

Univerzita Karlova

Pedagogická fakulta

Fakulta hudební výchovy

Bakalářská práce

Daniel Andrew Flynn BSc

Ragtime Performance Practice and Piano Technique

Praha 2024

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Vartan Agopian, Ph.D.

Prohlášení:

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně, že jsem řádně citoval všechny použité prameny a literaturu a že práce nebyla využita v rámci jiného vysokoškolského studia či k získání jiného nebo stejného titulu.

V Praze, dne 11. July 2024

Daniel Andrew Flynn

Klíčová slova (česky)

Ragtime, piano, pedagogika, Scott Joplin, nahrávky, interpretační analýza, jazz, improvizace

Klíčová slova (anglicky):

Ragtime, piano, pedagogy, Scott Joplin, recordings, interpretation analysis, jazz, improvisation

Abstrakt

Při hledání literatury zabývající se tématem využití ragtime pro pedagogické účely dojdeme k závěru, že takové literatury je pomálu. V této práci se snažím obhájit ragtime jako ideální výukový materiál pro rozvoj hudebnosti, a to jak z hlediska nástrojového mistrovství (klavírní techniky), tak z hlediska klíčových pojmů hudební teorie. V souvislosti s klavírní technikou poskytuje ragtime vynikající základ pro klávesovou geografii prostřednictvím skoků levé ruky. Melodický materiál je jednoduchý, většinou se v něm vyskytuje pouze jeden hlas. Rytmický jazyk je dostatečně přímočarý na to, aby bylo možné na jeho základě učit studenty dělení taktů, hodnoty not a tečkovaný rytmus. Na pokročilejších úrovních je materiál velmi dobře čitelný díky krokovému pohybu a pentatonickým vzorcům spolu s předvídatelnou strukturou frází. Z hlediska improvizace poskytuje základ, který lze využít pro jednoduché improvizční pokusy v rámci prostého, opakujícího se rytmu. Co se týče teorie je ragtime ideálním prostředkem pro výuku hudební forem, která může probíhat prostřednictvím rozboru partitur a poslechových aktivit.

Tato práce zkoumá prvky interpretační praxe ragtime a nuancí, které existují v provedení této hudby. Na příkladu děl Scotta Joplina analyzuji různé nahrávky a jejich interpretačními styly. Zaměřuji se zejména na otázky tempa, rytmu a změn oproti původní notaci. To vše mě vede k zamyšlení se nad dostupnými učebními pomůckami pro studenty. Chci se především soustředit na hodnocení existujících ragtimových metod hraní a také konkrétně zhodnotit jeden příklad aranžmá pro začátečníky.

Na základě výše uvedených tezí je nastíněn přínos ragtime pro konkrétní didaktické účely s navrhovanými zdroji. Spornou otázku "autentického provedení" posuzuji prostřednictvím zkoumání argumentů pro dodržování a odchylky od partitur. Práce je uvedena historickým pozadím vzniku ragtime a jeho znovuzrození v populární kultuře.

Abstract:

The author has been unable to identify significant literature on the topic of the use of ragtime as a teaching aid. It seeks to advocate for ragtime as an ideal teaching material in the development of musicality, both in terms of instrumental mastery (piano technique) and key music theory concepts. In relation to piano technique, ragtime provides an excellent basis for keyboard geography through the left-hand leaps. The melodic material is simple, there is usually only one voice. The rhythmic language is straightforward enough to teach the division of beats and the values of notes and dotted figures. At more advanced levels, the material is highly readable owing to stepwise movement and pentatonic patterns alongside predictable phrase structure. In terms of improvisation, it provides a foundation on which to build. In terms of theory, ragtime is an ideal vehicle for the teaching of form, which can be through score analysis and listening activities.

This work explores elements of ragtime performance practice and the subtleties that exist in the execution of this music. Using the works of Scott Joplin as a case in point, performances are discussed in relation to interpretative choices. In particular, matters of tempo, rhythm and embellishment are subject to discussion. This leads into a consideration of learning resources for students, in terms of appraisal of an existing ragtime method, alongside an example of an arrangement for the beginner.

Based on the foregoing discussions, further elaboration of the benefits of ragtime for specific didactic purposes are outlined with suggested resources. The contentious matter of 'authentic performance' is considered by exploring arguments for adherence and deviation from scores. The work is prefaced with a historical background of ragtime origins, its resurgence in popular culture.

Contents

1 Introduction	3
1.1 Organisation of chapters	4
1.2 Motivation	4
1.3 Glossary of terms	5
1.4 Primary texts	7
2 The evolution of a distinctly American music - Ragtime	9
2.1 Origins	10
2.2 Rise of ragtime in America	12
2.3 Related styles	15
2.4 The "Classic Rag" Designation	17
2.5 Later styles	20
2.6 Influence of ragtime in relation to Western Art Music	21
2.7 The ragtime revival(s) and contemporary ragtime composition	24
3 Foremost composer of ragtime – Scott Joplin	25
4 Analysis of ragtime performance approaches	29
4.1 Listening criteria	29
4.1.1 Rhythmic emphasis and swing	29
4.1.2 Harmonic embellishment	30
4.1.3 Melodic embellishment	30
4.1.4 Agogics	31
4.1.5 Dynamics	31
4.1.6 Tempo	31
4.1.7 Articulation and pedalling	32
4.2 Analysis of recordings	32
4.2.1 A note about the availability of recordings	32
4.2.2 Recording 1 – Scott Joplin - Maple Leaf Rag (Library of Congress recordings) /performed by Jelly Roll Morton	33
4.2.3 Recording 2 - Scott Joplin – Maple Leaf Rag (Connorized Piano Roll)/ performed by Scott Joplin.	35
4.2.4 Recording 3 - Scott Joplin – Maple Leaf Rag (Uni-Record Piano Roll)/ performed by Scott Joplin	36

4.2.5 Recording 4 – Scott Joplin - Scott Joplin’s New Rag /performed by Max Morath	36
4.2.6 Recording 5 – Scott Joplin - Weeping Willow / Performed by William Albright	38
4.2.7 Recording 6 – Scott Joplin - Gladiolus Rag / Daniel Flynn, encore from recital, 24.05.2024).....	39
4.2.8 Recording 7 – Scott Joplin - Maple Leaf Rag / Eubie Blake	39
4.2.9 Recording 8 – Scott Joplin - Euphonic Sounds / James P. Johnson	40
4.2.10 Additional Mention –Royce Martin –Memories on Morgan Street: Scott Joplin Reimagined; 2023.....	41
5 Pedagogical applications of ragtime	42
5.1 Example Ragtime Material	42
5.2 Example learner repertoire	44
6 Technique-related matters	46
6.1 Sight Reading and memorization	46
6.2 Teaching of compositional analysis	47
6.3 Further listening activities	48
6.4 Alternating between bass note and chord with accuracy	48
6.5 Rhythm and tempo	49
6.6 Fingering	50
6.7 Swing and notation value precision	51
6.7 Leaps	51
6.8 Phrasing and pedal	51
6.9 Improvisation	52
7 The question of authentic performance.....	54
7.1 Arguments for absolute fidelity to the score.....	54
7.2 Arguments for deviation from the score	56
8 Conclusion	59
9 Bibliography	61
Appendix 1 Illustrations	62
Appendix 2 Accompanying Audio	67

1 Introduction

This thesis explores stylistic variations in the interpretation of ragtime piano music and the use of ragtime as teaching material in the development of piano technique.

In the interpretation of ragtime, performance styles vary enormously. Since there are a fascinating variety of approaches, it is possible to compare and contrast stylistic differences. In choosing material for research, I have decided to concentrate on the works of Scott Joplin, since there are a large number of recorded interpretations to compare, and his works are particularly popular. I have surveyed a wide range of recordings. Based on this, the main body of my work analyses extracts from selected recordings.

I have tried to include examples which provide a breadth of contrasting approaches. Some of the performers are trained in Western classical music tradition, others hail from a jazz background. Some recordings represent performances from the early part of the 20th century, the most recent is from 2024 (my own interpretation). Some performers adhere largely to the scores, some depart considerably from the printed music. The debate surrounding this is covered in a separate section.

Ragtime has considerable pedagogical potential; firstly, the musical characteristics of the genre provide clear-cut material for illustrating key concepts such as rhythmic acuity, melodic awareness, themes, modulation and form. These are often taught in the abstract sense, but within ragtime such elements of the composition are clearly demonstrable, they stand in relief so to speak. Secondly, for more advanced

students, lessons can be learned regarding subtleties of interpretation which lead to additional layers of musicality being revealed. Such may include the study of chord balance, rubato, addition of passing notes and further embellishments, which can be linked to more advanced interpretative teaching, especially approaches to developing improvisation skills.

1.1 Organisation of chapters

In Chapter 2, an outline of the ragtime genre is provided. I shall particularly discuss origins of the style, historical context and other elements.

In Chapter 3, I present the biography of a representative composer in the field – Scott Joplin.

Chapter 4 comprises analysis of recordings with respect to matters of interpretation. This analysis will be supported where appropriate by transcribed extracts from the recordings.

In Chapter 5 informed by the foregoing analysis, I propose a range of teaching activities focused on developing musicality through the use of ragtime.

Chapter 6 focuses on individual aspects of musicality in relation to ragtime, and in Chapter 7 I consider the question of authentic performance with respect to 'classic ragtime'.

1.2 Motivation

Ragtime as a piano genre is something close to me personally. From the age of twelve I was drawn to this music. It was immediately catchy and had a freshness

combined with a measure of subtlety and a formality which appealed to me. The style was far more accessible than the closest related early jazz styles for piano in terms of notation, rhythm and harmony. I was aware that the sheets for non-classical piano pieces were mostly simplified versions. In contrast, I was able to find sheets for ragtime in the original arrangement, alongside simplified versions. I was pleased to find that even my small local lending library had at least a small anthology of such pieces, and I eagerly brought them home to try out.

I seemed to navigate the left-hand skips with accuracy. I enjoyed the rhythmic drive and the melodiousness of the genre. For this reason, any time I would have a chance to play in school or college, I would often play a ragtime piece.

I have always been aware of the ubiquity of certain ragtime pieces, most notably those of Scott Joplin, such as The Entertainer, and Maple Leaf Rag. Particularly the first of these must surely rank amongst the most popular piano pieces new learners desire to play - this has at least been my own experience.

Since maintaining interest is a key component of effective learning, repertoire is key in maintaining engagement.

1.3 Glossary of terms

Boogie-Woogie	Jazz/blues piano style featuring ostinato/broken octaves in the bass
Cakewalk	Strutting/high-stepping dance devised by African American slaves to parody white dance mannerisms.

