mixture in their titles, subtitles, and tempo descriptions: W. C. Handy's Jogo Blues (1913), marked "Tempo di Rag (a la Memphis Blues)"; Harry J. Lincoln's Checkers Rag (Blues or Fox Trot), 1913; Charles L. Cooke's Blame It on the Blues (1914), marked "Tempo di Ragioso"; Theron Bennet's Some Blues (For You All). A Southern Rag (1916); Henry Lodge's Baltimore Blues. Fox Trot Rag (1917).

Musically, too, there was a hybridization. Handy, referring to the genesis of his St. Louis Blues (1914), wrote: "My aim would be to combine ragtime syncopation with a real melody in the spiritual tradition."<sup>18</sup> Ragtime rhythms and other ragtime features are present in numerous other blues as well. The Memphis Blues, for instance, begins with the twelve-bar pattern that is today recognized as standard for blues, but the immediate strophic variant typical of blues is absent; instead, the following section is an unrelated sixteen-measure strain, closely resembling a ragtime strain: tied syncopations, secondary ragtime figures (measures 9-12), a V4/3 opening, and frequent use of a march bass (Example VIII-15). If there were a steadier rhythmic impulse delivered from the bass, this section would be indistinguishable

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<sup>17</sup>The cover is reproduced on the back cover of Ragtimer (March/April 1969).

<sup>18</sup>Handy, Father of the Blues, p. 120.

EXAMPLE VIII-15. W. C. Handy, Memphis Blues (Memphis, Tenn.: Handy Music Co., 1912), B 1-16.

The musical score consists of five systems, each with a piano accompaniment and a vocal line. The piano part is written in a 12/8 time signature with a key signature of one flat (B-flat major). The vocal line is written in a single treble clef. The lyrics are as follows:

System 1:  
 Crump don't low\_ no eas-y rid - ers here.  
 Crump don't low\_ it. ain't goin' have it here.

System 2:  
 Crump don't low\_ no eas-y rid - ers  
 Crump don't low\_ it. ain't goin' have it

System 3:  
 here. We don't care\_ what Mis-ter  
 here.

System 4:  
 Crump don't 'low,\_ We gon - na bar'l - house an - y how, - Mis-ter

System 5:  
*loco*  
 Crump don't low\_ no eas-y rid - ers here.  
 Crump can go\_ and catch his-self some

from a rag. The third strain then returns to the twelve-bar format, but reflects current dance practices, including ragtime, in being in the subdominant key.

Combinations of twelve- and sixteen-bar strains are present in many other blues publications of the period. One such piece, A Bunch of Blues (1915), has two strains in the twelve-bar blues pattern and three in the sixteen-measure form of ragtime, the latter sections using blue notes and ragtime rhythms (Example VIII-16). The frequency with which pieces of this type occurred during the 1910s clearly demonstrates the significance that ragtime had on blues at that time.<sup>19</sup>

EXAMPLE VIII-16. H. Alf Kelley and J. Paul Wyer, A Bunch of Blues. Fox Trot (Chicago: Will Rossiter, 1915), "Ship Wreck Blues," 1-7.

<sup>19</sup>The reader interested in pursuing this line of investigation is referred to W. C. Handy, ed., Blues: An Anthology, 3d ed., rev., edited by Jerry Silverman; Introduction by Abbe Niles; Illustrations by Miguel Covarrubias (New York: Macmillan Co., Collier Books, 1972). See, especially, Handy's Memphis Blues, St. Louis Blues, Jogo Blues,

The growing popularity of blues undoubtedly led some composers and publishers to use the term simply as a sales device, with little or no musical justification. Cooke's Blame It on the Blues. A Weary Blue, for instance, can claim the use of blue notes in the A strain, but nowhere else, and is structurally and rhythmically ("Tempo di Ragioso") a typical rag (Example VIII-17). Other pieces, such as J. Bodewalt Lampe's Harmony Blues (1917), are totally devoid of any musical basis for the blues label.

EXAMPLE VIII-17. Charles L. Cooke, Blame It on the Blues (New York: Jerome H. Remick, 1914), Introduction 6-8, A 1-7.

On the ragtime side of this transaction, the blues influence, which was so slight before 1912, after that date increases markedly. The actual percentage of identifiable

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Beale Street Blues, and Ole Miss (pp. 70, 82, 78, 116, and 179); Will Nash's Snakey Blues (p. 108); Spencer Williams's Tishomingo Blues (p. 120); and Douglas Williams's Hooking Cow Blues (p. 123).

rags with strong blues influence rises to about 15 percent by 1915, and if the substantial number of hybrids going under the blues or fox trot labels were considered, the proportion would be much higher. As earlier, blue notes are the most common blues element found in rags (Example VIII-18).

EXAMPLE VIII-18. (a) J. Lamb, Cleopatra Rag, C 5-8;  
 (b) C. Thompson, Lily Rag, A 1-8.

(a)

(b)

Occasionally other blues influences are also present. In Luckey Roberts's Pork and Beans (1913), the blues-suggesting

flatted fifths may have generated a misprint for, although the strain is of sixteen measures, a double bar is placed after the twelfth measure (Example VIII-19). The blues

EXAMPLE VIII-19. Luckey Roberts, Pork and Beans (New York: Jos. W. Stern, 1913), D 9-16.

influence on the C theme of Joplin's Magnetic Rag (1914) is of more substance; in addition to blue notes, the appropriate harmonic-formal design is followed. The strain is of twenty-four measures--unusual for a rag--and is broken into uneven segments of fourteen and ten measures. The first fourteen measures parallel the twelve-measure form of the blues, with a two-measure interpolation extending the subdominant area (Example VIII-18).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>This is not Joplin's first use of the blues form. In his opera Treemonisha (1911), measures 21-24 of "A Real Slow Drag" follow the pattern of the first eight measures of a blues.

EXAMPLE VIII-20. S. Joplin, Magnetic Rag (New York: Scott Joplin Publishing Co., 1914): C 1-14, C' 1-2; (b) Analysis.

(a)

The musical score consists of four systems of piano and treble clef staves. The first system begins with a piano dynamic marking (*mf*) and includes a *cresc.* marking. The second system also features a *mf* marking. The fourth system includes a section labeled 'A' with a *mf* marking. The score is heavily annotated with fingerings (numbers 1-5) and articulation marks (accents) throughout both staves of each system.

(b)

Analysis of C 1-14

|   |    |   |    |   |    |   |                  |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|----|---|----|---|----|---|------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| / | I  | / | I  | / | I  | / | I <sup>b</sup> 7 | / |   |   |   |   |
| / | IV | / | IV | / | IV | / | IV               | / | I | / | I | / |
| / | V  | / | V  | / | I  | / | V7               | / |   |   |   |   |

As with the dotted fox trots, the mixture of blues and rags enriched the ragtime language, but in so doing detracted from the distinctiveness of the latter. Not that

the mixture was universally applied to ragtime; as long as rags were being written there remained conventional samples without a trace of blues. But with the increase of blues and the fading of ragtime there was also a growing proportion of hybrids, of pieces that fit both categories, of bluesy rags and raggy blues.

### Jazz

Jazz, in its broadest and most inclusive sense, replaced ragtime as the most prominent American popular music. The blurred distinctions between jazz and ragtime, so evident in articles from about 1917 on (see above, pages 33-35), were matched by an indiscriminate mixing of terminology in the published music, a single piece sometimes bearing the multiple labels of rag, fox trot, blues, and jazz; for example: Kee-to-Kee (A Modulating Rag). Fox Trot, marked "Moderato a la Jazz."

As presented in published form, the music is usually characterized by a dotted rhythm, either with or without syncopation, and is indistinguishable from fox trots and late, dotted versions of ragtime (Example VIII-21). Not all samples are dotted, though. In some instances, even the most conventional rags may be placed in the jazz category. Henry Lodge's Bounding Buck (1918), an ordinary undotted, tied-syncopation rag, is subtitled both "A Rag Dance" and "Fox Trot," and is concluded with a two-measure coda marked

"Jazz Break."<sup>21</sup> In an extreme case, Arthur Pryor's A Coon Band Contest (1899)--a typical early rag using untied syncopation--was reissued in 1918, unaltered except for a new, more fashionable descriptive designation: "Jazz Fox Trot" (Example VIII-22).

EXAMPLE VIII-21. (a) David Comer, Hide and Seek. Jazz Fox Trot (London: B. Feldman & CO., 1916), A 1-4; (b) Platzmann and Eastwood, Kee-to-Kee, A 1-4.

(a)

§ FOX-TROT.



(b)



It is clear that the piano sheet music bearing the label "jazz" does not reflect the musical phenomenon which

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<sup>21</sup>This is apparently an example of what jazz clarinetist Garvin Bushell (b. 1902) has referred to as the earliest musical application of the term "jazz": "We didn't call the music jazz when I was growing up . . . except for the final tag of a number. After the cadence was closed there'd be a one bar break and the second bar was the tag --5, 6, 5, 1. Sol, la, sol, do. Da da--da DUM! That was called the jazz." See Hentoff, "Garvin Bushell," p. 11.

EXAMPLE VIII-22. A. Pryor, A Coon Band Contest. Jazz Fox Trot (New York: Emil Ascher, 1899, 1918), A 1-4.



was fascinating so much of the American and European public; it has neither the heightened rhythmic variety mentioned by the commentators of the time nor any suggestion of the improvised counterpoint which has come to be known as "Dixieland jazz." These publications have nothing to distinguish them from the various styles of ragtime being written at the same time, and this very fact of identity underlines the loss of ragtime's uniqueness.

#### Novelty Piano

Few composers were still writing ragtime--in name and in style--in the 1920s. The 1920s were represented primarily by the new syncopated art of jazz and, to a lesser extent, the semivirtuosic style of "novelty piano."

Some current writers refer to novelty piano as "novelty ragtime," suggesting that it falls within the province of ragtime.<sup>22</sup> But this latter term is of recent

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<sup>22</sup>The foremost promoter of the term "novelty ragtime" is David Jasen, whose views on the subject have been accepted by most writers on ragtime. See by Jasen, Recorded Ragtime, p. 5; "Zez Confrey: Creator of the Novelty Rag," Rag Times 5

origin, and was not used by composers of the style--neither by Zez Confrey (1895-1971), with whom the style is most closely associated, nor by his contemporaries. If anything, Confrey was allied with the popular conception of jazz rather than ragtime. In his book So This Is Jazz (1926), Henry Osgood stated: "It was only when Zez Confrey came along with his ingenious 'Kitten on the Keys' that a genuinely pianistic idiom for jazz was established"; elsewhere in the book he headed a chapter "Piano Jazz: Those Kittenish Keys!"<sup>23</sup> Similarly, in 1927 Aaron Copland found the jazz age typified by Confrey's Stumbling (1922) and Kitten on the Keys (1921), and Gilbert Seldes expressed the same opinion.<sup>24</sup>

It must be granted that novelty piano has its roots in ragtime. Certainly, some of Confrey's earliest pieces closely correspond to both conventional and later rag styles. The B strain of his Kitten on the Keys follows the established patterns of tied-synco-pation ragtime, and even the dotted figures of the A section fall within the later dotted rag style, combining with the secondary ragtime figure (Example VIII-23). My Pet<sup>25</sup> also manifests secondary ragtime traits,

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(September 1971): 4-5; Liner notes on Zez Confrey Played by John Jensen, Genesis GS 1051.

<sup>23</sup>Osgood, So This Is Jazz, pp. 32, 76.

<sup>24</sup>Copland, "Jazz Structure and Influence," pp. 11-12; Seldes, Seven Lively Arts, pp. 89, 91.

<sup>25</sup>Both My Pet and Kitten on the Keys bear copyright

EXAMPLE VIII-23. Zez Confrey, Kitten on the Keys (New York: Mills Music, 1921): (a) B 1-4; (b) Vamp, A 1-4.

(a)

(b)

but here, instead of the accentual shift within the three-unit group--the general characteristic of secondary ragtime --the notated accents enforce the effect of a temporary change to triple meter (Example VIII-24a). While other

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registrations of 11 March 1921, the earliest copyrights obtained by Confrey. David Jasen, however, reports possession of a piano roll of My Pet made by the composer in 1918; this suggests the possibility that Kitten on the Keys also dates from several years earlier, a hypothesis supported by the piece's adherence to ragtime figurations. One can speculate that if these works had been published in 1918 rather than 1921 they might have been called rags.

pieces suggest roots in the secondary ragtime pattern, what appears more significant is Confrey's inclination to expand and develop this device beyond its ragtime context (Example VIII-24b-d). His link with ragtime becomes even more tenuous as his pieces develop in new directions, foreign from ragtime (Example VIII-25).<sup>26</sup> In addition to the nonrag appearance of these works, the brilliant, high-speed performance demanded by Confrey's music is at odds with the very spirit of the dance-oriented, moderate tempo of ragtime.

What has been said about Confrey applies equally to most other composers whose music was published during the 1920s as "novelty piano." There are occasional uses of ragtime figuration, especially in the early 1920s. But ties to the ragtime tradition became increasingly sparse in the course of the century, and to label such pieces as "rags" falsifies the meanings of both ragtime and novelty piano (Example VIII-26).