	Winning performance awarded a cake
Classic rag	A ragtime piece conforming to the structural and thematic principles most exemplified in the works of the most prolific composers (Joplin, Lamb, Scott etc.)
Cutting contest	Competition between pianists to demonstrate most impressive skills
Honky-tonk	v. Piano playing – where the sound of the instrument timbre is made to imitate a worn-out bar-room instrument. Hardening of the hammers (or tacking) and intentional detuning; n. The venue of performance literally being a saloon or public house
Jazz	A musical form characterized by improvisation, swing and blue notes, with roots in blues, ragtime and a blend of African and European musical traditions
Novelty piano	A development from ragtime, pieces concentrating on special effects based on repeated 'licks'
Piano roll	A piano recording made by punching holes into a paper roll. Duration and pitch indicated by position and length of perforations
Player-piano	Piano with the mechanism to play back piano rolls, usually operated by foot pump action to fill bellows

Ragging	Interpretation of existing piece of music, with the liberal addition of syncopation
Stride piano	A style founded upon alternating single note and chord, but with wider leaps and richer voicings. More diverse melodic and harmonic devices along with higher velocity
Swing	Unequal division of the pulse varying from dotting to triplet rhythm
Syncopation	Displaced accent against main pulse
Trad jazz	Revival movement of early jazz, specifically that which occurred in the 1950's and 1960's

1.4 Primary texts

The first book dedicated to ragtime was published in 1950. The preparation began in summer 1949. The research of the Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis resulted in the publication of 'They All Played Ragtime'¹. As the first detailed survey of the ragtime genre, the authors were able to take the opportunity to speak to a number of important individuals related to the genre who were still alive at the time of their research. The book provides interesting accounts which include reminiscences of performers in relation to performance style. The writers were pioneering in their work. Blesh and Janis were residing in New York, decided upon the project with Blesh having completed

¹ Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis, *They All Played Ragtime: The True Story of an American Music* (Knopf, 1950).

a jazz history a few years previously. They researched material at the Library of Congress in Washington D.C, and New York Public Library. Following this, they pursued interviews, as Blesh later recounted, "...we were able to personally interview around one hundred people that were all very intimately connected one way or another with ragtime."²

The book 'Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History'³ by Edward Berlin is a thoroughly-researched study which takes a meticulous approach to the analysis of trends in published ragtime. based on extensive use primary documentation. The author explores a range of facets, including origins, stylistic variations and developments, and a useful bibliography. Berlin argues points with strength of conviction. leading to some scholars questioning certain of his claims. Nevertheless, the book is an excellent source of quantitative data. There is relatively little material related to performance matters.

'Ragtime: It's History, Composers, and Music'⁴ by John Hasse is a compendium of contributions. Some are extracted from journals and broader texts. With sections relating to social history, key figures and finally a section concentrating on the music itself, this book includes chapters written specifically on topics where the editor found scholarship lacking.

² John Edward Hasse, ed., *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1985), 185.

³ Edward A. Berlin, *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History* (Berkeley (Calif.) Los Angeles (Calif.) London: University of California press, 1984).

⁴ Hasse, *Ragtime*.

2 The evolution of a distinctly American music - Ragtime

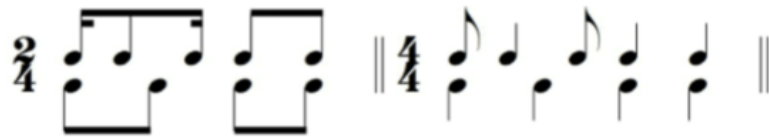
Ragtime is an American musical genre which rose to prominence around the turn of the 20th Century and within twenty years had become largely supplanted jazz. In this chapter I shall point out the characteristics of the genre, and present the historical backdrop including identification of notable figures and events.

Typical hallmarks of ragtime include:

- The music is thoroughly notated
- There is rhythmic stability in the accompaniment, contrasted with a strongly syncopated melody. ⁵

Edward Berlin⁶ identifies the following common types of syncopation in ragtime:

a) Untied Syncopations:



b) Tied Syncopations:



c) Augmented Syncopations:



⁵ David A. Jasen and Trebor Jay Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime: A Musical History* (New York: Dover, 1989), 11.

⁶ Berlin, *Ragtime*, 83.

The genesis of ragtime has origins in the melding of West African musical influences, Western Art music, and the peculiar combination of social factors in the United States in the late 1800s.

The syncopated element in ragtime can be traced to the intricate and subtle West African rhythmic groupings, while the steady rhythmic accompaniment with emphasis on first- and third-beat derives from the march. The effective melding that took place here was tempered in a most interesting manner. The subtleties of how this came about (most particularly the African origins) can be further unpacked leading to insights into the development of ragtime.

2.1 Origins

Research carried out by the musicologist A.M. Jones long ago established that native African music contains a level of polymetric and polyrhythm complexity such as had never been found in European-based musical tradition.⁷ These core elements continued into America due to transportation and enslavement of Africans. On arrival to America, the musical heritage of Africa was expressed through the lens of Western art music.

The analysis of syncopation from the Western classical viewpoint is based on the concept that strong beats are found in relatively close proximity, and that the other beats are weaker. The impact of off-beat rhythms is therefore to in fact reenforce the strong beats via the contrast with weak beats. On the contrary, native African rhythmic

⁷ Gunther Schuller, *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development*, The History of Jazz, v. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 11.

concept is based on no such straightforward emphasis, hence the introduction of syncopation into the Western classical context represents a dilution and compromise of far more sophisticated origins.⁸

In his book *The History of Jazz*, Schuller very succinctly outlines the synthesis of African musical influences in key transmission points:

“Evolving in a steady process of musical assimilation, the Negro’s rhythms were eventually transformed into the much simpler patterns of early jazz. Along this route, especially after Emancipation, various social reforms and corollary manifestations in social or religious rituals and in popular entertainment left their mark. The marching-band tradition of Italian and German immigrants blended readily with the funeral processions of the Negro; Anglo-American hymns blended with African monodic and diodic singing to become the spiritual and its secular counterpart, the blues. The development of the minstrel show provided the Negro with an outlet in the area of popular entertainment, absorbing in the process various popular musical forms from Europe—jigs, marches, polkas, quadrilles, etc.—and finally spawning a pianistic descendant: ragtime.”⁹

As distilled in the previous quotation, the origins of piano ragtime are the product of a fairly clear set of influences. However, the true story is far more subtle, more complex and must take into account factors such as South American influences.¹⁰

⁸ Schuller, 16.

⁹ Schuller, 18.

¹⁰ Samuel A. Floyd and Marsha J. Reisser, ‘The Sources and Resources of Classic Ragtime Music’, *Black Music Research Journal* 4 (1984): 22, <https://doi.org/10.2307/779473>.

Ragtime is an example of the synthesis of musical traditions. Piano rags derive a number of important characteristics from the march:¹¹

- The structure often comprises a number of 16-bar themes (commonly referred to as strains)
- There is not usually development of themes; rather, they are independent and contrasting
- Serial presentation of melody, rather than thematic development (this it has in common with waltz and march forms)
- March-like left-hand part with accent on first and third notes
- The existence of introduction material (commonly a four-bar passage within rags, more usually an eight-bar passage in marches). Transitional material between strains is sometimes found in march and subsequently in ragtime
- The prevalence of non-tonic endings. These are a common characteristic in turn-of-the-century American marches such as those written by John Philip Sousa (1854-1932)
- Use of the tempo indication 'tempo di marcia' being found in almost a third of ragtime publications

2.2 Rise of ragtime in America

In the late 1800's, pianos became affordably available to more households. Indeed, by the end of the century, approximately 150,000 were being produced each

¹¹ Berlin, *Ragtime*, 89; Berlin, 99–104.

year¹². The demand for music making in the home was met by a vast increase in the publication of sheet music, technically accessible to amateur players.

A further advancement in home music-making came in the form of player-pianos as a means of reproduction. Many ragtime, novelty, stride, blues and early jazz compositions were released on piano roll.

It is likely that the genre labelled 'ragtime' was established by the sheet music industry first and foremost, through the publication and wide distribution of highly syncopated original works. Prior to this, the 'ragging' of melody was a stylistic approach to interpreting existing music such as popular songs and classical pieces. Played by ear, talented musicians would improvise by introducing syncopation.¹³

Eventually, audio recording technology and the dawn of radio and television, led to the displacement of the piano as a primary means of home entertainment.

The cultural placement of ragtime is fascinating, since the genesis involves the American yearning for a folk tradition. The acceptance of African American music by the majority white middle-class was key to its commercial success. There were obviously a number of factors at play leading to ragtime gaining acceptance. At least one interesting narrative is the American yearning for a unique musical tradition, and the growing sense that African American (and native Indian) music held the key to the development of a truly American musical 'voice'.¹⁴

¹² Susan Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune: A Life of Scott Joplin* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2004), 108.

¹³ David Gilbert, *The Product of Our Souls: Ragtime, Race, and the Birth of the Manhattan Musical Marketplace* (Chapel Hill, N.C: the University of North Carolina press, 2015), 28.

¹⁴ Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune*, 48.

The earliest ragtime piece is generally acknowledged to be 1895 "You've been a Good Old Wagon but You've Done Broke Down", by Ben Harney. The first pieces bearing the title "rag" were "Mississippi Rag" by William Krell, and Harlem Rag by Tom Turpin, both published in 1897.

A number of commentators can be cited to support the fact that syncopated music was commonly performed in America far before the dawn of piano ragtime. Hasse quotes the poet Sidney Lanier (1842-1881), writing about syncopation in 1876: "Syncopations...are characteristic of negro music. I have heard negroes change a well-known melody by adroitly syncopating it...so as to give it a bizarre effect scarcely imaginable, and nothing illustrates the negro's natural gifts in the way of keeping a difficult tempo more clearly than his perfect execution of airs thus transformed from simple to complex accentuation".¹⁵

In a newspaper article discussing the reputation of ragtime, Scott Joplin himself wrote:

"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."¹⁶

The popularity of ragtime was a function of the growing market for sheet music publications to satisfy the amateur home market. There was a shift towards popular songs which displaced the previous dominant home repertoire of hymns and popular classics¹⁷. One can therefore directly align the rise of this music with innovations in printing, advertising, refined manufacturing processes leading to more affordable

¹⁵ Hasse, *Ragtime*, 6.

¹⁶ Lester Walton, 'Detriment To Ragtime', *New York Age*, 3 April 1913, 6.

¹⁷ Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune*, 109.

instruments, and the legitimisation of African American works in pursuit of a distinctly American music tradition.

Ragtime had its detractors and adversaries. An article in *The Etude* magazine (a prominent music publication at the time), included the following response to the reader question "what is ragtime":

"Rag time is a term applied to the peculiar, broken, rhythmic features of the popular 'coon song'", containing the same aesthetic elements "...as that in the monotonous recurring rhythmic chant of barbarous races". Its popularity was "something to be deplored".¹⁸

Similarly, ragtime was described as "a source of mental ailments"¹⁹ and "a disease".²⁰

2.3 Related styles

The categorisation 'folk rag' is dealt with head-on by few writers, though the terminology persists. Jasen and Tichenor develop an explanation of the category within an entire chapter of their book. The authors set about an exploration of the characteristics of folk rag²¹. Broadly they relate to the It is notable especially in early ragtime pieces through use of rhythmic figures reminiscent of banjo strumming patterns. It stands to reason that these hand-held string instruments would be a basis for some rag figurations, since this would be a much more convenient and available instrument.

¹⁸ 'Questions & Answers', *The Etude*, no. 16 (October 1898): 285.

¹⁹ 'Ragtime Causing Mental Ailments', *Musical America*, no. 18 (15 July 1913): 28.

²⁰ 'Our Musical Condition', *The Etude*, no. 17 (November 1899): 340.

²¹ Jasen and Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime*, 30.

Such rags are often termed 'folk rags' – a term used vaguely for rags containing these particular figurations.

Berlin does not give credence to the term "folk" rag, on the basis that no evidence of actual folk melodies had been pointed to by any author at the time.²² The matter is explored well by Jasen and Tichenor, who claim it to be a sub-genre, definable as those pieces that possess "variegated expression" – a folksy flavour and idiosyncratic character. They summarise, "Thus the Folk rag refers not to one specific type of rag, but rather a body of performances and compositions which have folk elements of various sorts which are enumerated in the discussion of each individual rag".²³ Doubtless this seems a vague definition, however the authors do proceed to provide more specific indicators, such as the tendency for such pieces to bring together a patchwork of tunes, unrelated and later continued well into the century in popular music medley styles.