Novelty piano is clearly an outgrowth of ragtime piano and it is therefore not surprising that certain resemblances should exist, especially in the early novelty works. But as the composers of this later music abandoned most of the ragtime gestures in developing a new style, and

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<sup>26</sup>The pieces in this and in the following examples are cited because they are considered to be rags by some present-day writers, and are listed in Jasen's Recorded Ragtime.

EXAMPLE VIII-24. Z. Confrey: (a) My Pet (New York: Mills Music, 1921), A 6-10; (b) Greenwich Witch (New York: Mills Music, 1921), B 1-4; (c) Stumbling: Paraphrase (New York: Leo Feist, 1922), B 1-4; (d) Stumbling, B' 1-4.

(a)

Musical score for (a) My Pet. The score is in treble and bass clefs, with a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 3/4 time signature. It features a series of chords and melodic lines. A triplet of eighth notes is marked with a '3' above it. The text 'N.B.' is written above the staff. The piece concludes with a fermata over a final chord.

(b)

Musical score for (b) Greenwich Witch. The score is in treble and bass clefs, with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a 3/4 time signature. It features a series of chords and melodic lines. The text 'stacc.' is written below the staff. The piece concludes with a fermata over a final chord.

(c)

Musical score for (c) Stumbling: Paraphrase. The score is in treble and bass clefs, with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a 3/4 time signature. It features a series of chords and melodic lines. The text 'mf' is written below the staff. The piece concludes with a fermata over a final chord.

(d)

Musical score for (d) Stumbling. The score is in treble and bass clefs, with a key signature of two flats (Bb, Eb) and a 3/4 time signature. It features a series of chords and melodic lines. The piece concludes with a fermata over a final chord.

EXAMPLE VIII-25. Z. Confrey: (a) Coaxing the Piano (New York: Mills Music, 1922), A 1-4; (b) Dizzy Fingers (New York: Mills Music, 1923), A 1-8; (c) Jack in the Box (New York: Mills Music, 1927), A 15-16, B 1-3.

(a)

Musical score for 'Coaxing the Piano' (Example VIII-25a). The score is written for piano in G major, 2/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The right hand has a melodic line with several triplets and slurs. The left hand provides a steady accompaniment with chords and single notes. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking.

(b)

Musical score for 'Dizzy Fingers' (Example VIII-25b). The score is written for piano in G major, 2/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The tempo is marked *Fresto*. The right hand has a highly technical melodic line with many slurs and fingerings. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking.

(c)

Musical score for 'Jack in the Box' (Example VIII-25c). The score is written for piano in G major, 2/4 time. It features a treble and bass staff. The right hand has a melodic line with many slurs and fingerings. The left hand has a steady accompaniment. The piece begins with a piano (*p*) dynamic marking.

EXAMPLE VIII-26. (a) Billy Mayerl, Virginia Creeper (London: Keith Prowse Music Publishing Co., 1925), A 3-12; (b) Mayerl, Jazzaristrix (London: Keith Prowse Music Publishing Co., 1925), A 3-8; (c) J. S. Zamecnik, Polly (New York: Sam Fox Publishing Co., 1926), A 1-6.

(a)

Musical score for 'Virginia Creeper' by Billy Mayerl. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. The first system features a treble clef with a melodic line containing triplets and a bass clef with a harmonic accompaniment. The second system includes a key signature change to one flat (B-flat major) and a 'cresc.' marking in the bass line. The third system continues the melodic and harmonic development.

(b)

Musical score for 'Jazzaristrix' by Billy Mayerl. The score is in 2/4 time and consists of two systems of piano accompaniment. The first system features a treble clef with a melodic line and a bass clef with a harmonic accompaniment. The second system includes a key signature change to one flat (B-flat major) and a 'mf' marking in the bass line.

(c)

avoided the ragtime label in most of their publications (there are a few exceptions) there can be little justification for applying the artificial, and newly invented designation of "novelty ragtime."

#### Other Applications and Misapplications

The inclination of some writers to expand the orbit of ragtime is not restricted to novelty piano; the term "ragtime" has been applied also to later jazz piano, most notably to the style loosely referred to as "stride." In the appendix of They All Played Ragtime, for instance, the listing of ragtime composers and compositions includes stride pieces by Fats Waller and the later works--extending into the 1940s--of James P. Johnson.<sup>27</sup> In his early days Johnson

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<sup>27</sup>Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, pp. 288-89, 295-96.

did work within the sphere of the current ragtime fashions and to this extent his personal manner was grounded in ragtime. But his language, expanding within the context of later jazz styles, outgrew the restricted conventions of ragtime. Placing all of his music in the "ragtime" category overlooks this stylistic development and inappropriately distends ragtime's coverage. Such overextensions of terminology lead inevitably to the type of misunderstanding evidenced in a recent textbook in which jazz pianist Art Tatum is included in the ragtime category.<sup>28</sup> The practice of forcing virtually every pre-bop jazz piano style into the ragtime orbit misrepresents historical fact, serves no practical objective, and results only in confusion.<sup>29</sup> Rather than invent new encumbrances for "ragtime," a term already heavily weighted with a variety of meanings, a more sensible and useful practice would be to restrict applications to the word's original, more limited connotations.

#### Summary

From the late 1890s through the first decade of the

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<sup>28</sup>Paul O. W. Tanner and Maurice Gerow, A Study of Jazz, 2d ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown Co., 1973), p. 53.

<sup>29</sup>Apparently even be-bop is not to be denied the "ragtime" label. An outline for a book in preparation--This Is Ragtime, by Terry Waldo--indicates the inclusion of bop pianist Thelonious Monk. See "Book Proposal," Ragtimer (July/August 1975): 15.

twentieth century, piano ragtime developed a strong identity through the consistent and persistent use of a few distinctive rhythmic gestures: tied and untied syncopations, and secondary ragtime. In the second decade of the twentieth century, as ragtime merged with, and was influenced by new dance music and music styles--trots, jazz, and blues--its language was broadened. Admitting a greater and more prominent use of dotted and unsyncopated rhythms, becoming closely enmeshed with jazz and the idiosyncratic colorations of blues, ragtime enlarged its scope beyond its formerly restricted and easily recognized bounds. As a result, by the advent of the 1920s ragtime had all but ceased to exist as a distinctive style.

In recent years there has been a trend among commentators on ragtime to expand the genre's orbit beyond its original stylistic limitations. The piano style known as "novelty piano" during the 1920s has been renamed "novelty ragtime," and several jazz piano styles have similarly been forced into the ragtime category. This reclassification seems ill-advised as it is without historical or musical justification and thereby tends to obscure stylistic distinctions.

PART THREE

THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

## CHAPTER IX

### THE HISTORIOGRAPHY OF RAGTIME

The various ways in which ragtime has been perceived in the past eighty years is revealed in the literature about it. Part One surveyed the attitudes expressed about ragtime by its contemporaries and established that, for the public, this genre was represented primarily by the song. The present section, Part Three, examines how these attitudes have changed since the ragtime era: Chapter IX traces the views as they evolved from 1930 to the present; Chapter X evaluates how modern writers have approached a major theoretical issue, the subdivision of piano ragtime into several stylistic categories.

#### Vocal Ragtime Versus Piano Ragtime

There were fewer ragtime articles written in the 1930s than at any other time in the music's eighty-year history. Of those writers who did concern themselves with this subject, most retained the attitudes of previous decades in considering the song as ragtime's major form. The chapter on ragtime in Goldberg's Tin Pan Alley is concerned primarily with coon songs and show music.<sup>1</sup> The discussion

of piano ragtime is restricted to some brief references to Ben Harney, the "forgotten" Scott Joplin, and Kerry Mills.<sup>2</sup>

In Alain L. Locke's The Negro and His Music ragtime is linked specifically to the stage, the title of the chapter being "Ragtime and Negro Musical Comedy: 1895-1925."<sup>3</sup> The main manifestation of ragtime is viewed as vocal music, the piano phase being relegated to a secondary and mostly corrupt role:

What passed for ragtime was not the full rhythmic and harmonic idiom of the genuine article as used, for example, by Will Marion Cook and the Negro musical comedy arrangers who had chorus and orchestra at their disposal, but the thin and rather superficial eccentric rhythm as it could be imitated on the piano or in the necessarily simplified "accompaniments" of popular sheet music of the day.<sup>4</sup>

Exceptions to the view of piano ragtime as a false form are made only for the music of Scott Joplin, Kerry Mills, and, ironically, Irving Berlin:

Still, a few rag artists, like the famous Scott Joplin wrote real rag compositions like his "Maple Leaf Rag" (1898) and "Palm Leaf Rag" (1903). Also Kerry Mills, with his "Georgia Camp Meeting," (1897); "Rastus on Parade," "Whistlin' Rufus" set the pace that was to catch the whole country and culminate in that instru-

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<sup>1</sup>Goldberg, "The Rise of Tin Pan Alley: Ragtime," Tin Pan Alley, pp. 139-77.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 147, 174.

<sup>3</sup>Alain L. Locke, The Negro and His Music (Washington: Associates in Negro Folk Education, 1936; reprint ed., New York: Arno Press & New York Times, 1969), pp. 57-69.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 62.

mental classic of matured ragtime--Irving Berlin's "Alexander's Ragtime Band."<sup>5</sup>

Goldberg's impressions of ragtime are essentially repeated by Helen L. Kaufman in From Jehovah to Jazz.<sup>6</sup> For Kaufman the focal point of ragtime is Irving Berlin and one of the highlights is musical comedy composer Jerome Kern (1885-1945). To piano ragtime, she devotes only one paragraph:

One or two instrumental pieces are worthy of mention. A negro named Scott Joplin produced the clever Maple Leaf Rag, which was something new in piano ragtime. A white man, Zez Confrey, wrote Kitten on the Keys, a brilliant study in chasing a melody up and down the keyboard. . . . He has graduated from ragtime to jazz, but has never duplicated the sensational success of Kitten on the Keys.<sup>7</sup>

The first significant shift in orientation from the vocal medium to the piano is in Winthrop Sargeant's thoroughly competent study of jazz, Jazz: Hot and Hybrid.<sup>8</sup> Unques-

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<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Helen L. Kaufman, "Blacks and Blues and Ragtime: The Missing Link," From Jehovah to Jazz: Music in America from Psalmody to the Present Day (Dodd, Mead & Co., 1937), pp. 240-54. This chapter is reprinted in part in a school publication as "From Ragtime to Swing: A Short History of Popular Music," Scholastic, 30 April 1938, pp. 29-30.

<sup>7</sup>Kaufman, From Jehovah to Jazz, pp. 248-49.

<sup>8</sup>The 3d ed. (1975) of this book has already been quoted above in Chapters IV and VII. As the present chapter is concerned with the historical sequence of commentary, the original edition (New York: Arrow Editions, 1938) will be cited. For reference, the corresponding pages of the current edition will be placed in parentheses.

tionably, his conception of ragtime as a pianistic expression contrasts sharply with the published opinions of the time:

Ragtime was essentially an instrumental art. Few of the best rags offered melodies that could be sung. None of the really good ones had vocal refrains or were encumbered with words. The song writers attempted for years to capitalize on the trend by writing vocal tunes in which texts extolling the virtues of the dance were accompanied by slightly "ragged" piano accompaniments. The results were usually feeble imitations. One need only examine the so-called ragtime songs of such writers as Irving Berlin and George M. Cohan to be struck with their unimaginativeness in comparison with the real rags of the period. The rags were written by instrumentalists who knew their instruments intimately and exploited their practical potentialities. Few of the big commercial names of Tin Pan Alley knew enough about music in the practical sense to turn out acceptable rags.

The dominating instrument of the period was the piano, and the good rag composers were usually pianists.<sup>9</sup>

Placed alongside the writings of his contemporaries in the 1930s, Sargeant's views are extraordinary. His elevation of piano ragtime and scornful rejection of the Irving Berlin and Tin Pan Alley conception of vocal ragtime anticipate attitudes that have since become basic axioms for most ragtime enthusiasts. Moreover, his discussion of piano ragtime is not restricted to Scott Joplin and Kerry Mills; in his analyses of jazz rhythm he draws upon a broad spectrum of piano rags by various composers, highlighting tied and untied syncopations (not using that terminology) and secondary ragtime.<sup>10</sup> Although ragtime is not Sargeant's major con-

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<sup>9</sup>Sargeant, Jazz, p. 111 (p. 136).

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 37-46, 104-19 (pp. 58-64, 128-46).

cern in this book, his observations of the music are far more perceptive than most analyses that have since been written.

Sargeant's interest in piano ragtime was probably due to his concern with true jazz, mainly an instrumental form, rather than with general popular music. It is not surprising, then, that subsequent writers on popular music failed to recognize the importance of Sargeant's views, and for the next few years the vocal ragtime slant continued to dominate the literature.

In 1939 a major book on popular music appeared, The Story of the House of Witmark: From Ragtime to Swingtime, written by Isidore Witmark, one of the pioneering music publishers in the early days of ragtime, in collaboration with Isaac Goldberg. Giving an insider's view of the popular music business, the volume offers a wealth of information,<sup>11</sup> but in its views on ragtime the main focus is still on vocal music.

This persuasion carries into the early 1940s. In an article from the beginning of that decade, "Negro Producers of Ragtime," the author mentions Scott Joplin and Tom Turpin, but again the emphasis is on the vocal idiom.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>See citations above, pp. 50, 66, 68, 122, 127, 130.

<sup>12</sup>Written in 1940 by Sterling Brown; printed in The Negro in Music and Art, International Library of Negro Life and History, vol. 16 (New York: Publishers Co., 1967),

As a final expression of this view, a master's thesis from 1942, "Ragtime," delineates the characteristics of ragtime, based on a study of the Maple Leaf Rag and fifty coon songs.<sup>13</sup>

### The Ragtime Revival

The "ragtime revival," the conclusive shift to a piano conception of ragtime and the opening of an era of ragtime research and performance, began in 1943. Writing in Record Changer, an inauspicious pamphlet concerned--significantly--with jazz discography, Roy Carew<sup>14</sup> started a trend that was to develop into the first intensive wave of ragtime research. Finding a favorable response to his articles on Tony Jackson and Jelly Roll Morton, Carew turned his attention to Scott Joplin and others, bringing to light biographical information never before available in print.<sup>15</sup> Rightfully, Carew should be considered the

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pp. 49-50.

<sup>13</sup>Laura Pratt Howard, "Ragtime" (M.M Thesis, Eastman School of Music, University of Rochester, 1942).

<sup>14</sup>See above, p. 14.

<sup>15</sup>The following is a chronological list of important ragtime articles by Carew, or relating to him as a writer of ragtime history. Carew, "New Orleans Recollections," Record Changer (February 1943): 28-29; Jelly Roll Morton, "A Fragment of an Autobiography" [a MS owned by Carew], Record Changer (March 1944): 15-16 and (April 1944): 27-28; Carew and Don E. Fowler, "Scott Joplin: Overlooked Genius," Record Changer (September 1944): 12-14, (October 1944): 10-12, and

first ragtime historian.

As interest was stimulated by Carew's writings, other writers began to publish their reminiscences and the results of their researches in Record Changer and other jazz magazines. The ragtime revival was on.

Mister Jelly Roll and They All Played Ragtime

Consummating the researches of the 1940s are two monumental books which appeared in 1950: Alan Lomax's Mister Jelly Roll: The Fortunes of Jelly Roll Morton, New Orleans Creole and "Inventor of Jazz," and Rudi Blesh's and Harriet Janis's They All Played Ragtime. Mister Jelly Roll was an outgrowth of Morton's recording sessions at the Library of Congress in 1938, in which the pianist performed, sang, and related anecdotes.<sup>16</sup> As a biography of one of the

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(December 1944): 10-11; Carew and S. Brunson Campbell, "Sedalia . . . Missouri, Cradle of Ragtime," Record Changer 4 (May 1945): 3; Carew, "Euphonic Sounds," Record Changer 4 (December 1945): 40-41; Carew, "Treemonisha," Record Changer 5 (October 1946): 17; Carew and Campbell, "How I Became . . . a Pioneer Rag Man of the 1890's," Record Changer 6 (April 1947): 12; Carew, "Scott Joplin," Jazz Record, no. 60 (November 1947), pp. 6-7; Carew, "Shephard N. Edmonds," Record Changer (December 1947): 13-14; Carew, "Assorted Rags," Record Changer 8 (February 1949): 6; George W. Kay, "Basin Street Stroller" [referring to Carew], Jazz Journal 4 (June 1951): 1-3, (August 1951): 1-2, and (September 1951): 1-2; Carew, "Hodge Podge," Jazz Report 2 (September 1961): 3-5; Kay, "Reminiscing in Ragtime: An Interview with Roy Carew," Jazz Journal 8 (November 1964): 8-9; [Carew], "A Tribute to Roy Carew: Not Forgetting Jelly Roll," Jazz Journal (May 1968): 22-23.

<sup>16</sup>For the contents of these recordings, see Lomax,

most flamboyant and enterprising figures in ragtime-jazz history, the book goes beyond the range of ragtime considerations; based primarily on the words of Morton, whose boasting was as legendary as his musical talent,<sup>17</sup> the work can hardly be considered objective. Still, however one-sided, this book provides a unique and invaluable portrait of the times.

Using Scott Joplin and Classic Ragtime (a term to be explored in the next Chapter) as a fulcrum, They All Played Ragtime provides a broader view of ragtime history. As the first book devoted entirely to this subject, it contains an impressive amount of historical information, joining the investigative efforts of the 1940s to extensive new researches and interviews with surviving ragtimers. In its main objective, the study of the personalities and interrelationships of the period, They All Played Ragtime is unmatched and has become a prime source for later works on the subject. In other respects, though, Blesh and Janis are less successful. Their comments on the music are of limited value because of their personal, intuitive, and

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Mister Jelly Roll, pp. 307-12.

<sup>17</sup>Note Morton's self-proclaimed title, "Inventor of Jazz." As one example of how his contemporaries regarded his exaggerations, song writer Shelton Brooks (1886-1975), who was acquainted with Morton, Jackson, Joplin, and other ragtimers, said upon hearing Morton's claim of having originated the Tiger Rag: "That Morton was the biggest liar of all time"; see Whitcomb, "Shelton Brooks."

nontechnical approach. Even more open to question is the entanglement of fact and speculation, which is often difficult or impossible to unravel. There are some overlays of fiction that are sufficiently obvious to be unproblematic:

He thought of the young Scott Hayden. . . . Joplin thought of Arthur Marshall . . . ; he thought of these two boys whom he had befriended, and some of the warmth he had given them came back to warm his chilled heart.

But other passages, such as the following commentary on an important question of performance practice, are more troublesome:

In St. Louis a new cosmopolitan style had arisen that featured a staccato speed technique and brilliant display. . . . So it came about that many seized every opportunity to cajole Joplin into playing and then took delight in publicly topping him.

This description could well be true and may have been related to the authors by a witness of such scenes. But the failure to attribute the testimony provides reason for doubt, especially as the passage ends with another sentence suggestive of a novelist's omniscience:

It is strange that this should have disturbed Joplin so deeply, but he came from the playing school himself, and he took it harder than anyone knew; . . .<sup>18</sup>

In defense of the book, it must be stated that however the scholar may protest at these shortcomings, They All Played Ragtime was not written to satisfy academic

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<sup>18</sup>These three quotations from Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime; in order, pp. 80, 65-66, 66.

tastes; it was designed as a rhapsodic, partisan, and--for many--inspiring popular history. By these criteria the book has been supremely successful and is deservedly referred to as "the bible of ragtime."

#### Ragtime Fan Clubs

In the 1950s rag researchers were joined by an ever-growing legion of ragtime pianists; occasionally, both dimensions of interest were joined in a single individual, resulting in such ventures as Max Morath's entertaining and informative telecasts for National Educational Television, programs that must have considerably benefited the cause of ragtime. By 1962 two publications devoted exclusively to ragtime had appeared: the Ragtime Review (1962-66), of Saint Louis, and the Ragtime Society [Newsletter] (1962-), of Toronto.<sup>19</sup> In 1967 a third publication, Rag Times (1967-), issued by the Maple Leaf Club of Los Angeles, entered the field. (The influence of They All Played Ragtime, with its emphasis on Classic Ragtime, is evident in all three periodicals. Ragtime Review was "Published . . . in the interest of Classic Ragtime," and the two other organizations share the inscriptions: "Dedicated to the Preservation of Classical [or Classic] Ragtime.") These publications signify the accelerated interest in ragtime, providing additional out-

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<sup>19</sup>In 1967 the newsletter was renamed Ragtimer.

lets for relevant commentary. Necessarily broad to satisfy the diverse interests of members and subscribers, the quality of these magazines is uneven; articles range from trivia to contributions of real consequence. The subject matter includes reports on activities of current ragtime performers, book and record reviews, reprints of music<sup>20</sup> and articles from the ragtime period, musical analyses, and results of recent historical investigations. In helping to preserve and distribute the materials of ragtime, these organizations, composed primarily of amateurs (in the best sense of the word), have provided an invaluable service to students of American culture.

#### The Scott Joplin Edition and Current Scholarship

The publication in 1971 by the New York Public Library of The Collected Works of Scott Joplin had far-reaching repercussions. Sponsored by one of the great repositories of scholarship, this collection brought to ragtime a respectability and acceptance far beyond that which could be offered by scattered fan clubs and magazines. In this impressive new format, Joplin's music suddenly reached musicians who had been previously untouched by the burgeon-

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<sup>20</sup>The Ragtime Society offers for sale photocopies of a large selection of out-of-print rags. The Maple Leaf Club has located and distributed to members the La Mertha/Joplin collaboration Snoring Sampson, which is absent from the Collected Works of Scott Joplin.

ing activities of enthusiasts for the previous three decades; the newly aroused interest resulted in concert performances and a new wave of historical investigations. At least indirectly, this edition led to the use of Joplin's music in a popular movie score, bringing to ragtime an unprecedented amount of attention (for recent years).<sup>21</sup> While commercial interests, playing upon the popular fad, have tended to distort the perspective of ragtime, such distortions are outweighed by the positive benefits: a wider public for the music, a new surge of research and performance activity, and an increased availability of reprint editions of ragtime music by other composers. The full impact of this daring publishing venture by the New York Public Library is yet to be completely gauged.

Within two years of the new Joplin edition, three ragtime projects, which promised to be major scholarly contributions, were completed. David Jasen's Recorded Ragtime, 1897-1958 is an almost impeccable discography, the

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<sup>21</sup>It would be incorrect, though, to assume that the popular record-buying public that made Joplin's rag The Entertainer a best-seller was aware of the historical aspects of ragtime. In an informal survey of students in general, introductory music classes at Herbert H. Lehman College in the spring of 1975, the present writer found that most students thought The Sting--the name of the movie in which the music was used, and the name by which The Entertainer is popularly known today--was composed by Marvin Hamlisch, who was given an Academy Award for arranging the film score. Of the minority of students who knew the name Scott Joplin, few realized that he was not a current figure.

fruition of many years of assiduous collecting. The book lists about twenty-two hundred 78 r.p.m. recordings, arranged alphabetically by the approximately nine hundred titles cited; record numbers and, in most cases, dates of commercial release are included. A separate section lists the represented compositions, with the exact date of copyright registration, under the respective composers. For each composer, where the information is known, dates and race are given. While one might not always agree with the author's conception of what constitutes ragtime, this issue is an area of interpretation for which there is no single solution. As the book stands, it is a unique and valuable reference tool which few would be able to duplicate.

A second book from 1973, Schafer's and Riedel's The Art of Ragtime: Form and Meaning of an Original Black American Art, is of little value to anyone seriously interested in this subject. Promoted by a university press as the "first extensive musicological analysis of ragtime,"<sup>22</sup> the book reveals competence in neither historical research nor in musical analysis. There is a notable lack of original research as the historical material and points of view are taken almost entirely from They All Played Ragtime. The bibliography, while fairly extensive, repeats numerous

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<sup>22</sup>Schafer and Riedel, Art of Ragtime, dust jacket blurb.

errors found in earlier bibliographic listings--primarily Merriam's Bibliography of Jazz<sup>23</sup>--raising the serious question of whether the authors actually examined many of the works they cite. The musical discussions are equally flawed. Conclusions are based on an inadequate, narrow sampling of the literature, one that could hardly be considered as representative, and the actual analyses can be described only as a caricature of musicology. In contrast to the promotional claims made for the book, the authors make a virtual admission of their limited view of musical analysis:

The sense of continuity and unity within a rag is probably, in the end, inexplicable. . . . Nor does a piano rag yield to the same sort of analysis which can be applied to a composition in, say, sonata form.

The ragtime composer simply was not concerned with the problem of sonata-like development of musical themes.<sup>24</sup>

It is unfortunate that Art of Ragtime has been welcomed with such acclaim,<sup>25</sup> for it does not in any sense represent what

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<sup>23</sup>Alan P. Merriam, A Bibliography of Jazz, assisted by Robert J. Benford (Philadelphia: American Folklore Society, 1954; reprint ed., New York: Kraus Reprint, 1970).

<sup>24</sup>Schafer and Riedel, Art of Ragtime, pp. 74-75. The concern with what ragtime is not is also found elsewhere in the book, along with a totally inappropriate and questionable comparison with sonata form: "The only connection between rag and the sonata form is that the first section of the rag uses the da capo form which is also the form of the third movement of many sonatas and symphonies: minuet-trio-minuet and scherzo-trio-scherzo" (p. 60). This, of course, is not a "connection." The authors confuse sonata form--the inner structure of an individual movement--with an unrelated aspect of a multimovement sonata composition.

musicology can contribute to the understanding of music, or of culture in general.

A third work, a Ph.D. dissertation, "The Life and Works of Scott Joplin,"<sup>26</sup> necessarily leans heavily on They All Played Ragtime for biographical data, but also uncovers additional facts and makes use of more recent investigations and interviews. The "works" portion of the study, while comprising three quarters of the thesis, is less illuminating. Perhaps this deficiency is a reflection of the author's apparent animosity toward musical analysis:

It must be understood that to do a traditional analysis of Joplin's complete works would add more to this paper than is intended, and such analysis would probably distract from the sounds of the works.<sup>27</sup>

Style analysis in the musicological tradition is not particularly suited to the study of ragtime.<sup>28</sup>

The works of Joplin, then, still await thorough, perceptive commentary.