Further to this, the authors define true folk rags as having a further characteristic: they exist only in recorded form, and were never published.²⁴

In folk rags, the phrases tend to be irregular in length. Hasse brings this out considering the 3 + 2 grouping such as that found in Ragtime Dance by Joplin.²⁵ Though he emphasizes that, in ragtime compositions of an original nature, melodies

²² For further mention of this matter, please refer to the section discussing Antonin Dvorak

²³ Jasen and Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime*, 30.

²⁴ Jasen and Tichenor, 33.

²⁵ Hasse, *Ragtime*, 3.

were written are “fundamental to the very conception of the melody”²⁶, awareness of rhythmic groupings in this way may be of value to performance.

2.4 The “Classic Rag” Designation

The term “classic rag” deserves expansion since it has tended to inform performance practice.

Historically the labelling of some rags as “classic” has been a source of heated disagreement in the field²⁷, and many writers have commented on this designation. Wherever the term has been used in relation to ragtime music it seems to have been for these reasons:

- To convey sense of quality of compositions;
- To lend credibility to the genre;
- To classify a ragtime work according to the characteristics of the composition

For example, Floyd and Reisser (1984), adopt a simple working definition of Classic Ragtime as “...the notated or recorded piano music of the Midwestern ragtimers, specifically that of Scott Joplin, James Scott, Arthur Marshall, Louis Chauvin, and their progeny; also that of Joseph Lamb and Artie Matthews.”²⁸

Through a historical lens, the term was a misappropriation of the Western designation. That all Afro-American artists at the turn of the century aspired to be taken seriously could be one interpretation in this regard. The aspiration to credibility was a

²⁶ Hasse, 4.

²⁷ Ask x ragtime experts and you get x different answers – BERLIN quote

²⁸ Floyd and Reisser, ‘The Sources and Resources of Classic Ragtime Music’, 1984, 22.

theme applying to all African American musical to a genre being hailed in the pursuit of establishing an American distinct musical tradition.

The last here is the struggling which shall be visited in more detail in the section in relation to Western Art music. John Stark, who published advertisements exalting the compositions of those he published (such as Joplin, Lamb, and Scott) as works of the highest quality (including the byline for his company as "The House of Classic Rags"²⁹), wrote the following, propagating the sense parallel with serious music, taking care to draw the distinction between high quality compositions in the ragtime genre worthy of serious designation, and the ubiquitous output of poorer quality material:

"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 Patee so that the understudy musicians and camp followers could tip toe and rave about them.

"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.

"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

²⁹ Hasse, *Ragtime*, 186.

Bach fugue, writers of diluted and attenuated imitations have sprung up from Maine's frozen hills to the boiling bogs of Louisiana".³⁰

This extract from a trade publication demonstrates the obvious hyperbole of a music publisher with a vested interest in promoting his product. One may dismiss it as such. However, the term found currency through its adoption in the seminal book "They All Played Ragtime". It was used at that time by the authors to differentiate between works of a higher quality and those of derivative and inferior quality, which was a distinction they drew based on criteria subsequently debunked. Some of the main postulates include that the higher quality works originated geographically from the Midwest Missouri region, discrediting ragtime from the East Coast of the United States, notably that of "Tin-Pan Alley" origin.

Blesh and Janis bring together fascinating first-hand material and gripping reminiscences. The book has been criticized for lacking academic precision, for the claims the authors make through their phraseology, and the subjectivity of the text. As Edward Berlin clarifies, however, "...it was not written to satisfy academic tastes".³¹ It was written as a popular history, and to that extent it serves its purpose very well. One can say with certainty that the designation "classic ragtime" first came into widespread use through its usage in this book.

In all realms of music, certain figures rise to prominence owing to consensus of popularity, a function of the inherent qualities of the work and the perception thereof. The same applies within ragtime. The music of Scott Joplin has enjoyed particular

³⁰ Hasse, 187.

³¹ Berlin, *Ragtime*, 177.

longevity and prominence, and understandably. He produced more rags than his contemporaries and his successes grew his reputation.

2.5 Later styles

Pioneers of stride such as James P. Johnson, Thomas "Fats" Waller, and Art Tatum, were especially renowned for technical prowess. A richness of harmonic language is a particular hallmark of stride, provided by varied voicings, increased rhythmic complexity, and an inventive approach to improvise variations in the melody. Octave doubling is a standard element, and a more virtuosic approach is necessary especially in relation to keyboard geography for leaps, countermelody improvisation and harmonic variation which necessitates from performers a keen awareness of progression patterns and modulation possibilities.

Composers such as Zez Confrey and Edward Claypoole experimented with the texture of ragtime especially by the inclusion of fast arpeggiated figurations, exploration of the full compass of the instrument, grace notes and onomatopoeic effects (imitation of animals for example), harmonic extensions for piquant effects while maintain a fully-notated tradition.

The evolution of ragtime into the more complex styles of stride and novelty piano, eventually culminated in a move towards greater melodic and harmonic variability, supported by greater technical virtuosity and a dominance of improvisation. Form also became freer to accommodate these changes. Ultimately, these were the changes that heralded jazz.

2.6 Influence of ragtime in relation to Western Art Music

Many composers in the Classical tradition have found inspiration in ragtime. Examples include Darius Milhaud, Erik Satie, Erwin Schulhoff, Igor Stravinsky and Charles Ives. Especially worthy of note are the last two, since they were both active composers based in America at the time when ragtime was growing in popularity.

Ives encountered ragtime at minstrel shows in his home town around 1892³². Subsequently he was the earliest incorporator of ragtime in classical music, composing such works as the Set of Nine Ragtime Pieces (1902), Ragtime Dances (1902-3), and Set of Four Ragtime Pieces (1902-4). Furthermore, Ives wrote "Ragtime may be nature's way of giving art raw material...time will throw its vices away and weld its virtues into the fabric of our music".³³ Continuing within such works as Ives' Second Symphony and Three Places in New England (and through a melding of Civil War songs, plantation songs and minstrel songs), Joseph Horowitz concludes "The Black vernacular is here not appropriated, but retrospectively observed with admiration and respect. At the same time, snatches of ragtime look forward to Black music to come".³⁴

The Czech composer Antonín Dvořák (1841 – 1904) occupies a special position at the juncture of the Western Art music tradition and the desire for creation of a distinctive American musical 'voice'. Suffice that the topic merits mention here at least in outline; it is not entirely corollary to the matter at hand.

³² Charles Ives, *Memos*, ed. John Kirkpatrick, Norton paperback [ed.], 3. [print.] (New York: Norton, 1991).

³³ Ives.

³⁴ Joseph Horowitz, *Dvořák's Prophecy: And the Vexed Fate of Black Classical Music*, First edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2022), 78.

Dvořák famously found inspiration in the Negro spirituals and plantations songs, in addition to being inspired by the Native American romance of Hiawatha. Yet some proclaim direct evidence of ragtime echoes are apparent in – say – the third movement of Dvořák's Suite in A Major Op. 98b. Horowitz states "Joplin is in fact the composer that the third movement of Dvořák's *American Suite* (1894), with its stride-piano left-hand skips, most evokes".³⁵ It seems that critics and composers were rather fixated on the desire to find a unique voice. Dvořák is historically prominent in being a composer of repute, whose opinion was therefore readily published, but the message he provided was nothing new in itself.

Ultimately, to make anything further of the connection would require that Dvořák could have remained in America for longer in order to exert more influence on Joplin (evidence has not come to light that Joplin was exposed to the works of Dvořák). At the least, Joplin and Dvořák can be said to share some common source of inspiration, and that the credibility of African American spirituals and plantation melodies would be an element of shared context amongst these artists. In terms of their periods of compositional activity, the compositions and writings of Dvořák in America are broadly contemporaneous to the period in which Joplin was working. It is known that Dvořák liked to experience a diversity of musical genres, and it is highly likely that he was exposed to the ragtime piano style on that basis³⁶.

The Czech composer Erwin Schulhoff (1894 – 1942) lived through an incredibly innovative period. His oeuvre contains a diversity of stylistic influences, and he

³⁵ Horowitz, 111.

³⁶ Horowitz, 111.

produced a number of jazz-inspired works. He first became familiar with ragtime, dance rhythm and jazz through George Grosz, a collector of American recordings. Distinctively jazz-focused compositions include such works as *Cinq études de jazz* (1926), *Esquisses de jazz* (1927), *Hot-Music* (1928), and the oratorio *HMS Royal Oak* (1930). The earlier jazz-influenced works include movements entitled "ragtime". The *Fünf Pittoresken* (1919) and the *Suite for Chamber Orchestra* (1921). He recorded some of this repertoire for Polydor in the late 1920s. Later he performed as a radio pianist and theatre accompanist. As a Jew his later operation as a composer was restricted and he met his tragic demise whilst detained in a concentration camp in 1942, having unsuccessfully attempted to flee Czechoslovakia.³⁷

An example of early ragtime revival may be found in the oeuvre of Jaroslav Ježek (1906 – 1942). An adept classically-trained composer, he produced incredibly successful show tunes. His *Equatorial Rag* (1929, for the revue *Fata-Morgana*) contains hardly any instance of tied or untied syncopation; it is a good example of a pastiche, and more a march. On the other hand, his well-known *Bugatti Step* (1931, for the revue *Don Juan & comp.*) contains a vast array of syncopation effects.

Composers continue to write rags. One particularly noteworthy composer is the American composer William Bolcom (b. May 26th 1938), whose rags are particularly inventive and well-crafted. These are especially informed by jazz traditions and an awareness of Western classical harmonic language.

³⁷ 'Musica Non Grata', accessed 11 July 2024, <https://www.musicanongrata.cz/en/about-the-project/>.

Ragtime – classical or popular?

Many commentators describe the aspiration of Joplin to develop as a classical composer and transcend the popular music genre. Joplin had such ambition and drive that he wrote two operas. However, I am not of the opinion that this can be equated with the intention to be taken seriously as a classical composer. I suggest that a parallel may be drawn with the pursuits of rock artists who write concept albums (such as Pink Floyd – The Wall, The Kinks – Arthur, The Small Faces – Ogden’s Nut Gone Flake, The Beatles – Sgt. Pepper, The Who – Tommy, The Pretty Things – S.F. Sorrow), which very often embrace film and orchestral work, or those artists who incorporate orchestral instruments in their albums (such as Love, Deep Purple, Frank Zappa). Similarly, Joplin and his ability can be said to extend past the limitations of the simple hit single believed in himself as a serious composer. Rather, in Joplin, we have a popular writer who is able to deal with longer forms.

2.7 The ragtime revival(s) and contemporary ragtime composition

The “ragtime revival” is a phrase commonly associated with two spikes in interest relating to ragtime, between the early 1940s to the late 1970s, when ragtime enjoyed growing exposure and - especially one point – an explosion in popularity. The ragtime pianist, composer and broadcaster Max Morath, correctly identified that the term revival was somewhat a misnomer, since ragtime never truly revived in the sense of returning as a popular music form; rather, a nostalgia for the music of the era was aroused.

During the 1920s and 30s Maple Leaf Rag was recorded at least 24 times.³⁸ By this era, interpretations of ragtime no longer conformed to the notated tradition. It should be said that the timeline and cross-pollination of ideas is far from linear and since we are concerned here with classic ragtime as defined previously, it will suffice to outline the features of the individual approaches.