Peter Gammond's Scott Joplin and the Ragtime Era,<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>For favorable evaluations, see Dick Zimmerman, Rag Times 7 (September 1973): 4-5; Allen MacInnes, Ragtimer (September/October 1973): 8-9; Bill Long, Ragtimer (November/December 1973): 6-8; Frank Conroy, New York Times Book Review, 3 February 1974, sec. 7, pp. 4-5; Wolfgang Suppan, Jazzforschung 6/7 (1974/75): 279-80. Additional comments critical of Art of Ragtime will be presented in Chapter X.

<sup>26</sup>Addison W. Reed (University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1973).

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. vii.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

published in December 1975, is one more book to emanate from the present ragtime revival. Gammond, considering They All Played Ragtime and Art of Ragtime to be scholarly works directed toward the specialist, proposes to fill the need for a book written for the general reader.<sup>30</sup> Actually, these assumptions are all incorrect, and They All Played Ragtime has managed to fascinate nonspecialists for the past quarter-century, a feat that Gammond's book is not likely to match. With long stretches of pages enumerating a sampling of the yearly ragtime output from 1896 to 1930, and additional pages of the author's impressions of each of Joplin's works, much of the book is virtually unreadable. The rest is an inadequate condensation of They All Played Ragtime and Art of Ragtime. (The author is apparently unaware of Reed's dissertation on Joplin.) There is no original research, little awareness of the literature--old or recent--about ragtime, and no new insights. This book is a barren, worthless, commercial exploitation of the current interest in ragtime.

Despite shortcomings in some of the recent studies, chances for a vastly increased perspective of the genre are promising, for major ragtime projects have reached unprecedented numbers. At the time of this writing there are at

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<sup>29</sup> (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p. 14.

least six other monographs in progress: one on Scott Joplin's piano music, two on Joe Lamb, one on Brun Campbell, and two general histories of ragtime.<sup>31</sup> While results cannot be predicted, the serious interest in ragtime is a good sign; an area of American music history that has long been regarded only superficially is now considered a legitimate subject for investigation.

#### Summary

Continuing from where Part One concluded, Chapter IX surveys the ragtime-oriented literature from 1930 to the present. Interest in ragtime was at its nadir in the 1930s, and of the few writings on the subject, most retained the earlier conception of the ragtime song being the major product of the movement. A notable exception is Winthrop Sargeant's book, Jazz: Hot and Hybrid (1938), which dismisses the ragtime song and raises piano ragtime to prominence. The conclusive shift to a concern with piano ragtime came with the ragtime revival of the 1940s. Writing in jazz magazines, Roy Carew and a few others initiated the

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<sup>31</sup>Rudolph W. Kompanek, "The Piano Music of Scott Joplin" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Rochester); Marjorie Freilich Den, "Joseph F. Lamb: A Ragtime Composer Recalled" (M.A. thesis, Brooklyn College); Joseph Ralph Scotti, "Joe Lamb: A Study of Ragtime's Paradox" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Cincinnati); Paul Lasswell, book on Brun Campbell; Terry Waldo, This Is Ragtime (book); David Jasen and Trebor Tichenor, Ragtime: An Original American Music (book).

serious historical concern with ragtime. In 1950, capping the preliminary research of the previous decade, two major books were published: Blesh's and Janis's They All Played Ragtime and Lomax's Mister Jelly Roll. Both studies are eminently readable and informative, but They All Played Ragtime must be given the major share of credit for spurring a new wave of interest in the genre, resulting, in the 1960s, in the formation of two ragtime societies and one independent ragtime periodical.

The most recent impetus to historiographical and performance activity in this area has been the publication, by the New York Public Library, of The Collected Works of Scott Joplin. The new availability of the music of one of the most accomplished composers of this genre and the involvement of an esteemed scholarly organization have encouraged ragtime studies to reach unprecedented proportions. Some of the results have been disappointing, but at least one valuable book has already been published--Jasen's discographical study, Recorded Ragtime. With the number of serious works now in progress, there is the potential for an emergence of a clearer understanding of ragtime and its place in American culture.

## CHAPTER X

### A CONSIDERATION OF STYLE

For most commentators during the ragtime era, all ragtime was a single phenomenon, a single style; all was "syncopation." There were some who made distinctions, and they will be noted below, but it is primarily the modern writers who have concerned themselves with ragtime style, with the subdivision of ragtime--and especially, piano ragtime--into a variety of categories. Inquiry into the meanings and connotations of these categories, and the historical and stylistic justification (or lack of justification) for them is the object of Chapter X.

#### The Perception of Style

When James P. Johnson recognized that the ragtime he heard in Jersey City differed from the "real" ragtime he later learned in New York, and that the New York pianists played differently from those working in other parts of the country (see pages 126 and 262 above), he was acknowledging the existence of stylistic divisions within the ragtime genre. A similar conclusion was drawn by Jelly Roll Morton, as illustrated by his contrasting performances of Maple Leaf

Rag, designed to show the respective mannerisms associated with New Orleans and Saint Louis musicians.<sup>1</sup> While these distinctions were made in regard to performed rather than composed music, there are also stylistic divergences in published ragtime.

The historical consideration of ragtime styles seems to have received its major impetus from Blesh and Janis in They All Played Ragtime, but some essential concepts may also be traced back to Sargeant, in his book Jazz: Hot and Hybrid. Most important in this regard are Sargeant's statements that the best ragtime emanated from outside New York, and that Tin Pan Alley's role was as a later, and destructive, imitator.

Few of the best rags even issued from New York. On the covers of the earliest and most imaginative of them the names of such publishing houses as Victor Kremer, McKinley and W. C. Polla of Chicago, Herzer and Brown of San Francisco, Howard and Browne of St. Louis, Darrow and Sharp of Denver, appear quite as often, or oftener, than those of the New York publishers. . . . Exploitation by Tin Pan Alley came later, and with it came a cheapening of the product.<sup>2</sup>

Both of these attitudes are accepted and further developed by Blesh and Janis. Tin Pan Alley--that is, New York--ragtime is portrayed as an inferior product, a poor counterfeit of the authentic, Midwestern strain, which they refer to as

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<sup>1</sup>Recordings re-released on They All Played the Maple Leaf Rag, Herwin 401.

<sup>2</sup>Sargeant, Jazz, p. 117 (p. 142).

Classic Ragtime. As this latter term has become central to the modern ragtime cult, it is important to understand how its meaning has undergone various transformations.

Classic Ragtime: Stark and Joplin

The term "Classic Ragtime" had its origins in the ragtime period and was used by publisher John Stark and composer Scott Joplin to denote a music of superior artistic quality, a ragtime worthy of serious consideration. Stark referred to his publishing company as "The House of Classic Rags," and his flamboyant and whimsical advertisements are the sources of some of the attitudes that are today associated with the term, especially the comparisons with European classical music, and the "Classic-Tin Pan Alley" dichotomy:

CLASSIC RAGS

As Pike's Peak to a mole hill, so are our rag classics to the slush that fills the jobbers' bulletins. . . .  
 St. Louis is the Galileo of classic rags. It is a pity that they did not originate in New York or Paree so that the understudy musicians and camp followers could tip toe and rave about them.<sup>3</sup>

Tell me ye winged winds that 'round my pathway roar.  
 --We know one house of classic rags--pray are there  
 any more?

The answer filtered through the leaves and whispered  
 'long the shore:

"There's only one classic Rag House."

We know what we say when we call these instrumental  
 rags classic.

They are the perfection of type.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Advertisement from 1916, as printed in facsimile in Schafer and Riedel, Art of Ragtime, frontispiece.

Since we forced the conviction on this country that what we called a rag may possibly contain more genius and psychic advance thought than a Chopin nocturne or a Bach fugue, writers of diluted and attenuated imitations have sprung up from Maine's frozen hills to the boiling bogs of Louisiana.<sup>5</sup>

Stark's use of the term "classic" was more than just an advertising ploy. The term reflects his sincere effort to avoid the hackneyed and his willingness to print music of uncommon patterns and technical difficulties. Nor did his high standards go unrecognized. Such connoisseurs of piano ragtime as Axel Christensen and Jelly Roll Morton praised his publications.<sup>6</sup>

It is not known who actually originated the term "Classic Ragtime." While Stark used the word "classic" in this context in his advertisements by the beginning of the 1910s, if not earlier, the word did not appear in his published titles until very late: James Scott's Modesty Rag. A Classic (1920), Pegasus. A Classic Rag (1920), Broadway Rag. A Classic (1922). Much earlier, some of Joplin's pieces, issued by other publishers, began to refer to the classic

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<sup>4</sup>As reproduced in facsimile, without date, in Ragtimer 6 (April 1967): 23.

<sup>5</sup>Advertisement on the back cover of Scott Joplin and Scott Hayden, Felicity Rag (St. Louis: Stark Music Co., 1911).

<sup>6</sup>See above, p. 140; see also, Christensen, "Is Ragtime Respectable?" Melody 2 (August 1918): 8; idem, "Ragtime Demoralizing," Melody 2 (November 1918): 8; and Lomax, Mister Jelly Roll, pp. 148-49.

concept--The Sycamore. A Concert Rag (1904), Sugar Cane. A Ragtime Classic Two Step (1908); his two operas, A Guest of Honor (1903) and Treemonisha (1911), also signify classical aims. Some recognition of Joplin's use of this term appeared in an article in 1911 praising Treemonisha:

Scott Joplin, well known as a writer of music, and especially of what a certain musician has classified as "classic rag-time," has just published an opera . . .<sup>7</sup>

According to the historical evidence, then, "Classic Ragtime" originally referred to the high-quality music published by John Stark, and to the music of Scott Joplin, regardless of publisher. As later adopted by Blesh and Janis, and then by others, the term assumes a broader coverage and a variety of new connotations.

#### Classic Ragtime: Blesh and Janis

Given the emphasis on Joplin and on other Stark-associated composers in They All Played Ragtime, the adoption of the motto "Classic Ragtime" is wholly appropriate. Furthermore, due to the authors' impressive presentation, the term has become the dominant slogan of ragtime enthusiasts. But after establishing organizations "dedicated to the preservation of Classic Ragtime," it occurred to some members to ask, "What is 'Classic Ragtime'?"

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<sup>7</sup>"A Musical Novelty," American Musician and Art Journal 27 (24 June 1911): 7.

The expression "classic ragtime" is a rather recently-introduced one so far as I know. . . . The term's meaning has escaped me. . . .

. . . [We] await enlightenment as to just what it is about a specimen of syncopation that makes it "classic ragtime" while countless of the world's old ragtime numbers apparently go rejected by the modernists.<sup>8</sup>

Most ragtime fans (myself included) don't seem to know what's "classic" and what isn't, once they get away from a small body of pre-labelled "classic" compositions. Being committed to the propagation and preservation of "Classic Ragtime" and not knowing what you're talking about is embarrassing. What's worse, it tends to limit your range of ragtime interest to those few rags that somebody else has called "classic."<sup>9</sup>

Just what the hell is classic ragtime, anyway?

Drop that one in a crowd of twenty rag buffs, and you'll get forty different answers. Everyone seems to agree that there's a certain something called "classic ragtime," but they can't seem to agree on what it is.<sup>10</sup>

This confusion has been created by the extension of the original bounds of Classic Ragtime. Instead of simply referring to the music composed by associates of Stark, it now denotes the music, first, of a specific geographic region:

The scene of classic ragtime was the Missouri Valley area of Missouri and Kansas, with the adjacent fringes of Arkansas, Tennessee, Texas and the Oklahoma and Indiana territories. Its focal points were, successively, Sedalia and St. Louis.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>Cole, Untitled letter, pp. 19-20.

<sup>9</sup>Tom Shea, "Winging It with Tom Shea," Ragtimer 6 (April 1967): 3.

<sup>10</sup>Bob Ashforth, "On Classic Ragtime," Ragtimer (March/April 1970): 7.

Second, a continuous undercurrent suggests that Classic Ragtime was derived from black folk music of the region:

Piano ragtime was developed by the Negro from folk melodies. . . .

Although ragtime originated on the folk level, several outstandingly gifted composers of both races carried the music to a creative level that can only be termed classical.

Joplin's Maple Leaf Rag is only one of scores of richly folksy rags that got published. . . . But Maple Leaf was the one incomparable fusion of folk music and art music . . .

The classicism that in Original Rags and Maple Leaf had already lifted folk melody to a serious, syncopated level . . .

The birth and growth of the "classical" or folk ragtime in this area . . .<sup>11</sup>

Third, Classic Ragtime also signifies a stylistic consistency, as implied by the inclusion of Joe Lamb, a white Easterner:

Joe Lamb, the white ragtime composer nearest to the Joplin classicism, is the exception that proves the rule. This New Jersey phenomenon is the only one not born or brought up in the folk-rag area.<sup>12</sup>

Difficulties arise in attempts to apply the term "Classic Ragtime" uniformly. In Classic Piano Rags, a

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<sup>10</sup>Rudi Blesh, Introduction to Classic Piano Rags: Complete Original Music for 81 Rags (New York: Dover Publications, 1973), p. vi.

<sup>11</sup>These four quotations from Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime; in order, pp. 7-8, 52, 66, 108.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., p. 107.

companion anthology to They All Played Ragtime, Blesh puts his conception of Classic Ragtime into concrete examples. Stark publications are generously, and rightfully, represented; Joe Lamb is the only Easterner included, but his presence is justified by his having been published regularly by Stark and having consciously modeled his music after Joplin's. The admission of Percy Wenrich, Clarence Woods, and Charles Johnson is more questionable; these composers were not associated with Stark and do not bear stylistic resemblances to Joplin or to any other composer who is justifiably called "Classic." Certainly there is little in common between the almost Chopinesque chromatics in Joplin's Gladiolus Rag and the static clumsiness of Woods's Slippery Elm Rag (Example X-1). Apparently these additional composers were included simply on the basis of their Missouri/Midwestern birth. (Jasen, in contrast, places these same composers in the Tin Pan Alley category, finding some difficulty with the geographic contradiction in Johnson's preference for living in Kansas City rather than New York.)<sup>13</sup> Through such accretions to the domain of Classic Ragtime the term has been overextended, losing whatever precision and usefulness it ever had.<sup>14</sup>

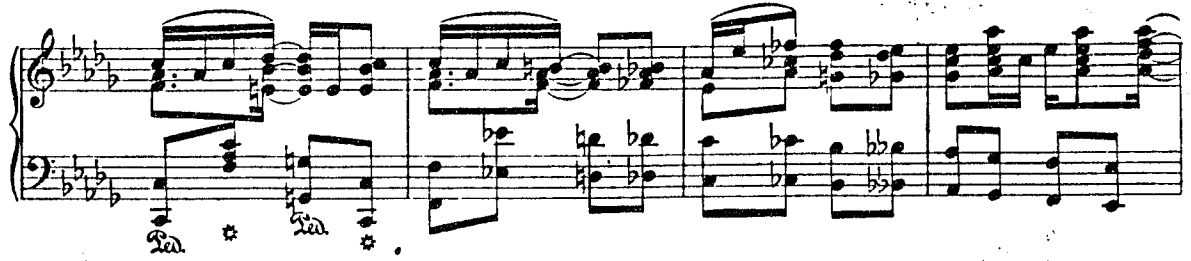
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<sup>13</sup>Jasen, Recorded Ragtime, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>A similar suggestion was made by the present writer in a review of Classic Piano Rags in Black Perspective in Music 2 (Fall 1974): 218-19. In response,

EXAMPLE X-1. (a) S. Joplin, Gladiolus Rag, C 5-8; (b) Clarence Woods, Slippery Elm Rag (Dallas, Texas: Bush & Gerts Piano Co., 1912), C 9-16.

(a)



(b)

Blesh wrote in a private communication (22 January 1975): "Pressed by you, I must admit that not all midwest ragtime of the period is classic or of an even creative quality, but I had in mind something like what happened in, say, 18th century music: even minor composers are 'classic' because they are of the period."

Blesh's analogy is apt if restricted simply to time and place. But just as Lamb is admitted to the Classic category, there should be sufficient flexibility for Midwestern composers to be placed in groups as dictated by stylistic affinity. Also ignored in Blesh's explanation is the original conception of Classic Ragtime as a music of special quality.

Despite these difficulties, despite its vagueness, the Blesh/Janis conception of Classic Ragtime is, in general, the one most widely accepted today. To add to the perplexity, though, the Blesh/Janis version has been expanded by Schafer and Riedel in their favorably received book, Art of Ragtime. Taking one further step away from the Stark/Joplin conception of Classic Ragtime, Schafer and Riedel imbue the term with some most unlikely qualities.

#### Classic Ragtime: Schafer and Riedel

One of the main tenets Schafer and Riedel adopt from Blesh and Janis is the tie between Classic Ragtime and folk music; they repeatedly assert that piano rags are nothing more than folk tunes collected and arranged into dance suites, thereby denying any melodic originality to the composers of record:

Ragtime is a black musical form developed and brought to maturation between 1890 and 1910. . . . Basically it is a formation, an organization of folk melodies and musical techniques. . . . In a sense, ragtime composers serve as folk collectors or musicologists, collecting music in the air around them in the black communities and organizing it into brief suites or anthologies which they called piano rags.

Classic ragtime can be defined very simply as the piano rags of Scott Joplin, James Scott, Joseph Lamb, and their immediate collaborators, students, and followers. . . . These three composers collected the materials of early folk ragtime, codified the style of a generation of folk players, and defined the structure of classic rag.

Essentially all three men were as much collectors as

composers, assembling and synthesizing the works of itinerant ragtime stylists who were too unskilled, or too indifferent, to write down their own creations.

Joplin devoted his life to creating a true art from the miscellaneous materials of folk inspiration.

Joplin's first task was to create from a widely known folk style an actual genre of scored music. (This is roughly analagous to the manner in which Bela Bartok and Zoltan Kodaly collected and organized Hungarian folk music.) To do this he had to invent and perfect a set of conventions of structure and form.

[James] Scott came closest to capturing Joplin's sensitive handling of Missouri folk materials.

Scott worked with Joplin, studied his compositions, and delved into the same regional folk materials . . .

Joplin and his peers had folk inspiration aplenty but no form into which to cast it, . . .<sup>15</sup>

With all of the claims of a derivative relationship between Classic Ragtime and folk music there is not one suggestion of a specific folk melody being the source of a published Classic Rag, not a single statement from Joplin, Scott, or Lamb that they were collecting Missouri folk materials, and no explanation of how Joe Lamb managed to absorb the black folk tunes of Missouri without leaving his home in Brooklyn. And to suggest that Joplin "had to invent and perfect a set of conventions of structure and form," and that he had "no form into which to cast" his music completely ignores the rag literature in print before his first rag publication

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<sup>15</sup>These eight quotations from Schafer and Riedel, Art of Ragtime; in order, pp. 5, 49, 51, 52, 54, 75, 80, 97.

and the hundreds of earlier two-step dance compositions which provide the formal and structural model for ragtime.

Clearly, the concept of Classic Ragtime has been stretched beyond recognition. What was originally a fairly well defined and select category has been made to embrace a host of composers of various stylistic orientations, has been made to include an embryonic ethnomusicology, and has been made dependent upon a supposedly existing--but never produced--body of folk music. The term, at present, seems too solidly entrenched to be removed from the ragtime vocabulary (although Jasen does suggest "St. Louis Ragtime" as a replacement).<sup>16</sup> But if it is ever to have any useful, critical application, it must be pared down to sensible, definable dimensions.

#### Other Ragtime Classifications

There are various other categories of ragtime styles mentioned in the recent literature: Cakewalk, Folk, Tin Pan Alley, Eastern, Stride, Saint Louis, Midwestern, New Orleans, Chicago, Louisville, and Novelty Ragtime. A detailed examination of all of these is a study in itself; moreover, in view of the perfunctory reasoning that has gone into the claims for such categorization, a study might not be very fruitful. In general, the literature promoting these clas-

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<sup>16</sup>Jasen, Recorded Ragtime, p. 3.

sifications is almost entirely lacking in musical discussion, musical examples, or efforts to isolate and define specific traits characterizing a style.<sup>17</sup> The following, then, will be limited to a few clarifications and comments on problematic areas.

The Cakewalk Rag designation is the least confusing; it refers simply to the early rags that were dominated by untied and augmented syncopations, as discussed in Chapters V and VII. Some writers have been disturbed by the occasional "cakewalk" label on a tied syncopation rag, such as the Scott Joplin/Arthur Marshall collaboration, Swipesy.

Cake Walk:

Swipesy, as a matter of fact, could just as well have been placed in the classic rag section on [of?] the folio, but Joplin and Marshall called it a cakewalk, so I'll take their word for it.<sup>18</sup>

Harmonically and structurally SWIPESY is more of a classic rag than a cakewalk. "Cakewalk" in the title may refer to the distinct folk flavor of the tune.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup>In addition to the following, a concise summary of representative conceptions of ragtime style may be found in Jasen, Recorded Ragtime, pp. 2-5. Jasen has been writing on this question for several years, and the introduction to his book presents his latest thoughts on the subject. See also, by Jasen, "Ragtime--A Re-Evaluation," Ragtimer, vol. 6, nos. 5/6 (1967), pp. 26-28; reprinted in Jazz Journal 21 (April 1968): 22-23; "Another Look at Ragtime," Rag Times 3 (August/September 1969): 6-7; "Ragtime Explained," Storyville, no. 37 (October 1971), pp. 4-7.

<sup>18</sup>Max Morath, Max Morath's Ragtime Guide (New York: Hollis Music, 1972), p. 29.

<sup>19</sup>Trebor Jay Tichenor, Liner notes for Scott Joplin

Such examples should not be considered problematic; this piece, like any other two-step, may appropriately accompany a cakewalk dance. The cakewalk label in the title merely reflects the currency of that dance when the piece was written (1900); the title should not be confused with the "Cakewalk Rag" category, which is an artificial designation used by historians to group works of stylistic similarity.

Tin Pan Alley Ragtime is a much maligned category. In its most common usage, Tin Pan Alley Ragtime represents the crass, exploitative commercialism of New York publishers (as if publishers in other parts of the country were innocent of these traits) and inferior workmanship. Generally, the category is applied to composers who lived and published in New York. But should such an individual demonstrate some talent, a reason is found to place him in another group, thereby denying any talent to Tin Pan Alley. Thus, Eubie Blake, despite his commercial success as a popular composer connected with New York publishers, is not given the Tin Pan Alley label. Instead, he is placed variously in the Eastern or Stride schools. (Precisely what is meant by "stride" is never explained.) For Blesh and Janis, the reason for Blake's reclassification is the inherent high quality of his music, an attribute that stems from an undefined "folk

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Ragtime, vol. 2, Biograph BLP 1008Q, 1972.

strain" in his work.<sup>20</sup>

There is no intention here of defending what has been vaguely referred to as Tin Pan Alley Ragtime, for undeniably an enormous amount of poor quality music has emanated from New York presses, as well as those in other parts of the country; but there is a need for an unbiased perspective, a view clear of the myths perpetuated in the literature. One such myth is that Tin Pan Alley Ragtime is a late and corrupt form, a poor copy of Classic and other superior styles:

Exploitation by Tin Pan Alley came later, and with it came a cheapening of the product.<sup>21</sup>

A handful of creative spirits, some black, some white --James Scott, Joseph F. Lamb and a few others, led by Scott Joplin--went on composing serious ragtime, getting it published when and where they could, but composing it nonetheless. Finally the decisive factor, commercialization, entered. Tin Pan Alley, reaching for the quick buck, flooded the market with an inundation of ragtime . . .

The extent to which classic ragtime was published --despite the flood of Tin-Pan Alley's cheap imitations . . .

In the broader sense of the fate of ragtime as a whole, the year 1911 witnessed the resounding success of young Irving Berlin's rag-song, Alexander's Ragtime Band. Classic piano ragtime was waning as Tin-Pan Alley took over with pseudo-rags and rag-songs. The real rag classics, originally championed by Stark, were supplanted by more easily played and more salable items.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Blesh and Janis, They All Played Ragtime, p. 199.

<sup>21</sup>Sargeant, Jazz, p. 117 (p. 142).

. . . after 1910 a modified version of ragtime was taken up by Tin Pan Alley composers and exploited into craze proportions both in popular song and dance in the theatre.<sup>23</sup>

But this appraisal is not accurate. However artless the Tin Pan Alley product may be (and this point is also debatable), it was not a late arrival in ragtime publications. Already in the 1880s New York publishers were issuing rag-like compositions, such as Patrol Comique and Hottentots Patrol (Example VI-5), and the very first instrumental rag in print--Krell's Mississippi Rag--came from S. Brainard & Sons, a New York firm. By 1899, numerous New York publishers were playing a significant role in the ragtime flood of that year. Tin Pan Alley may be guilty of many sins, but, in regard to ragtime, it was not a late imitator.

The Folk Rag style is described by several writers as that which was centered in Nashville, Tennessee, and drew upon local folk material:

This early kind of ragtime utilized the simple syncopations coming from the songs and dances of the working people in the rural midwest and south. The outstanding member of the Folk Rag composers was Charles Hunter [1878-c. 1907] of Tennessee.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>These three quotations from Blesh, "Scott Joplin"; in order, pp. xiii, xxxiv, xxxvii.

<sup>23</sup>Gammond, Scott Joplin, p. 181.

<sup>24</sup>Jasen, Recorded Ragtime, p. 3.

The extraordinary ragtime at Nashville could well be called a school of folk rag composition. There is a consistent style here--an inspired spontaneity and an unfettered approach characteristic of good folk rag, and an ebullient mix of both Black folk sources and White Tennessee hill music, a distinctly "southern-fried" concoction. The leading composer was blind pianist Charles Hunter . . .<sup>25</sup>

While Blesh considers Hunter a Classic ragtimer, he does create a special subcategory for him: "The Hunter rags are definitive of the term 'Missouri Valley country ragtime.'"<sup>26</sup>

There seems to be considerable agreement that Charles Hunter was a Folk ragtimer. More arguments will have to be offered, though, to establish Folk Ragtime as a school. So far, only one other composer has been placed in this category, Thomas E. Broady, also of Nashville.<sup>27</sup> As with Classic Ragtime, neither folk sources nor elements of folk style have been cited to support the supposed folk origins of this category.