Some research covering elements of ragtime had been carried out prior to 1950. For example, in 1938, the musicologist Alan Lomax conducted interviews with jazz pioneer Jelly Roll Morton at the Library of Congress, including performances and reminiscences relating to ragtime (refer to audio material excerpt of Maple Leaf Rag).

Subsequently, ragtime grew somewhat in profile through the recordings of a number of performers during the 1950s. Artists such as Dick Hyman, Wally Rose and Anne Charters were recording ragtime piano in the 1950s.

There were a series of events in short succession which led to the revitalization of ragtime in the public eye. Since these were almost entirely focused upon the work of Scott Joplin, more details are provided in Chapter 3.

3 Foremost composer of ragtime – Scott Joplin

Joplin was born in Bowie County, Texas on November 24th 1868.³⁹ Hailing from a musical family, he was the son of a free-born woman and freed slave father. He played second cornet in the Queen City Concert Band in Sedalia, Missouri. Subsequently he sang in the Texas Medley Quartette which he founded. From 1885 onwards he

³⁸ David A. Jasen, *Recorded Ragtime, 1897-1958* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1973), 99.

³⁹ Jasen and Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime*.

performed regularly in a saloon bar. The social club associated with this was the Maple Leaf Club. At around the age of 25, he enrolled at George R. Smith College – an African-American only college opened in 1894 – taking courses of composition, harmony and music theory.⁴⁰ His first compositions in ragtime date from this period. His first published works were typical sentimental songs and marches, containing minimal syncopation. His first rag, *Original Rags*, was published in 1899. *Maple Leaf Rag* was his second publication. This proved a phenomenal success. A subsequent contract with publisher John Stark marked a fruitful period of composition in St. Louis, Missouri. Joplin maintained a consistent quality of output and became celebrated for his works. Following a divorce and the tragic loss of his two-month-old daughter, in 1907 Joplin moved to New York where Stark had also set up offices.

Joplin was notable for the quality and volume of his compositional output. His works are consistently marked by a melodic elegance and a sophistication and taste with respect to treatment of textures and harmonic progressions. He was ambitious in striving to elevate ragtime as a classical genre. Famously he produced two operas, one of which (*A Guest Of Honour*) is now lost, and the second of which, *Treemonisha*, was not performed in orchestrated form in his lifetime⁴¹. Both projects failed and Joplin descended into depression. Complications from syphilis are his likely cause of death, and he spent his last months in an asylum. Joplin died in New York, New York April 1 1917. He was buried in an unmarked grave.

⁴⁰ Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune*, 81.

⁴¹ Hasse, *Ragtime*, 133.

The quality and quantity of Joplin's oeuvre dominates his contemporaries in the genre. Therefore, Joplin's work became a de facto model for the genre. He possessed a melodic gift for elegant simplicity. The extent to which Joplin was limited by his lack of formal training might stand discussion, in light of comments made by the Director of the St Louis Choral Symphony, Alfred Ernst. Writing in 1901, he comments on the talents of Joplin in most complimentary manner. He qualifies by acknowledging "a certain crudeness" in Joplin's work, citing his lack of musical education in this regard. He continues:

"Recently I played for him portions of Tanhauser. He was enraptured. I could see that he comprehended and appreciated this class of music. It was the opening of a new world to him, and I believe he felt as Keats felt when he first read Chapman's Homer.

"The work Joplin has done in ragtime is so original, so distinctly individual, and so melodious withal, that I am led to believe he can do something fine in compositions of a higher class when he shall have been instructed in theory and harmony.

"Joplin's work, as yet, has a certain crudeness, due to his lack of musical education, but it shows that the soul of the composer is there and needs but to be set free, by knowledge of technique..."⁴²

The Joplin works for piano are broadly speaking simple harmonically but this is appropriate for the genre, the elegance lies in the simplicity of the tonal plan and the minimality of the writing. In his ambitious operatic works, we see an entirely contrasting side of his capability. A discussion of his musical aptitude should consider

⁴² 'Joplin To Play Ragtime In Europe', *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 28 February 1901.

his handling of choral and orchestral writing, since there is very little other chamber music (excluding a handful of songs).

In respect of his performing ability at the piano (he was also cornet player and singer) we have the information provided in the piano rolls (which are of dubious credibility; refer to the later analysis section). Furthermore, anecdotal testimony from his arrival in Sedalia around 1894 indicated that Joplin was immersed in the music community and was in demand as a performer and coordinator of music events⁴³

In her book *Dancing To a Black Man's Tune: A Life of Scott Joplin*, Susan Curtis states that, since composers such as Rubinstein, Godowsky and Debussy cut piano rolls of their works, Joplin '...thus joined elite company and prompted an association between his work and the work of famous musicians to substantiate his claim to serious critical consideration'⁴⁴. I do not believe that the recording of these rolls by Joplin would have significantly enhanced his credibility. Ragtime stood in contrast to classical music, and thus would have been perceived differently.

Below I present a timeline of events which drove Joplin's compositions into a sort of renaissance.

Nov. 1970	Joshua Rifkin album <i>Piano Rags</i> by Scott Joplin released by Nonesuch Records. Becomes a best-seller, and eventually tops a million sales following the release of the film 'The Sting'
1971	Publication of the <i>Collected Piano Works of Joplin</i> supervised by Vera Brodsky Lawrence

⁴³ Curtis, *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune*, 78.

⁴⁴ Curtis, 148.

1972	Restaging of Joplin Opera Treemonisha
Dec. 1973	Release of the film 'The Sting', exclusively featuring Joplin's music arranged by Marvin Hamlisch. Wins Academy Award for soundtrack.
1976	Joplin is awarded a posthumous Pulitzer Prize for Treemonisha

4 Analysis of ragtime performance approaches

I shall now begin analysis of recordings. At times I shall refer to the aural testimony of interpreters and other commentators. I intend to compare and contrast approaches to performance. Extracts of recordings are included in the accompanying audio disc. Wherever apt to my points, I supplement descriptions with transcriptions of passages from recordings compared against corresponding original scores. I shall focus primarily on objective points aspects and also offer subjective comments on the matter of effectiveness of approach.

4.1 Listening criteria

Here I present an amplification of the main listening criteria I use in the analysis section which follows.

4.1.1 Rhythmic emphasis and swing

Swing is usually written 'straight'. Swung rhythm may be generally described in terms of subtle lengthening and shorting of the first and second notes in a beat., where a beat is actually notated with notes of equal value. An example might be the division

of a quarter note into a dotted eighth followed by a sixteenth. On the other hand, the actual degree of swing depends on the precise extent of lengthening and shortening. The typical blues or boogie swing divide each beat into a triplet.

The extent to which the interpreter modifies swings the rhythm is pivotal to the effect of the interpretation, since swing provides what is effectively a further level of all-pervasive syncopation. This displacement causes an anticipatory urge in the listener, engendering physical sympathetic reaction (such as head nodding, foot/hand tapping) and a general sense of 'groove' which enhances the listening experience. Since groove is established for a degree of time (to achieve effect this must be the case), it is easier to comment upon than melodic rubato which has more variability.

4.1.2 Harmonic embellishment

It is very common practice for modifications to be made in harmonic terms, in order to add colouration. For example, alternative voicings (e.g. doubling bass note at the octave, octaves extended to tenths in the bass, addition of the third or fifth in an octave), arpeggiation of chords, added modulations and substituted chords.

4.1.3 Melodic embellishment

To enhance the basic homophonic texture, added parallel thirds and sixths or doubling at the octave are a common addition to the melody line. Passing notes, grace notes and turns, are a further approach particularly amongst the classic school of performance. Addition of countermelody is an occasional approach.

4.1.4 Agogics

Expressive fluidity and agogic accentuation are a particularly interesting aspect in the performance of ragtime. An example would be arpeggiation of chords. Fundamentally, it is necessary to preserve the elements which provide the greatest effect – the syncopated melody. The maintenance of this rhythmic drive should be possible even with agogic adjustment. Perhaps this is the most subjective element related in this list.

4.1.5 Dynamics

Notation of dynamics is typically thorough in ragtime scores. Repeats are often performed in contrasting dynamic. As with any music, the shaping of phrases dictates the most logical dynamic movement.

4.1.6 Tempo

Tempo is an area of enormous controversy amongst ragtime commentators. There are two main camps of opinion. Firstly, the classical moderate tempo, with notable tempo fluctuation for expression. These interpretations are the most well known in recent times, since they stem from the approach popularised during the most recent 'ragtime revival' by performers such as Joshua Rifkin, William Albright, William Bolcom (and prior to this, the pioneering recordings of Anne Charters).

Contrasting with this, the 'old-time' playing approach, often maintains faster tempi. This is particularly favoured by those performers who depart more often from the score in the spirit of the nostalgic competitive spirit of the cutting-contest.

4.1.7 Articulation and pedalling

Articulation is commonly distinctively handled, often without adherence to instructions within a score. Hence, I anticipate a diversity of approaches to touch, phrasing and pedalling. A dry approach (very little pedal) is more common than a prominent pedal. In any case it is largely up to the discretion of the performer, since many scores contain few pedal instructions.

4.2 Analysis of recordings

4.2.1 A note about the availability of recordings

The availability of recordings has been greatly improved in the digital era through the reissue of material on streaming services, video platforms and online repositories. I have located a quantity of material via this method. In addition, I have collected a variety of recordings many of which are unavailable digitally. A complete listing of recordings I have appraised in the course of my research may be found in the Appendix.

The aim of the process was to gain awareness of a broad range of performance styles. In pursuance of this work, I wish to present noteworthy examples of interesting interpretations. The performers are from diverse backgrounds. Most are trained in the Western classical tradition, but many are from non-classical backgrounds, and some recordings are by composers themselves.

I consider piano roll recordings with necessary caveats relating to authenticity and reliability of reproduction. The recording of solo piano at the turn of the 20th century was particularly challenging compared to vocal or ensemble performances.

Dynamic range was limited, background noise was intrusive and most home playback equipment did not provide optimal reproduction. The timbres of the piano were difficult to capture to a degree of musical satisfaction. With modern techniques, restoration can result in intelligible playback of even the poorest quality analogue recordings made on cylinder or disc.

However, for the aforementioned reason, many musicians preferred to embrace piano roll recording as a mechanism to preserve their intentions. Pianist-composers in the 1910s (such as Scriabin and Granados), favoured piano rolls over flawed analogue audio recording. A smaller proportion of pianists (such as Grainger, Rachmaninov and Busoni) were more willing to experiment with the technology.