The other styles listed can be described in a few words. Saint Louis Ragtime is approximately the same as Classic Ragtime, but with the recognition that not all of the Saint Louis composers were associated with Stark.<sup>28</sup> Midwestern Ragtimers were those of that region who were

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<sup>25</sup>Tichenor, Ragtime Rarities, p. vii.

<sup>26</sup>Blesh, Classic Piano Rags, p. vii.

<sup>27</sup>Tichenor, Ragtime Rarities, p. vii.

<sup>28</sup>Jasen, Record Ragtime, p. 3.

active mostly in the second decade of the twentieth century. Some were published by Stark, but there is no suggestion of stylistic unity. Chicago and Louisville Ragtime are rarely used terms and refer simply to musicians working in those areas. Both Joe Jordan and Percy Wenrich have been named as members of the "Chicago School,"<sup>29</sup> although they are also, and more frequently, placed in the Classic, Midwestern, and Tin Pan Alley groups. New Orleans Ragtime seems to have two outstanding exponents, Jelly Roll Morton and Tony Jackson. Morton, however, did not publish his rags until the 1920s, and Jackson published only songs. There are, in fact, few publications from New Orleans and, in view of the attention devoted to early New Orleans jazz, surprisingly little has been written about the piano ragtime from that city. A final style, Novelty Ragtime, referring to the Novelty Piano of the 1920s, was discussed in Chapter VIII. As indicated, this is not a true ragtime style, and use of the term should be reconsidered.

The preceding discussion is not an outright rejection of the categorization of stylistic variety, but an effort to accentuate the deficient presentations these proposed classifications have received. Obviously there are

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<sup>29</sup>Respectively: Harding, Untitled letter, p. 25; Bartlett D. Simms and Ernest Borneman, "Ragtime: History and Analysis," Record Changer 4 (October 1945): 7.

vast differences between such composers as Scott Joplin, Abe Holzmann, Eubie Blake, and Artie Matthews; while the present study has provided chronological and evolutionary interpretations for these distinctions, other explanations are also feasible. Regional theories of style, if formulated with sufficient flexibility to recognize that there was no real geographic insularity, have rich potential. Above all, stylistic studies of individual composers provide the key for understanding larger groupings. But stylistic proposals must be drawn up in exacting musical terms; the strictly intuitive approach may have some validity, but is too limited and cannot be applied in a truly critical fashion to historical studies.

#### Summary

A major concern of modern writers has been the classification of piano ragtime into stylistic groups. (Strictly speaking, these groupings usually lack true stylistic unity.) The term that has figured most prominently has been Classic Ragtime. Originally used during the ragtime era by publisher John Stark and composer Scott Joplin to denote a ragtime of superior quality, the meaning of Classic Ragtime has since undergone several transformations. In They All Played Ragtime the term retains its connections with Stark and Joplin, but in addition acquires folk origins and a geographic focus in the Missouri Valley. In Art of

Ragtime this accretion is further expanded--and distorted--to include ethnomusicological activities; Classic ragtimers are portrayed not as authentic composers, but as arrangers of folk material. The diverse interpretations given to Classic Ragtime have led many of today's ragtime buffs to question the suitability of the term's use.

The antithesis of Classic Ragtime, according to the usage of most writers, is Tin Pan Alley Ragtime, a music usually characterized as inferior, commercial, exploitative, and imitative. Composers favored by particular writers are generally, for the very reason of being favored, excluded from the Tin Pan Alley category and reclassified as Eastern, Stride, or even Classic.

Other terms currently in use are Cakewalk (early rags emphasizing UTS), Folk (centered around Nashville), Midwestern (comprised of composers working around Saint Louis in the 1910s), New Orleans, and Novelty (rejected as a true rag style).

A major shortcoming of these classifications is that they tend to reflect the subjective impressions of each commentator without having any uniformly accepted usage. Ultimately, they do emanate from the recognition--however vague--of a real stylistic diversity in ragtime. But for a meaningful, critical application, these terms will require more precise--and musical--formulation.

## CHAPTER XI

### CONCLUSION

The primary intent of this study is to establish an intelligible overview of piano ragtime composition and to create a perspective within which individual achievements and historical trends can be discerned and evaluated. The paper is divided into three sections: an examination of how ragtime was considered by its contemporaries; a survey of the evolutionary trends in piano ragtime, from its precursors in the late 1880s to the end of the ragtime era (1920); and an outline of the changing views on ragtime, from 1930 to the present.

Part One, comprising Chapters I-III, explores commentary from the ragtime era (1896-1920) to determine what contemporaries understood the term "ragtime" to signify, what they considered to be the origins of the term and of the music, and how they felt about the music. It has been determined that the word "ragtime" was applied broadly to cover, at various times, a number of different kinds of songs, instrumental (including piano) pieces, and dances; of these, vocal music was considered the most important man-

ifestation of ragtime. The first music to be identified as "ragtime," the term having been acquired by 1896, was the "coon song," a black dialect song that previously had been known to the minstrel stage. Soon afterwards, the term "ragtime" was applied to instrumental versions of these songs and to original instrumental pieces that used the syncopated rhythms associated with coon song performance and retained, on covers and titles, black racial connotations. During the first decade of the twentieth century, ragtime--in its vocal and instrumental forms--lost much of its restricted ethnic implication and became accepted by the American public as the nation's most representative popular music.

The term "ragtime" was also applied to dances performed to ragtime music. While there were a host of ragtime dances that seem to have been regional, there were also widely known ballroom steps associated with the music. The first prominent dances to be markedly (but not exclusively) linked with ragtime were the march, two-step, and cakewalk. These were gradually replaced by different dances, the fox trot and one-step being most notable.

Almost universally, ragtime was thought to have roots in Afro-American music. This is clearly indicated in sheet music covers, titles, and words, and in the voluminous written commentary. Views of ragtime's birth were less def-

inite; whereas there were frequent references to ragtime's being unveiled to the public in 1893 at the Chicago World's Fair, there is also evidence of its prior and simultaneous existence in other parts of the country. Similarly, Kentucky pianist Ben Harney was credited with the origination of piano ragtime, but this claim can be discounted as sheet music with unmistakable ragtime features was already in print before Harney's appearance.

The word "ragtime" itself intrigued many commentators, and the literature is replete with explanations, mostly fanciful, of the term's origins. In all likelihood, though, the term developed simply from attempts to describe the uneven, "ragged" effect of the music's characteristic syncopation.

Attitudes toward ragtime were expressed in most vehement terms, both in opposition and in support. The most universal criticism was directed against the vulgar and racially disparaging sentiments of coon song lyrics. The use of these texts was discontinued as ragtime was assimilated into the mainstream of American culture in the early 1900s, but the casual slang of later songs still incurred occasional protest. On a broader level, ragtime was condemned as a threat to "good music," to morality, and to civilization; efforts were made to discourage its propagation and even to ban it. At the source of much of this disapproval was the

fear that, as a music of Afro-American origins, ragtime would lead to a kind of racial-cultural contamination.

Arguing in favor of ragtime, some commentators maintained that, at worst, the music was a harmless diversion for the masses who, in any event, would never develop an appreciation for serious music. More strongly, some proponents suggested that ragtime was an innovative force in music, that it was the only American music to capture the nation's exuberant spirit, and that it should form the basis for a national school of composition.

These conflicting positions regarding ragtime were never resolved. As the 1920s approached, the music was absorbed by jazz and in the process the arguments, both for and against, were transferred to the newer style.

Part Two, comprising Chapters IV-VIII, is concerned with piano ragtime, which itself took several forms: keyboard performances of ragtime songs; "ragging" the classics and other existing music; and original ragtime compositions for piano. It is this final style which is analyzed in depth in the present paper; this is the music that is today most closely associated with the term "ragtime," and the music that is best preserved in published form. Based on a study of over one thousand piano rags, the genre's major features are described and its development traced from its immediate sources in the late 1880s to its final days as a

living style, just prior to the 1920s.

Formal and harmonic conventions of piano ragtime composition stem almost entirely from the ballroom march of the 1880s and '90s. The characteristic syncopations that distinguish a rag from a march also had a prior existence; they probably were used as ethnic mannerisms on the minstrel stage earlier in the nineteenth century, and by the late 1880s appeared as racial traits in Negro character pieces. By the time the piano rag reached publication, in the late 1890s, its conventions were already familiar.

The evolution of piano ragtime is perceived primarily through changing rhythmic practices. Early ragtime was dominated by syncopations restricted to each half of a measure; coining a descriptive term for the present study, this early rhythm is called untied syncopation. Soon after the turn of the century, the rhythmic dominance shifted to syncopations tied across the center of a measure--tied syncopation. A final rhythm to be accepted into the style, without supplanting tied syncopations, is one that by the 1920s had acquired the name of secondary ragtime. Characterized by repeated melodic patterns of three eighth- or sixteenth-notes set against the normal duple meter of a rag, it achieves a unique effect of shifting accents within the continuous, three-unit pattern.

Ragtime was able to adapt to these various rhythmic

changes without losing its essential syncopated character. In the second decade of the twentieth century, however, dotted rhythms became prominent in ragtime and, in the process, the syncopated quality of the music was seriously compromised. Through this new acquisition ragtime lost its distinctive nature and thereby merged with other rhythmic dance styles, all of which eventually became known as jazz.

A musical style that at one time was identified as ragtime, but which gradually asserted its own distinctiveness, was blues. Although pieces were not published as blues until 1912, rags from the previous decade made use of "blue notes" and, in a few cases, contained complete sections that were actually twelve-bar blues and boogie-woogie. This intimate connection between the two genres affected both; blues adopted many of the rhythmic patterns of ragtime, and ragtime was increasingly influenced by blue notes and even the stereotyped harmonic formula of the blues. Whereas blues gradually developed a stronger musical individuality, its influence on ragtime contributed to the latter style's loss of distinctiveness.

A variety of piano styles since the ragtime era have been termed "rags" by modern writers. Many of these misapplications are too far-fetched to consider seriously. One that has been widely accepted in recent years, though, is the renaming of Novelty Piano, a style of the 1920s, as

Novelty Ragtime. While Novelty Piano was clearly an outgrowth of ragtime, it quickly became distinct from the earlier style. Since it was considered ragtime by neither its creators nor by its public, the new and artificial designation of Novelty Ragtime must be rejected.

Part Three, Chapters IX-X, examines the commentary from 1930 to the present, i.e., the literature that treats ragtime primarily as a historical rather than as a contemporary music. One purpose of this survey is to determine how present ideas about ragtime were formed; another, is to evaluate the stylistic classifications developed by modern writers.

The first writer to break with the prevailing conception of the ragtime song as ragtime's most important development was Winthrop Sargeant. In his book, Jazz: Hot and Hybrid (1938), Sargeant dismisses the ragtime song as having little musical value and concentrates on analyses of piano ragtime. Despite his impressive and convincing presentation, the book does not seem to have had any immediate impact on the thinking about ragtime. The "ragtime revival," the complete reorientation in attitudes about ragtime, came a few years later, in the mid-1940s. Writing in jazz discography magazines, Roy Carew initiated the serious consideration of ragtime history with his reminiscences of the ragtime greats with whom he was acquainted. Others soon

followed his lead and in 1950 the first wave of historical research was culminated with two books: Lomax's Mister Jelly Roll, and Blesh's and Janis's They All Played Ragtime. The latter book has become the standard reference work on ragtime history and has had a profound influence on the development of ideas on this subject. Above all, it placed Scott Joplin and Classic Ragtime at the center of ragtime history. While it can be agreed that this emphasis presents some of the best music that ragtime has to offer, it nonetheless has tended to distort the perspective of historical realities.

The current surge of interest in ragtime was precipitated by the New York Public Library's publication of the works of Scott Joplin. This venture has led to concert performances, recordings, popularization through a movie score, and an unprecedented scholarly activity. Ragtime has now been accepted as a topic for serious inquiry, an acceptance that should lead to a clearer understanding of its role in American music and culture.

The development of stylistic classifications for piano ragtime has been an area of major concern for modern writers, but it has also been an area of great deficiencies. Stylistic classifications have been made with the greatest casualness, each writer coining his own categories, or changing the use of familiar terms. Little effort, though, has been made to define the musical character of a style.

There does seem to be some validity in the concept of stylistic variety in ragtime, but for style categories to have any critical application, they will require more exacting --and musical--formulation.

Ultimately, ragtime is more than a musical style; it is the achievement of cultural independence and identity. At a time when many American art composers were seeking to loosen the ties of European musical dominance in order to find and assert a recognizable national language, the ragtime composer had already attained this end. Significantly, the defining element of this language emerged not from the European-American heritage, but from the Afro-American; it represented, despite considerable opposition, the first widespread acceptance of a black cultural influence into the mainstream of American life.