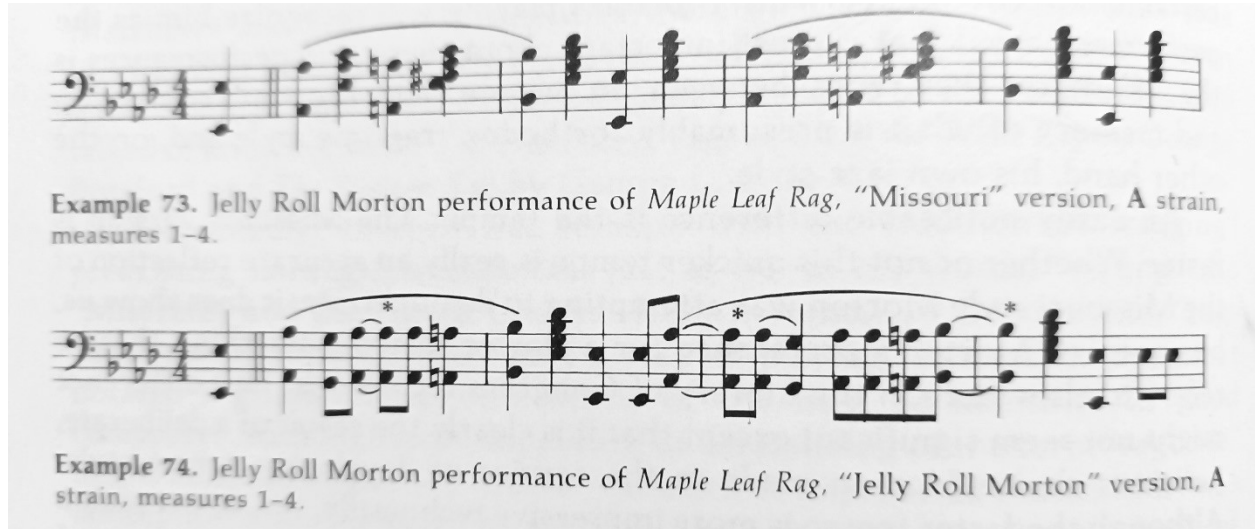
The process of selecting recordings for more detailed discussion has been informed by my own experience of a wide range of recorded interpretations as well as my experience as a performer of these pieces. I have set out to find recordings demonstrating a spectrum of approaches to performing ragtime.

4.2.2 Recording 1 – Scott Joplin - Maple Leaf Rag (Library of Congress recordings) /performed by Jelly Roll Morton

Ferdinand 'Jelly Roll' Morton was a pivotal figure in the development of jazz. His compositions and recordings demonstrate conspicuous creativity in the synthesis of influences.

Morton offers contrasting versions of the Maple Leaf Rag. Below is an extract of the initial four bars of bass transcription according to Hasse. The piece is originally in

2/4. However, these bass transcriptions are notated in 4/4 to acknowledge change in emphasis of the second version away from 2nd and 4th beats: ⁴⁵



Example 73. Jelly Roll Morton performance of *Maple Leaf Rag*, "Missouri" version, A strain, measures 1-4.

Example 74. Jelly Roll Morton performance of *Maple Leaf Rag*, "Jelly Roll Morton" version, A strain, measures 1-4.

His second performance is much more characteristic of the introduction of counter-melodies and South American rhythms which hallmark Morton's style. It is invaluable that his performance is preserved. The Missouri approach contrasts with his own style, largely developed through southern and eastern US musical influences.

⁴⁵ Hasse, *Ragtime*, 262.

4.2.3 Recording 2 - Scott Joplin – Maple Leaf Rag (Connorized Piano Roll)/ performed by Scott Joplin.



Highlighted passing notes, to be taken by RH or, if necessary, LH with more creative fingering (e.g. the preceding octaves fingered 5 and 2, thumb taking passing note).



Added descending 32nd notes include flattening C, anticipating the minor harmony ascending arpeggio.





Descending pentatonic figure in the final bar, which most naturally could be taken with finger 2 or 2 and then 3 on the C.

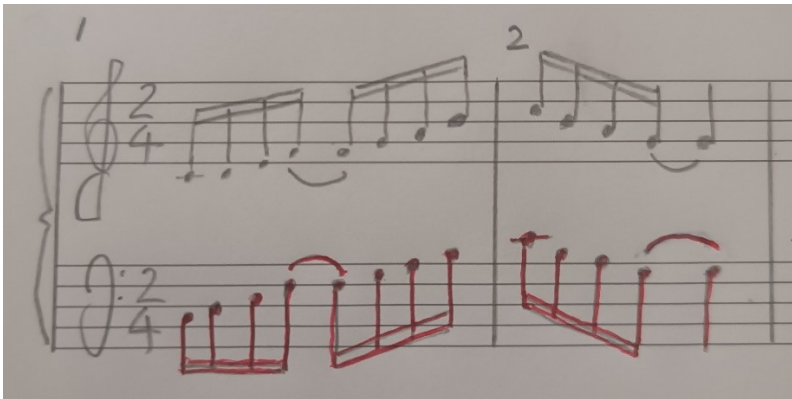
4.2.4 Recording 3 - Scott Joplin – Maple Leaf Rag (Uni-Record Piano Roll)/ performed by Scott Joplin

This particular performance lacks synchronicity, but is fundamentally straight rhythmically. There are two points of notable embellishments in a single note texture which provide contrast. The chorus emphasises staccato attack. The dynamic is relatively flat owing to the limitations of the technology. The tempo is to an extent difficult to conclude based on questions surrounding playback speed. There are almost no deviations from the printed score; the penultimate chord (which would create a perfect cadence) is omitted, which is of course very noticeable. Other than this, a greater degree of analysis would be required to untangle the artistic nuances from this roll data.

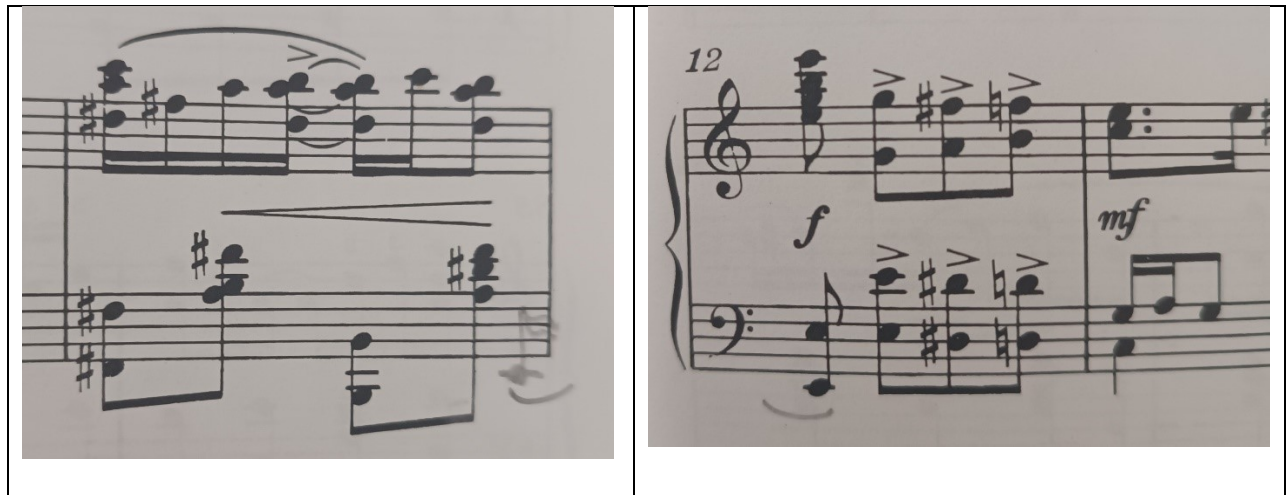
4.2.5 Recording 4 – Scott Joplin - Scott Joplin's New Rag /performed by Max Morath

A jaunty swing rhythm is selected and a moderate tempo. There is considerable fidelity to the score overall. Here are three notable examples of deviation:

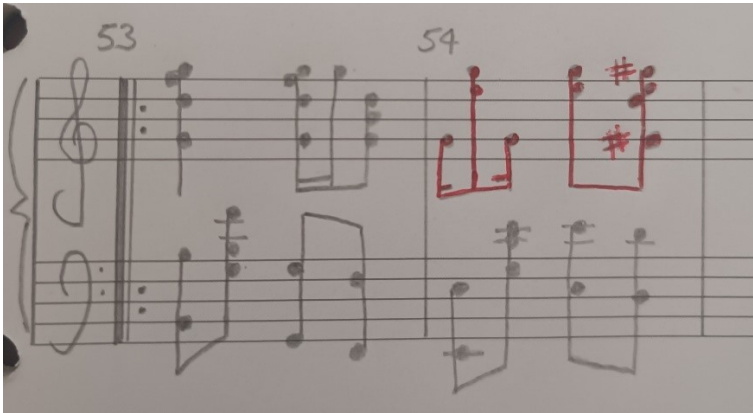
Modification 1: Introduction is originally parallel diatonic scale rising and falling a sixth apart between the hands. This is altered so that the left hand plays exactly an octave apart. On one hand there is the loss of the major third richness. However, this simplification adds force to the introduction.



Modification 2: Left hand broken octave syncopation (bar 11 shows the anticipatory 16th note, tied to bar 12. This would be a strict notated for rhythmic precision).



Modification 3: Variation of rhythm in section 3, bar 54. Particularly effective owing to the swing rhythm which emphasizes the dotted effect of the repeated G.



A very expressive approach is taken in section D, which is marked by an extremely contrasting slowed tempo and rubato. He switches back to original tempo for the descending chromatic figure leading into the final reprise of section A.

4.2.6 Recording 5 – Scott Joplin - Weeping Willow / Performed by William Albright

Albright provides a very subtle reading of this rag. His precise approach and musicianship lead to a very beautiful interpretation. As an example of the type of embellishment he includes, we can note a simple legato counter-melody added:



4.2.7 Recording 6 – Scott Joplin - Gladiolus Rag / Daniel Flynn, encore from recital, 24.05.2024)

My performance was recorded as part of my graduation recital. The audio quality is not optimal. I shall describe a number of my interpretative decisions.

I choose a moderate tempo with the intention to allow phrases to expand. I aim to provide expressive colour within each section, with an emphasis on the bassline in section C. I add unison quick descending notes, in deference to the well-known embellishment at the same point in the Connorized role of Maple Leaf Rag, at the beginning of the f-minor pentatonic pattern.

I add particular accent and emphasis by breaking the chord at various points. I add anticipatory notes in the B section. In section C of the rag, which is the modulation to sub-dominant, I occasionally apply the same device. Coming into section C, I broaden the tempo to accommodate the denser writing in the rising and falling pentatonic octaves. In the culminating bars of the section, I arpeggiate the chord down and then back.

To transition into section D, I break the left-hand descending octaves, playing them mezzo piano and staccato.

4.2.8 Recording 7 – Scott Joplin - Maple Leaf Rag / Eubie Blake

Blake (1883-1983) was a performer whose vitality and longevity allowed a connection to a bygone era. Having personally encountered Joplin and written some

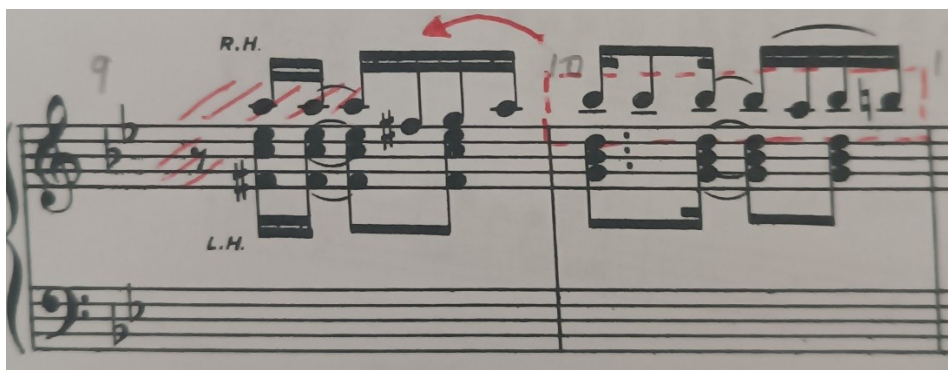
well-known ragtime/stride compositions, he enjoyed a career in popular songwriting and musical comedy, and became an ambassador for ragtime following the resurgence.

His rendition of Maple Leaf Rag was recorded when he was in his 80s. As would be expected, a brisk tempo is taken. The rendition is not in the original key. He commonly moves the bass octaves in the opposite direction to the printed version. Numerous key slide effects are added, and thicker chord textures are introduced. Into the Trio, he outlines the harmony in right hand chords, and instead takes a melody using syncopated octaves into the bass. Overall, this is a varied and lively performance demonstrating stride technique and harmonic awareness.

4.2.9 Recording 8 – Scott Joplin - Euphonic Sounds / James P. Johnson

Euphonic Sounds was recorded on numerous occasions by Johnson, who was an innovative stride player and composer in the period postdating the ragtime era. However, the complexity and unconventional nature of the harmonic language in this rag, clearly appealed to jazz players as a jumping-off point for improvisation.

Johnson makes a range of modifications to the original score. The introduction retains the harmonic outline (broadly I-IV-IV-V within the first four bars). He doubles all bass notes throughout. In bar 9, he plays the rhythm of bars 10 and 11:



Johnson adds a wealth of harmonies and sparkling chromatic runs. There is even a whole (brief) sequence which is unrelated to the original material. The flattened third and seventh of blues are strongly in evidence. Stride virtuosity does not overshadow the original piece. The tempo taken is moderate, the original key is maintained, and the fundamental elements are retained.

4.2.10 Additional Mention –Royce Martin –Memories on Morgan Street: Scott Joplin Reimagined; 2023

Royce Martin has a formal training in jazz. He is a prominent figure in the sphere of ragtime enthusiasts. As a pianist at the Scott Joplin House Museum, which is precisely the context in which such performances would be most impactful, his performances bring the music to life.

Martin interprets Joplin's works in a variety of melded styles (primarily jazz, and to a much lesser extent classical) which differ significantly in each rag. Martin is technically highly adept and very capable in each style. His interpretation of Solace is particularly effective.

These skilful re-imaginings are intensely respectful of the melodic and harmonic base of Joplin's music. Martin treads new ground in a generation of artists who present ragtime in a fresh iteration, updated, through the lens of all later innovations. This album has considerable pedagogical potential for advanced listening exercises, such as to identify blending of styles within sections.

5 Pedagogical applications of ragtime

Ragtime works indeed figure within instructional methods, but within this section I shall identify the elements within ragtime which make it an ideal medium for teaching core musical concepts. Further, I will advocate for the advantages of ragtime in development of practical musicianship skills.

5.1 Example Ragtime Material

Manfred Schmitz – Bausteine Ragtime für Klavier⁴⁶ is an excellent course, which is part of the “Basic Series for young pianists” from Edition Peters. The introductions to the activities are very clear; however; the language used is rather advanced, and the construction of ideas in the text is rather heavy, making this less appropriate for self-study by younger piano students.

This comprises a ‘Beginners Corner’ which is a set of exercises based on a short model. In the first iteration the author already introduces the characteristic alternating bass simplified to be manageable in a single hand position without need for any large skips. Key letters indicate the harmonic changes (at first restricted to tonic and dominant) under the bars. Melodic legato slurs against bass staccato are immediately present to encourage awareness of rhythmic precision.

⁴⁶ Manfred Schmitz, *Bausteine Ragtime: für Klavier*, EP10200 (Edition Peters, n.d.), accessed 7 July 2024.

Übung 1 / Exercise 1

♩ ca. 72

C (3) 5 G⁷ (2) 1 2 (1)

Later the author uses symbols to identify chromatic and diatonic passing notes.

This is developed immediately by a novel notational approach outlining the rhythm and permitting variation, initially guided, thus:

Übung 2 / Exercise 2

C G⁷

1. C G⁷

2. C

This method of notation encourages experimentation while providing a framework of support, which I believe is an excellent aspect of this method.

Later the author uses the 'building block' approach and adds a second rhythmic pattern, followed by modulation to the secondary dominant. He moves on to introduce the prevalent diminished seventh, and so forth.

There follows a section with pieces of graduated difficulty. Potential areas for variation of material are indicated, all of which are referenced to a special separate chapter of 'Formula Phrases'. Again, a supportive framework to be used as a jumping-off point for initial ventures into improvisation. The work also includes a handful of pertinent exercises (after Hanon) and modulation (after Beringer).

5.2 Example learner repertoire

Emil Hradecký – Jozzové Kousky Pro Dvacet Prstů – pro klavir na čtyři ruce⁴⁷ is a collection comprises eight original piano duets including a blues, a boogie, a rag and various dance styles. These items are instructional compositions at a fairly low level of technical demand. Benefits of the collection include a forward explaining the swing approach, and an excellent suggestion for guided improvisation in the blues piece. In relation to the rag, a nice touch is that the *primo* is decidedly more challenging, and takes over the stride pattern to give the *secondo* player a solo. Yet another nice touch is the use of pedal in bars 17-24 (see figure). All elements (the pattern of staccato in piano dynamic, marking of *marcato*, and pedal after the tied eighth notes, all combine to reinforce the feeling of syncopation within students. I find this to be very subtle and intelligent writing for instructional purposes.

⁴⁷ Emil Hradecký, *Jazzové Kousky pro Dvacet Prstů*, H7975 (Editio Bärenreiter Praha, n.d.).

secondo

9

Measures 9-12. Bass clef. Measure 9: quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 10: quarter note D3, quarter note E3, quarter note F3, quarter note G3. Measure 11: quarter note A3, quarter note B3, quarter note C4, quarter note D4. Measure 12: quarter note E4, quarter note F4, quarter note G4, quarter note A4. Dynamics: *p* (measures 10-11), *mf* (measures 12-13). Fingerings: 1 (m9), 5 3 (m10), 3 1 (m11), 5 1 (m12). Pedals: * (m9), 1 (m10), 2 (m11), 3 (m12).

13

Measures 13-16. Bass clef. Measure 13: quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 14: quarter note D3, quarter note E3, quarter note F3, quarter note G3. Measure 15: quarter note A3, quarter note B3, quarter note C4, quarter note D4. Measure 16: quarter note E4, quarter note F4, quarter note G4, quarter note A4. Dynamics: *p* (measures 13-15), *f* (measures 16-17). Fingerings: 4 2 (m13), 3 1 (m14), 5 3 (m15), 3 1 (m16). Pedals: 5 (m13), 2 (m14), 2 (m15), 3 (m16), 4 (m17), *Lea* (m17).

17

Measures 17-21. Bass clef. Measure 17: quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 18: quarter note D3, quarter note E3, quarter note F3, quarter note G3. Measure 19: quarter note A3, quarter note B3, quarter note C4, quarter note D4. Measure 20: quarter note E4, quarter note F4, quarter note G4, quarter note A4. Measure 21: quarter note B4, quarter note C5, quarter note D5, quarter note E5. Dynamics: *p* (measures 17-19), *mf* (measures 20-21). Fingerings: 1 (m17), 1 (m18), 4 (m19), 4 (m20), 4 (m21). Pedals: * (m17), 1 4 *marcato* *Lea* * (m18), *Lea* * (m19), 4 *Lea* * (m20), 4 *Lea* * (m21).

22

Measures 22-25. Bass clef. Measure 22: quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 23: quarter note D3, quarter note E3, quarter note F3, quarter note G3. Measure 24: quarter note A3, quarter note B3, quarter note C4, quarter note D4. Measure 25: quarter note E4, quarter note F4, quarter note G4, quarter note A4. Dynamics: *f* (measures 24-25). Fingerings: 1 4 (m22), 1 4 (m23), 4 (m24), 1 2 4 2 (m25). Pedals: 1 4 *Lea* * (m22), *Lea* * (m23), 4 *Lea* * (m24), > (m25).

26

Measures 26-29. Bass clef. Measure 26: quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 27: quarter note D3, quarter note E3, quarter note F3, quarter note G3. Measure 28: quarter note A3, quarter note B3, quarter note C4, quarter note D4. Measure 29: quarter note E4, quarter note F4, quarter note G4, quarter note A4. Dynamics: *p* (measures 26-27), *mf* (measures 28-29). Fingerings: 5 3 (m26), 3 1 (m27), 5 3 (m28), 3 1 (m29). Pedals: 1 (m26), 2 (m27), 5 (m28), 3 (m29).

30

Measures 30-33. Bass clef. Measure 30: quarter note G2, quarter note A2, quarter note B2, quarter note C3. Measure 31: quarter note D3, quarter note E3, quarter note F3, quarter note G3. Measure 32: quarter note A3, quarter note B3, quarter note C4, quarter note D4. Measure 33: quarter note E4, quarter note F4, quarter note G4, quarter note A4. Dynamics: *p* (measures 30-31), *mf* (measures 32-33), *f* (measures 34-35). Fingerings: 5 3 (m30), 3 1 (m31), 2 1 2 (m32), 4 (m33), 5 2 1 (m34), 5 (m35). Pedals: 1 (m30), 2 (m31), 4 (m32), *Lea* (m33), 2 1 2 (m34), 5 (m35), * (m36).

6 Technique-related matters

6.1 Sight Reading and memorization

There are many regularities within ragtime which are advantageous for sight-reading purposes:

- Time signatures are usually simple, typically either 2/4 or 4/4, which are easier to read than compound or irregular signatures.
- Time signature is unlikely to vary throughout the piece
- Joplin's works are typically limited to three accidentals in the original keys
- Textures are typically single-line and move in step motion
- The bass patterns are typically repetitive
- Section repeats are commonplace
- The harmonic plan is straightforward, with I, IV, V patterns common.
- Chords are found in closed positions.
- Modulation is typically straightforward to the sub-dominant or dominant.

More advanced reading techniques can also be developed:

- Melodies often incorporate pentatonic movement and therefore there needs to be accurate reading of step and leap movement.
- Left hand patterns often include octave and closed chord alternations. The leap must be negotiated, typically at the octave.
- The alternating lower notes often fall below the main staff and therefore the work on reading ledger lines must develop.

- A large proportion of rags include diminished chords which require reading of accidentals.

6.2 Teaching of compositional analysis

The overall structural elements and themes are highly accessible as an introductory material for analysing form. Listening exercises can be used to identify sections within compositions, such as within the following example:

Listening to “Ragtime Dance”

Listen to “Rag-time dance” by Scott Joplin. There are seven sections in the piece marked with the letters, intro, A, B, C, D, E, F and G. As you listen to the piece, match the correct description from the column on the right to the correct section.

“Ragtime Dance” – Scott Joplin

Intro	1. This section begins with a foot stamp and the melody is broken up
A	2. This is the shortest section and is played without chords. The melody ascends and descends with many chromatic notes
B	3. In this section a question and answer melody is repeated three times with some small changes in each repeat. The “question” begins by moving in steps whilst the answer has more syncopations
C	4. This section contains a complete descending chromatic scale, repeated twice
D	5. This section has a higher-pitched melody beginning with a “short-short-long” rhythm
E	6. This section is lower in pitch than all the others and has a melody that repeats twice. The backing pattern begins: oom-cha, oom-cha, oom-cha-cha
F	7. This section begins with repeated, instead of leaping, oom-cha backing chords. There is a silence with two stamps before the last two notes.

(source: musicalcontexts.co.uk)

6.3 Further listening activities

1: Rhythmic devices:

Listening to a ragtime effect: Exercise 1 (Scott Joplin School Of Ragtime)

Play a version of this exercise without the syncopation, then play the original

Annotate the score to indicate the difference

2: Identifying Chords

Basic: Label the chords in the extracts

Extension: Label the chord inversions in the extract

3: Melodic devices:

Basic: Identify passing notes.