The importance of ragtime transcends any individual work, composer, or group. Viewed in perspective, it is the rhythmic impulse of ragtime that is of greatest consequence, an impulse which, through its characteristic "swing," has made its impact on Western music. Whatever the fate of the actual music of ragtime, whether it remains in the public focus or again recedes to historical obscurity, it leaves a legacy of rhythmic vitality which, since its first prominence some eighty years ago, has been a dominating force in American popular music. If not in itself, ragtime is likely

to survive in its progeny.

## APPENDIX

### LOCATION INDEX FOR PIANO RAGS IN SELECTED ANTHOLOGIES

Due to the recent interest in ragtime, numerous anthologies have been issued reprinting works from the ragtime era. The accompanying table is designed to facilitate the location of piano rags in some of the more reliable collections. In addition to current anthologies, two important out-of-print collections are included.

- BeR The Best of Ragtime Favorites and How To Play Them. New York: Charles Hansen, n.d.
- BlC Blesh, Rudi, comp. Classic Piano Rags. Complete Original Music for 81 Rags. New York: Dover Publications, 1973.
- BrR Brainard's Ragtime Collection, Being a Collection of Characteristic Two-Steps, Cake Walks, Plantation Dances, Etc. New York: S. Brainard's Sons Co., 1899. Out-of-print.
- GEn Golden Encyclopedia of Ragtime, 1900 to 1974. New York: Charles Hansen, [1974].
- JCW Joplin, Scott. The Collected Works of Scott Joplin. Edited by Vera Brodsky Lawrence; Editorial Consultant, Richard Jackson; Introduction by Rudi Blesh. Vol. I: Works for Piano. New York: New York Public Library, 1971.
- MMG Morath, Max. Max Morath's Giants of Ragtime. New York: Edward B. Marks Corp., 1971.

- MOH Morath, Max, ed. One Hundred Ragtime Classics. Denver: Donn Printing, 1963. Out-of-print.
- PTR Play Them Rags: A Piano Album of Authentic Rag-Time Solos. New York: Mills Music, 1961.
- RtP Ragtime Piano: A Collection of Standard Rags for Piano. New York: Mills Music, 1963.
- SWF Shealy, Alexander, ed. World's Favorite Music and Songs: Ragtime. Carlstadt, N.J.: Ashley Publications, 1973.
- TFR 34 Ragtime Jazz Classics for Piano. New York: Melrose Music Corp., 1964.
- TRR Tichenor, Trebor Jay, comp. Ragtime Rarities: Complete Original Music for 63 Piano Rags. New York: Dover Publications, 1975.
- ZTr Zimmerman, Richard, comp. A Tribute to Scott Joplin and the Giants of Ragtime. New York: Sattinger-International Music Corp., Charles Hansen, 1975.

PIANO RAGS IN SELECTED ANTHOLOGIES

| Composer                    | Composition                   | Anthologies |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
|                             |                               | BeR         | B1C | BrR | GEn | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
| Anderson                    | Dakota Rag                    |             |     | 14  |     |     |     |     |     |     | 16  |     |     |     |
| Aufderheide                 | Dusty Rag                     |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 1   |     |
|                             | Thriller                      |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 5   | 33  |
| Barnard                     | Alabama Dreams                |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 9   |     |
| Barney &<br>Seymore         | St. Louis Tickle              |             |     |     |     |     |     | 97  |     |     |     |     | 14  |     |
| Bay                         | Seben Come Eleben             |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 29  |     |     |     |
| Bayler                      | Rastus Johnson's<br>Cake Walk |             |     | 49  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| [Bennett], cf.<br>Florence  | Sweet Pickles                 |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 19  |     |
| Bernard                     | Stinging Bee                  |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 24  |     |
| Birch [John-<br>son, C. L.] | Blue Goose Rag                |             | 51  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Blake                       | Chevy Chase                   |             |     |     |     |     | 20  | 235 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                             | Fizz Water                    |             |     |     |     |     | 24  | 209 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                             | Tricky Fingers                |             |     |     |     |     | 34  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                             | Troublesome Ivories           |             |     |     |     |     | 28  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Bolen                       | Smoky Topaz                   |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 29  |     |
| Boone                       | Rag Medley No. 1              |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 33  |     |
|                             | Rag Medley No. 2              |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 38  |     |
| Botsford                    | Black and White Rag           |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 16  |     |     |     |     |
|                             | Grizzly Bear                  |             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 38  |     |     |     |

| Composer            | Composition             | BeR | BlC | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|---------------------|-------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Broady              | Mandy's Broadway Stroll |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 45  |     |
|                     | Tennessee Jubilee       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 50  |     |
|                     | Whittling Remus         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 55  |     |
| Brooks              | Florida Cracker         |     |     | 10  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Brown               | Suwanee Echoes          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 126 |
| Brownold            | Manhattan Rag           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 4   |     |     |     |
| Burke               | Rag-Time Joke           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 102 |
| Cammack             | Rag La Joie             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 60  |     |
| Chapman & Smith, L. | One o' Them Things      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 63  |     |
| Chauvin & Joplin    | Heliotrope Bouquet      | 86  | 156 |     | 290 | 263 |     | 172 |     |     |     | 78  |     |     |
| Claypoole           | Alabama Jigger          |     |     |     |     |     |     | 231 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Ragging the Scale       |     |     |     | 88  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Cobb                | Russian Rag             |     |     |     | 92  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Cohan               | Popularity              |     |     |     |     |     |     | 30  |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Cohen               | Fashion Rag             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 22  |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Riverside Rag           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 9   |     |     |     |     |     |
| Connor              | Carpet Rags             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 47  |
| Crabbe              | Klassicle Rag           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 68  |
| Denney              | Chimes                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 68  |     |
| English             | Sweet Dreams of Youth   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 106 |
| Europe              | Castle House Rag        |     |     |     |     |     | 58  | 217 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Finzel              | Manila Belle            | 30  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Fischer             | Encore Rag              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 73  |     |
| Fischler            | Chili-Sauce             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 34  |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Hot Scotch Rag          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 18  |     |     |     |     |

| Composer              | Composition                      | BeR | BIC | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Fischler              | Pepper Sauce                     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 34  |     |     |     |     |
|                       | Weeping Willow Rag               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 14  |     |     |     |     |
| Florence<br>[Bennett] | Sweet Pickles                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 19  |     |
| Gearen                | Big Foot Lou                     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 77  |     |
| Gibson                | Cactus Rag                       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 87  |     |
|                       | Jinx Rag                         |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 82  |     |
| Gillis                | Coon Hollow Capers               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 91  |     |
| Gould                 | Whoa! Nellie!                    |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 95  |     |
| Guy                   | Cleanin' Up in<br>Georgia        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 105 |     |
|                       | Echoes from the<br>Snowball Club |     |     |     |     |     |     | 167 |     |     |     |     | 100 |     |
| Hamilton              | Alabama Hoe Down                 |     |     | 34  |     |     |     |     |     |     | 52  |     |     |     |
| Hampton               | Agitation Rag                    |     | 6   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                       | Cataract Rag                     | 28  | 2   |     | 100 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 34  |     |     |
| Harney                | Cake Walk in the<br>Sky          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 58  |
|                       | Rag Time Instructor              |     |     |     |     |     |     | 358 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Harris                | Virginia Rag                     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 120 |
| Harrison              | Bran Dance Shuffle               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 136 |
| Hayden &<br>Joplin    | Felicity Rag                     |     |     |     |     | 269 |     | 179 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                       | Kismet Rag                       |     |     |     |     | 275 |     | 195 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                       | Something Doing                  |     | 151 |     | 340 | 251 |     | 262 | 46  |     | 122 |     |     |     |
|                       | Sun Flower Slow Drag             | 78  | 146 |     | 238 | 245 |     | 8   |     |     |     | 70  |     |     |
| Held                  | Chromatic Rag                    | 32  |     |     | 100 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 24  |     |     |
| Hoffmann              | Rag Medley                       |     |     |     |     |     |     | 183 |     |     | 74  |     |     |     |
|                       | Ragtown Rags                     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 110 |     |

| Composer                     | Composition           | BeR | B1C | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Holzmann                     | Bunch o' Blackberries |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 117 | 140 |
|                              | Flying Arrow          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 121 |     |
|                              | Smoky Mokes           |     |     |     |     |     |     | 109 |     |     |     |     |     | 92  |
| Howard, G.                   | Polar Bear Rag        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 54  |
| Howard, J. &<br>Emerson      | Hello! Ma Baby        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 36  |     |     |     |
| Hubbell                      | My Filipino Princess  |     |     | 42  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Hudson                       | Sandella              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 44  |
| Hunter                       | Back to Life          |     | 37  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Cotton Bolls          |     | 27  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Just Ask Me           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 126 |     |
|                              | Possum and Taters     |     | 16  |     |     |     |     | 159 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Tennessee Tantalizer  |     | 22  |     |     |     |     | 304 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Tickled to Death      |     | 11  |     |     |     |     | 82  |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Why We Smile          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 143 |
| Ingraham                     | Mando Rag             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 152 |
| Janza                        | Lion Tamer            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 130 |     |
| Jentes                       | Bantem Step           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 135 |     |
| Johnson, C. L.               | Black Smoke           |     | 42  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| [Johnson, C.L.]<br>cf. Birch | Blue Goose Rag        |     | 51  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Johnson, C. L.               | Cum-Bac Rag           |     | 47  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Dill Pickles          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 6   |     |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Doc Brown's Cake      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Walk                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 140 |     |
|                              | Tar Babies            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 40  |
| Johnson, J. P.               | Caprice Rag           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 62  |     |     |     |     |
|                              | Daintiness Rag        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 58  |     |     |     |     |
| Johnston                     | Cake-Walkers          |     |     | 60  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |

| Composer               | Composition         | BeR | B1C | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|------------------------|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Joplin                 | Bethena             |     |     |     | 304 | 113 |     | 64  |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Breeze from Alabama |     | 75  |     | 242 | 53  |     | 251 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Cascades            | 24  | 109 |     | 264 | 101 |     | 38  |     |     | 82  | 16  |     |     |
|                        | Chrysanthemum       |     | 114 |     | 268 | 107 |     | 4   |     |     | 86  |     |     |     |
|                        | Cleopha             |     | 80  |     | 328 | 47  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Country Club        |     |     |     |     | 197 |     |     |     | 10  |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Easy Winners        | 90  | 65  |     | 234 | 41  |     | 227 |     |     | 90  | 82  |     |     |
|                        | Elite Syncopations  |     | 85  |     | 246 | 59  |     | 75  |     |     | 94  |     |     |     |
|                        | Entertainer         | 82  | 70  |     | 206 | 65  |     | 203 |     |     | 98  | 74  |     | 8   |
|                        | Eugenia             |     | 123 |     | 282 | 139 |     | 45  |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Euphonic Sounds     |     |     |     |     | 203 |     |     |     | 2   |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Favorite            |     | 119 |     | 258 | 93  |     | 88  |     |     | 102 |     |     |     |
|                        | Fig Leaf Rag        | 98  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 40  |     |     |
|                        | Gladiolus Rag       |     |     |     |     | 157 | 16  | 239 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Leola               |     |     |     | 278 | 125 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Magnetic Rag        |     |     |     |     | 227 |     |     |     | 47  |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Maple Leaf Rag      | 129 | 56  |     | 212 | 25  |     | 1   |     |     | 105 | 13  |     | 5   |
|                        | Nonpareil           | 110 |     |     | 286 | 163 |     |     |     |     |     | 102 |     |     |
|                        | Original Rags       |     | 60  |     | 222 | 19  |     | 19  |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Palm Leaf Rag       |     | 100 |     | 261 | 89  |     | 94  |     |     | 108 |     |     |     |
|                        | Paragon Rag         |     |     |     |     | 209 |     |     |     | 42  |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Peacherine Rag      |     | 70  |     | 230 | 29  |     | 105 |     |     | 114 |     |     |     |
|                        | Pineapple Rag       |     |     |     |     | 175 |     |     |     | 26  |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Pleasant Moments    |     | 133 |     |     | 191 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Rag-Time Dance         | 94                  | 128 |     | 218 | 151 |     |     |     |     | 118 | 86  |     |     |     |
| Reflection Rag         |                     | 138 |     | 298 | 233 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Scott Joplin's New Rag |                     |     |     |     |     | 221 | 8   | 221 |     |     |     |     |     |     |