Extension: Label the passing notes as diatonic or chromatic

4: Harmonic devices:

Identify the location of the cadence

Identify the name of this type of cadence

6.4 Alternating between bass note and chord with accuracy

Students should be trained in moving between notes of greater and greater distance, as an exercise. Two aspects can be focused upon in this regard - movement of the hand in preparedness, and preparedness for the chord. I advocate beginning with arrangements where smaller leaps are required, and obviously the taking of a half-speed tempo.

6.5 Rhythm and tempo

A steady rhythmic pulse is present and provides a foundation. This stability provides a framework for the dissection of syncopated patterns. The rhythmic complexity of syncopation can be very precisely mapped to the accompaniment. Therefore, ragtime provides ideal material for developing rhythmic acuity.

Lack of rhythmic precision and illogical tempi are particularly noticeable in ragtime music, since the effect relies so fundamentally on straight and syncopated contrast. Obviously, there are many effective interpretative options aside from the most score-faithful. However, the learner typically attempts to emulate performances, often at faster tempi than can be convincingly executed. The execution will lack digital precision, and contain unconvincing tempo changes alongside uncontrolled phrasing and dynamics. Therefore, exercises with metronome are recommended.

Exercises using hand-held percussion would be an excellent starting point for rhythmic training in syncopation. The following exercises are an extract from a series of online drum tuition exercises and illustrate a variety of syncopated patterns which could be individually isolated for potential hand-held percussion (or clapping/tapping) activities:

8th Note Syncopation Exercise

The image displays three staves of musical notation for an 8th note syncopation exercise in 4/4 time. The first staff shows a continuous eighth-note melody with a steady bass line. The second staff introduces syncopation by placing an accent on the eighth note of the first measure and a quarter rest on the second. The third staff continues the exercise with syncopation on the eighth notes of the first, third, and fifth measures, each followed by a quarter rest on the subsequent measure.

(source: <https://christianjohnsondrums.com/blog-content/2022/01/27/lesson-10-syncopation>)

6.6 Fingering

Logical use of the fingers will be essential with all original editions. Simplified editions in main tutorials contain finger suggestions. Editions such as the Peters (Edited by Klemm) have fingering suggestions added to the original arrangements. These provide sensible economical approaches which are absolutely critical to encourage accuracy. It is the teachers' responsibility to address practical considerations related to the hand shape and hand size of the student, and discuss alternatives where appropriate.

6.7 Swing and notation value precision

Classic ragtime works such as those of Joplin are typically played straight and not swung. However, it is valuable for students to be able to identify swing and therefore the use of exercises to develop a sense of triplets would be an initial step. After this, it would be appropriate for an exercise to permit notation of a square phrase in triplet form would be ideal.

6.7 Leaps

A typical configuration for left hand alternates octaves with chords, usually at the octave above. Such configurations are often to be found in waltz and march. Since the fluent performance requires a steady accompaniment, accuracy is important. Inaccuracy leads to uneven texture and rhythmic hesitation therefore an unconvincing interpretation.

6.8 Phrasing and pedal

Peddalling is not frequently notated in the works of Joplin. Therefore, it is a teaching point for discussion. Annotation of the student copy of a work is necessary in order for appropriate pedal to be taken. Ragtime is advantageous in this regard, since the clarity of harmonic language promotes student participation in the agreement on suitable places to apply pedal. I would suggest the application of pedal is restricted at first, to the first beat of the bar in 2/4 time, so as not to overload the student with considerations and also to train judicious application of the pedal, rather than stomping.

6.9 Improvisation

It is possible for a teacher to use a method such as that utilised in the method by Schulz mentioned previously, in order to encourage improvisation within a stated rhythmic framework. Note stems without pitch provide this type of scope. Further to this, alternative rhythmic figures can be suggested; alternatively, the notes can be prescribed, and the rhythm left to improvisation.

What can we tell about the performing style of Scott Joplin from piano rolls?

There exist piano roll recordings which are labelled as being played by Joplin himself. He recorded a number of piano rolls for the Connorsized company, and one for the Aeolian 'Uni-Record' Series (Maple Leaf Rag was recorded for both companies). Joplin's performing style and embellishments are obviously of considerable interest, since they would indicate the approach of the composer. However, in order to draw conclusions from the roll recordings, it is necessary to acknowledge major caveats.

For a number of reasons, the Connorsized roll recording seems to be discredited as unlikely to represent the playing of Joplin. There are various technical indications pointing to this. The roll shows considerable additional effects (repeats in different octaves, additional passing notes in the bass). Without venturing into a more forensic discussion, these embellishments had been considered an insight into the performance approach of the composer, but they are most likely the product of the staff of the piano roll company.

In contrast we are fortunate that a single roll exists recorded by a different method, which seems (again bypassing the forensic details) to contain hand-playing without extensive edits. In this version of Maple Leaf Rag (both rolls are included in the listening material), it is possible to discern modest embellishments. Admittedly the recording is highly unrhythmical; this is commonly explained in the literature as due to his poor state of health, which is totally feasible. However, there is information contained which may be a tantalising insight.

As mentioned in the 'origins' section, we can point to banjo jigs as a potential feed into ragtime. An interesting case in this regard is the following embellishment within Maple Leaf Rag. Compare the chorus (quoted) against a corresponding section of the jig 'Pea Patch'. (Nathan, 1962 pp. 201-204 Ex 74-6, quoted by Floyd and Reisser⁴⁸:

In this regard, Nathan's examples of black banjo tunes are instructive and provocative. Three of these tunes (commonly called "jigs"), reproduced in Example 6, can be readily compared to their probable derivatives in classic ragtime (Nathan, 1962, pp. 201-4, Ex. 74-6).

Example 6.
a. Nathan
Pea Patch Jig



Joplin
Maple Leaf Rag,
m. 9-10



⁴⁸ Samuel A. Floyd and Marsha J. Reisser, 'The Sources and Resources of Classic Ragtime Music', *Black Music Research Journal* 4 (1984): 33.

Even if we conceded that these embellishments are likely the work of a roll editor, it can be seen that this type of addition is likely to have been inspired by a banjo-based syncopation. Ragtime piano was a development, after all, of earlier syncopation performed on banjo.

7 The question of authentic performance

Performance practice is a clear area of interest amongst performance and researchers alike. Many commentators have discussed the matter⁴⁹. I shall now provide a brief consideration of some factors influencing interpretation decisions.

7.1 Arguments for absolute fidelity to the score

It has been repeatedly remarked in the literature that ragtime is primarily a notated music; that is to say, in contrast to the improvisatory spirit of the later styles which grew from it – notably novelty piano, and stride. The further implication of the term “classic” - wherever it is used – tends to draw the performer towards strict adherence to the score.

In the admonition of the prevalent composer Scott Joplin within his brief instructional pamphlet, ‘School of Ragtime’:

“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

⁴⁹ Nancy R. Ping-Robbins, ed., *Scott Joplin: A Guide to Research* (London: Routledge, 2015), 10–11.

written, as it takes this and also the proper time divisions to complete the sense intended".⁵⁰

Therefore, in relation to the music of Joplin at least, we have clarity of intent. From the information we possess about the composer, we can safely conclude that complete adherence to the printed music is a totally justifiable approach to interpretation. Joplin wished for his works to be taken seriously in the manner of Western classical compositions.

James Scott includes the note following note above his Pastime Rags (a series published by Joplin's major publisher John Stark):



Tempo instruction from Pastime Rag No.1 by James Scott (1913)

The meaning of "don't fake" is somewhat debatable. At the very least we can say that it is a further directive from a ragtime composer. Further to this, there is an implication that the music should be followed without compromise. Some performers may take this as an admonition not to stray from the printed notes under any circumstances. In conclusion, this instruction does not necessarily preclude embellishment during performance.

⁵⁰ Scott Joplin, *School of Ragtime* (New York: Scott Joplin, 1908), 5.

Ragtime scores are notated with clear performance directions. Therefore, enough information is provided in the score to show clear intentions to the performer. This contrasts with the simplified versions and lead-sheet which were the necessary approach as the music became more complex.

When Joseph Lamb (a protégé of Joplin and one of the most prominent composers of classic ragtime) was interviewed around 1960, he performed his own compositions exactly as notated. This is a further testimony to the existence of some conception that the score should suffice.

Finally, of course, in the case of the works of Scott Joplin, we can align fidelity to the score with both the (admittedly scant) evidence of his performing style, which differs very little from the original notation, and his ambitions which always pointed towards the realms of serious art music⁵¹ (article reproduced in Appendix)

7.2 Arguments for deviation from the score

It is clear the intended audience for this "School of Ragtime" pamphlet were amateur performers of varying skill. There is an inevitable tendency for this driving rhythmical music to propel performers to faster and faster tempi, and indeed to lose precision as a result. Given the pamphlets intended amateur audience, however, it is obvious that Joplin is not absolutely precluding interpretative license. Therefore, this advice does not preclude deviation from the sheet music where the performer has the necessary musicianship to support their intentions.

⁵¹ 'Joplin To Play Ragtime In Europe'.

Furthermore, first-hand interview reminiscences indicate that ragtime performers liberally improvised to increase the impact of their interpretation. This was encouraged further by the competitive nature of the music scene. Stride, boogie, and novelty pieces share increasingly virtuosic approaches and demonstrate the continued evolution of harmonic and stylistic boundaries.

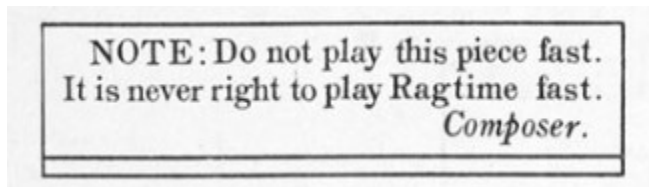
One might say therefore, that the spirit of ragtime performance is one born in the tradition of improvisation. If one accepts this, then it becomes natural to depart from the score. Performers of the period who made retrospective recordings (such as Jelly Roll Morton and Eubie Blake) clearly performed in an extemporaneous manner, having usually learned by ear. There is huge deviation from the score in both cases (see listening section).

In terms of the authority of the printed music, I feel that it is very important to consider each individual case. Certain ragtime composers did indeed expect their works to be performed precisely according to the printed music. However, there are many exceptions. Most notably, it is possible to notice a considerable difference between some performances by composers of their own works, usually in the form of elaborations. Especially in the case of artists who were active at the end of the ragtime era into the early jazz period, we may note significant additions divergence from scores.

As mentioned in section 4.1, the "old time" piano playing tradition places value on creativity of improvisation and virtuosity of approach. For example, the Scott Joplin International Ragtime Foundation holds an annual festival in Sedalia, Missouri. Participants perform in a range of styles, bringing in broader musical influences.

Additionally, the printed score may not represent the fullest intentions of composers owing to the requirement to temper technical difficulties to make pieces accessible to amateurs. Compared to recordings we may note this, similarly to Jasen and Tichenor's phraseology, we hear "...a full interpretation, not a watered-down simplification for the amateur players."⁵²

There is, of course, the famous instruction, which appears at the top of many works:



Rudi Blesh, who co-authored the seminal work *They All Played Ragtime*, provides an interesting reflection about the interpretation of this notice, within his introduction to the *Collected Works* (ed. Brodsky). He refers to the over-literal interpretation of the new school of players during the first ragtime revival of the 1940's, whereby very slow tempi became the vogue:

"The newcomers felt that, though it might not swing, ragtime was being played in the authentic manner. Actually, any piece of music dictates – within rather clear limits – its own proper tempo. Joplin's injunction needs to be read in the light of his time, when a whole new school of 'speed' players whose sole claim to fame was digital velocity were ruining the fine rags. Most frequently felled by this quack-virtuoso musical

⁵² Jasen and Tichenor, *Rags and Ragtime*, 33.

mayhem was the *Maple Leaf*. Joplin's concept of 'slow' was probably relative to the destructive *prestos* of his day"⁵³

On the other hand, many of Joplin's pieces are headed with the instruction 'Not Fast'. Joplin also specifically refers to tempo within his pamphlet "School Of Ragtime", in particular of the loss of effect caused by playing too quickly.