| Composer                          | Composition         | BeR | B1C | BrR | GE n | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|-----------------------------------|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Joplin                            | Search-Light Rag    |     |     |     |      |     |     | 354 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Solace              |     |     |     |      | 185 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Stoptime Rag        |     |     |     |      | 215 | 12  | 255 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Strenuous Life      |     | 95  |     | 250  | 77  |     | 322 |     |     | 126 |     |     |     |
|                                   | Sugar Cane          |     |     |     |      | 169 |     |     | 12  |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Sycamore            |     |     |     | 272  | 97  |     | 153 |     |     | 111 |     |     |     |
|                                   | Wall Street Rag     |     |     |     |      | 181 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Weeping Willow      |     | 104 |     | 254  | 83  |     | 138 |     |     | 134 |     |     |     |
|                                   | Silver Swan Rag     |     |     |     |      | 291 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Joplin [?]<br>Joplin &<br>Chauvin | Heliotrope Bouquet  | 86  | 156 |     | 290  | 263 |     | 172 |     |     |     | 78  |     |     |
| Joplin &<br>Hayden                | Felicity Rag        |     |     |     |      | 269 |     | 179 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Kismet Rag          |     |     |     |      | 275 |     | 195 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Something Doing     |     | 151 |     | 340  | 251 |     | 262 | 46  |     | 122 |     |     |     |
|                                   | Sunflower Slow Drag | 78  | 146 |     | 238  | 245 |     | 8   |     |     |     | 70  |     |     |
| Joplin &<br>Marshall              | Lily Queen          |     |     |     | 294  | 257 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Swipesy             |     | 141 |     | 226  | 239 |     | 112 |     |     | 130 |     |     |     |
| Jordan                            | Double Fudge        |     |     |     |      |     |     | 120 |     |     |     |     |     | 95  |
|                                   | Nappy Lee           |     | 162 |     |      |     |     | 271 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Pekin Rag           |     |     |     |      |     |     | 156 |     |     |     |     |     | 123 |
| Kelly                             | Peaceful Henry      |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     | 70  |     | 146 |     |
| Kirwin                            | African Pas'        |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 151 |     |
| Klickman                          | Smiles and Chuckles |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 28  |
| Koninsky                          | Eli Green's Cake    |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Walk                |     |     |     |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 156 |     |
| Krell                             | Cake-Walk Patrol    |     |     | 56  |      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                   | Mississippi Rag     | 140 |     |     | 186  |     |     | 51  |     |     |     | 134 |     |     |

| Composer  | Composition                 | BeR | BlC | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|-----------|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Krell     | Shake Yo' Dusters!          |     |     | 69  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 161 |     |
| Lamb      | American Beauty Rag         | 122 | 184 |     | 108 |     |     | 149 |     |     |     | 114 |     |     |
|           | Bohemia Rag                 | 20  | 202 |     | 112 |     |     | 86  |     |     |     | 9   |     |     |
|           | Champagne Rag               |     | 179 |     | 124 |     |     | 300 |     |     |     | 125 |     |     |
|           | Cleopatra Rag               | 16  |     |     | 116 |     |     | 134 |     |     |     | 5   |     |     |
|           | Contentment Rag             | 74  |     |     | 120 |     |     | 101 |     |     |     | 66  |     |     |
|           | Ethiopia Rag                | 54  | 170 |     | 132 |     |     | 307 |     |     |     | 46  |     |     |
|           | Excelsior Rag               | 48  | 175 |     | 129 |     |     | 311 |     |     |     | 40  |     |     |
|           | Patricia Rag                |     | 199 |     |     |     |     | 49  |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|           | Ragtime Nightingale         | 106 | 189 |     | 136 |     |     | 34  |     |     |     | 98  |     |     |
|           | Reindeer Rag                | 70  | 194 |     | 140 |     |     | 123 |     |     |     | 62  |     |     |
|           | Sensation                   | 136 | 166 |     | 148 |     |     | 79  |     |     |     | 130 |     |     |
|           | Top Liner Rag               | 118 |     |     | 144 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 110 |     |     |
| Lampe     | Creole Belles               |     |     |     |     |     |     | 130 |     |     |     |     |     | 30  |
| Lincoln   | Beeswax Rag                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 38  |     |     |     |     |     |
|           | Dixie                       |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 42  |     |     |     |     |     |
|           | Rag Bag Rag                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 26  |     |     |     |     |
| Livernash | Georgia Giggle              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 150 |
| Lodge     | Oh You Turkey               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 78  |
|           | Sure Fire Rag               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 167 |     |
|           | Temptation Rag              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 2   |     |     |     |     |     |
| Losey     | Rag Baby Rag                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 30  |     |     |     |     |
|           | Sumthin' Doin'              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 55  |     |     |     |     |
|           | Tanglefoot Rag              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 30  |     |     |     |     |     |
| Lowell    | Darktown Diversion          |     |     | 7   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|           | Dusky Doings in<br>Darktown |     |     | 26  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|           | Turkey Walk                 |     |     | 79  |     |     |     |     |     |     | 64  |     |     |     |

| Composer             | Composition                 | BeR | BlC | BrR | GEn | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|----------------------|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| McFadden             | Rags To Burn                |     |     |     |     |     |     | 281 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| McSkimming           | Felix Rag                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 172 |     |
| Marshall             | Ham and!                    |     | 210 |     |     |     |     | 345 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Kinklets                    |     | 205 |     |     |     |     | 116 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Peach                       |     | 215 |     |     |     |     | 336 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Pippin                      |     | 220 |     |     |     |     | 188 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Marshall &<br>Joplin | Lily Queen                  |     |     |     | 294 | 257 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Swipesy                     |     | 141 |     | 226 | 239 |     | 112 |     |     | 130 |     |     |     |
| Martin               | 'Possum Barbecue            |     |     | 22  |     |     |     |     |     |     | 56  |     |     |     |
| Matthews             | Pastime Rag No. 1           |     | 225 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Pastime Rag No. 2           |     | 230 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Pastime Rag No. 3           |     | 235 |     |     |     |     | 287 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Pastime Rag No. 4           |     | 240 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Pastime Rag No. 5           |     | 243 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Mills                | At a Georgia<br>Campmeeting |     |     |     |     |     |     | 91  |     |     |     |     |     | 12  |
|                      | Happy Days in Dixie         |     |     |     |     |     |     | 142 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Impecunious Davis           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 177 |     |
|                      | Kerry Mills Rag             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Time Dance                  |     |     |     |     |     |     | 333 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                      | Whistling Rufus             |     |     |     |     |     |     | 27  |     |     |     |     |     | 110 |
| Nash                 | Glad Cat Rags               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 182 |     |
| Niebergall           | Hoosier Rag                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 98  |
| Northrup             | Louisiana Rag               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 40  |     | 187 |     |
| Northrup             | Cannon Ball                 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 59  |     |     |     |     |     | 156 |
| O'Brian              | Rag Pickers Rag             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 193 |     |
| Olson                | Town Talk                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 62  |

| Composer       | Composition                 | BeR | B1C | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|----------------|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Petry          | Echoes from Old<br>Mobile   |     |     | 18  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | On a Southern<br>Plantation |     |     | 38  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | Ragtown Guards              |     |     | 52  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Phelps         | Darkies' Patrol             |     |     | 82  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Pitts          | Meadow Lark Rag             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 18  |
| Pollock        | Rooster Rag                 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 247 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Porcelain      | Bric-A-Brac Rag             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 116 |
| Powell         | Missouri Rag                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 25  |
| Pratt          | Colonial Glide              |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 132 |
|                | Hot-House Rag               | 102 |     |     | 104 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 94  |     |     |
|                | Vanity                      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 113 |
| Rawls & Neel   | Majestic Rag                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 198 |     |
| Roberts, C. L. | Junk Man                    |     |     |     |     |     | 50  | 243 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | Music Box Rag               |     |     |     |     |     | 54  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | Pork and Beans              |     |     |     |     |     | 46  | 213 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Roberts, J.    | Entertainer's Rag           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 82  |
| Rockwell       | Aunt Jemina's<br>Cake Walk  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 146 |
| Rubens         | Rag-Time Pasmala            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 44  |     |     |     |
| St. John       | Cole Smoak                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 203 |     |
| Schroeder      | Rag-Time Medley No. 1       |     |     | 46  |     |     |     |     |     |     | 79  |     |     |     |
|                | Rag-Time Medley No. 2       |     |     | 74  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Scott          | Broadway Rag                |     | 313 |     |     |     |     | 192 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | Climax Rag                  | 40  |     |     | 154 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 32  |     |     |
|                | Dixie Dimples               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 90  |
|                | Don't Jazz Me Rag           |     | 306 |     |     |     |     | 259 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                | Efficiency Rag              |     | 282 |     |     |     |     | 352 |     |     |     |     |     |     |

| Composer            | Composition          | BeR | B1C | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|---------------------|----------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Scott               | Evergreen Rag        | 127 | 227 |     | 151 |     |     | 314 |     |     |     | 118 |     |     |
|                     | Fascinator           |     |     |     |     |     |     | 277 |     |     |     |     | 213 | 36  |
|                     | Frog Legs Rag        | 36  | 246 |     | 158 |     |     |     |     |     | 20  | 28  |     |     |
|                     | Grace and Beauty     | 44  |     |     | 162 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 36  |     |     |
|                     | Great Scott Rag      |     | 255 |     |     |     |     | 349 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Hilarity Rag         | 51  | 268 |     | 190 |     |     | 326 |     |     |     | 43  |     |     |
|                     | Honey Moon Rag       | 58  |     |     | 166 |     |     |     |     |     |     | 50  |     |     |
|                     | Kansas City Rag      |     | 251 |     |     |     |     | 294 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Modesty Rag          |     | 300 |     |     |     |     | 199 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | New Era Rag          |     | 291 |     |     |     |     | 201 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | On the Pike          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 218 | 22  |
|                     | Ophelia Rag          |     |     |     |     |     |     | 318 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Paramount Rag        |     | 285 |     |     |     |     | 340 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Peace and Plenty Rag |     | 294 |     |     |     |     | 207 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Pegasus              |     | 303 |     |     |     |     | 225 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Prosperity Rag       | 132 |     |     | 170 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 121 |     |
|                     | Quality Rag          | 62  |     |     | 174 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 54  |     |
|                     | Rag Sentimental      |     | 288 |     |     |     |     |     | 275 |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Ragtime Betty        |     | 259 |     |     |     |     |     | 342 |     |     |     |     |     |
|                     | Ragtime Oriole       | 66  | 272 |     | 178 |     |     |     | 23  |     |     |     | 58  |     |
| Summer Breeze       |                      |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 208 |     |
| Sunburst Rag        |                      | 263 |     |     |     |     |     | 329 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Troubadour Rag      |                      | 297 |     |     |     |     |     | 266 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Victory Rag         | 114                  | 310 |     | 182 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 106 |     |     |
| Settle              | X. L. Rag            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 228 |     |
| Severin             | Jungle Time          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 222 |     |
| Seymore &<br>Barney | St. Louis Tickle     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 97  |     |     |     |     | 14  |     |
| Seymour             | Black Laugh          |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 86  |

| Composer                        | Composition                                   | BeR | B1C | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|---------------------------------|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Shepherd<br>Silverman &<br>Ward | Pickles and Peppers                           |     |     |     |     |     |     | 70  |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                 | That "Hand-Played"<br>Rag                     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 232 |     |
| Simon<br>Sizemore               | Sponge<br>Climbers Rag                        |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 237 |     |
|                                 |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 242 |     |
| Smith, L. &<br>Chapman          | One o' Them Things                            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 63  |
| Smith, R.<br>Stone              | That Demon Rag<br>Belle of the<br>Philippines |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 246 |
|                                 | Ma Ragtime Baby                               |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Taylor                          | Dogzignty Rag                                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 52  |     |     | 250 | 64  |
| Thompson, C.                    | Lily Rag                                      |     | 317 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Thompson, H.<br>Turpin          | Watermelon Trust<br>Bowery Buck               |     |     |     |     |     |     | 12  |     |     | 32  |     |     |     |
|                                 | Buffalo Rag                                   |     | 342 |     |     |     |     | 127 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                 | Harlem Rag (1897)                             |     | 322 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 24  |     |     |     |
|                                 | Harlem Rag (1899)                             |     |     |     |     |     | 62  | 176 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                 | Rag-Time Nightmare                            |     | 333 |     |     |     |     | 163 |     |     | 8   |     |     |     |
|                                 | St. Louis Rag                                 |     | 338 |     |     |     |     | 16  |     |     | 67  |     |     |     |
| Tyler                           | Cotton Patch                                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 258 |     |
| Von Tilzer                      | Ragtime Dance                                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 48  |     |     |     |
| Ward &<br>Silverman             | That "Hand-Played"<br>Rag                     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 232 |
| Wayburn                         | Ragtime Jimmie's<br>Jamboree                  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                                 |   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 60  |     |     |     |
| Weigel                          | Sheath  |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 263 |

| Composer               | Composition               | BeR | B1C | BrR | Gen | JCW | MMG | MOH | PTR | RtP | SWF | TFR | TRR | ZTr |
|------------------------|---------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Wenrich                | Ashy Africa               |     | 347 |     |     |     |     | 268 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Dixie Blossoms            |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 272 |     |
|                        | Fun-Bob                   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 71  |
|                        | Peaches and Cream         |     |     |     |     |     |     | 42  |     |     |     |     | 268 |     |
|                        | Smiler                    |     | 351 |     |     |     |     | 291 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Wilcockson             | Sweetmeats                |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 15  |
|                        | Pride of the Smoky<br>Row |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 50  |
| Wiley                  | Car-Barlick-Acid          |     |     |     |     |     |     | 55  |     |     |     |     | 281 |     |
| Willis                 | Queen Rag                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 286 |     |
| Woods.                 | Sleepy Hollow Rag         |     | 359 |     |     |     |     | 297 |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|                        | Slippery Elm Rag          |     | 355 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Woolsey                | Mashed Potatoes           |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 296 |     |
|                        | Medic Rag                 |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 291 |     |
| Wooster &<br>Smith, E. | Black Cat Rag             |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     | 301 |     |

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