8 Conclusion

It is clear that there is much scope for greater integration of ragtime pieces into both the individual instrumental instruction context and the general music classroom. It provides the opportunity to discuss historical and social issues surrounding the development of present-day musical styles. The beginnings of the melding of classical music with world folk-music traditions is already evident within ragtime and the origins story can be traced as a fascinating history.

In the forum of music teaching, I have demonstrated that there are many applications of ragtime sheet music analysis and analysis of interpretations, which provide great potential for accessible listening activities in the general music curriculum. There will always be some limited coverage of ragtime as part of the story of American music traditions; however, there are particular lessons which can be learned exceedingly well through the ragtime medium.

As a basis for practical musical training, piano skills can be developed effectively through the selection of engaging and popular ragtime pieces. A range of original and

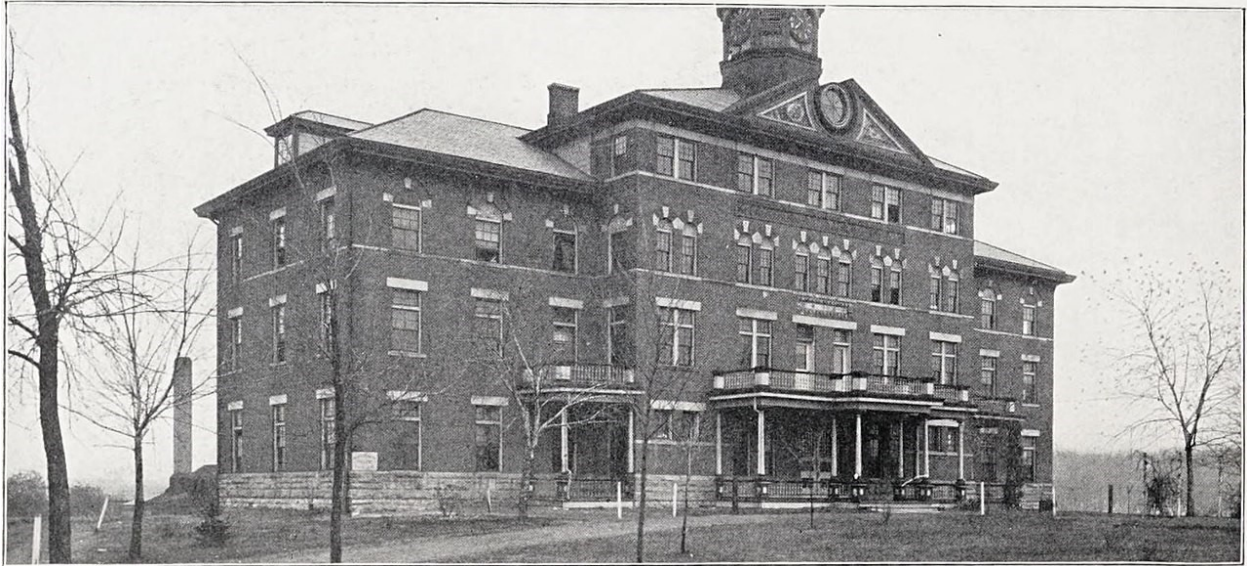
⁵³ Vera Brodsky Lawrence and Scott Joplin, *Scott Joplin: Collected Piano Works: Rags-Waltzes-Marches* (Schaum Pubns, 1971).

adapted materials exist to allow learners of all abilities to access syncopated works. The potential of ragtime to develop rhythmic acuity, general awareness of phrase shape and harmonic movement, all stand as testament to the suitability of ragtime as a medium for musical training.

9 Bibliography

- Berlin, Edward A. *Ragtime: A Musical and Cultural History*. Berkeley (Calif.) Los Angeles (Calif.) London: University of California press, 1984.
- Blesh, Rudi, and Harriet Janis. *They All Played Ragtime: The True Story of an American Music*. Knopf, 1950.
- Curtis, Susan. *Dancing to a Black Man's Tune: A Life of Scott Joplin*. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 2004.
- Floyd, Samuel A., and Marsha J. Reisser. 'The Sources and Resources of Classic Ragtime Music'. *Black Music Research Journal* 4 (1984): 22–59. <https://doi.org/10.2307/779473>.
- Gilbert, David. *The Product of Our Souls: Ragtime, Race, and the Birth of the Manhattan Musical Marketplace*. Chapel Hill, N.C: the University of North Carolina press, 2015.
- Hasse, John Edward, ed. *Ragtime: Its History, Composers, and Music*. New York: Schirmer Books, 1985.
- Horowitz, Joseph. *Dvořák's Prophecy: And the Vexed Fate of Black Classical Music*. First edition. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2022.
- Hradecký, Emil. *Jazzové Kousky pro Dvacet Prstů*. H7975. Editio Bärenreiter Praha, n.d.
- Ives, Charles. *Memos*. Edited by John Kirkpatrick. Norton paperback [ed.], 3. [print.]. New York: Norton, 1991.
- Jasen, David A. *Recorded Ragtime, 1897-1958*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1973.
- Jasen, David A., and Trebor Jay Tichenor. *Rags and Ragtime: A Musical History*. New York: Dover, 1989.
- Joplin, Scott. *School of Ragtime*. New York: Scott Joplin, 1908.
- 'Joplin To Play Ragtime In Europe'. *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 28 February 1901.
- Lawrence, Vera Brodsky, and Scott Joplin. *Scott Joplin: Collected Piano Works: Rags-Waltzes-Marches*. Schaum Pubns, 1971.
- 'Musica Non Grata'. Accessed 11 July 2024. <https://www.musicanongrata.cz/en/about-the-project/>.
- 'Our Musical Condition'. *The Etude*, no. 17 (November 1899): 340.
- Ping-Robbins, Nancy R., ed. *Scott Joplin: A Guide to Research*. London: Routledge, 2015.
- 'Questions & Answers'. *The Etude*, no. 16 (October 1898): 285.
- 'Ragtime Causing Mental Ailments'. *Musical America*, no. 18 (15 July 1913).
- Schmitz, Manfred. *Bausteine Ragtime: für Klavier*. EP10200. Edition Peters, n.d. Accessed 7 July 2024.
- Schuller, Gunther. *Early Jazz: Its Roots and Musical Development*. The History of Jazz, v. 1. New York: Oxford University Press, 1986.
- Walton, Lester. 'Detriment To Ragtime'. *New York Age*, 3 April 1913, 6.

Appendix 1 Illustrations



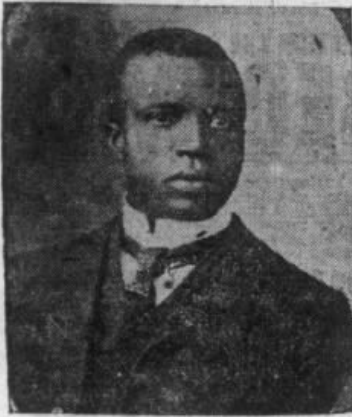
George R. Smith College which Joplin attended to take music theory classes

THE KING OF RAG-TIME COMPOSERS IS SCOTT JOPLIN, A COLORED ST. LOUISAN

St. Louis boasts of a composer of music, who, despite the ebony hue of his features and a retired disposition, has written possibly more instrumental successes in the line of popular music than any other local composer. His name is Scott Joplin, and he is better known as "The King of Rag-Time Writers," because of the many famous works in syncopated melodies which he has written. He has, however, also penned other classes of music and various vocal numbers of note.

One of the interesting characteristics of Scott Joplin's personality is his conservatism. He rarely refers to his productions and does not boast of his ability, despite the fact that he is possibly one out of three-score of composers who arranges his own compositions. This negro is a tutored student of harmony and an adept at bass and counterpoint; and, although his appearance would not indicate it, he is attractive socially, because of the refinement of his speech and demeanor.

Scott Joplin was reared and educated in St. Louis. His first notable success in instrumental music was "The Maple Leaf Rag," of which thousands upon thousands of copies have been sold. A year or two ago Mr. John Stark, a publisher of this city, and father of Miss Eleanor Stark, the well-known piano virtuoso, bought the manuscript of "The Maple Leaf" from Joplin for a nominal sum. Almost within a month from the date of its issue, this quaint creation became a byword with musicians, and within another half a twelve-month cir-



SCOTT JOPLIN.

Dedicated to Sammie Chess and Mr. Bluffton Clark.

THE ENTERTAINER.

A RAG-TIME GUY'S RAGA

INTRO:

Not fast.

BY SCOTT JOPLIN.



Copyright, 1903, by John Stark & Co.

culated itself throughout the Union in vast numbers. This composition was speedily followed by others of a like character, until now the Stark list embraces nearly a score of the Joplin effusions. Following is a list of some of the more pronounced pieces by this writer, embodying these oddly titled works:

- "Elite Syncopations."
- "The Strenuous Life."
- "The Rag-Time Dance" (song).
- "Sunflower Slow Drag."
- "Swipsy Cake Walk."
- "Fanchine Rag."
- "Maple Leaf Rag."

Probably the best and most euphonious of

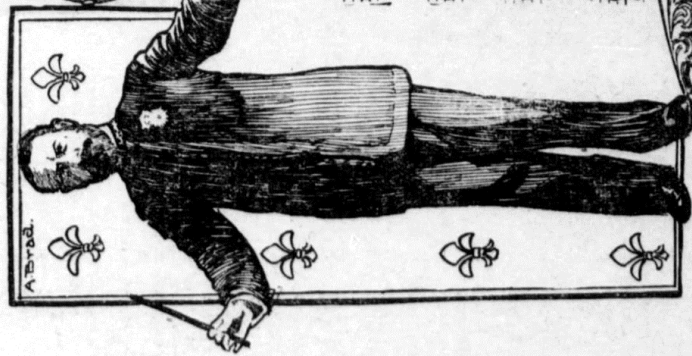
his latter-day compositions is "The Entertainer," a few bars of which are herewith given. It is a jingling work of a very original character, embracing various strains of a retentive character, which set the foot in spontaneous action and leave an indelible imprint upon the tympanum.

Joplin's ambition is to shine in other spheres. He affirms that it is only a pastime for him to compose syncopated music and he longs for more arduous work. To this end he is assiduously toiling upon an opera, nearly a score of the numbers of which he has already composed and which he hopes to give an early production in this city.

MONROE H. ROSENFELD.

The King of Rag-Time Composers Is Scott Joplin, A Colored St. Louisan, St. Louis Globe-Democrat, June 7, 1903, Sporting Section, 5, col. 1-3.

PARIS HAS GONE RAG TIME WILD



Bunch O' Blackberries.
CAKE WALK (TWO STEP)

ABE HOLZMANN,
Composer of SMOKY MOKES,
CAKE WALK & TWO STEP.

Trin. *mf*

pp - ff

1 2



All Paris is raving over John Philip Sousa and his band of luscious instrumentalists. The vim and dash of the American musicians, together with the lively American style of music which they are playing, has decided innovation to the Parisians. The principal conversation all along the boulevards these days, seems to be the remarkable success which Sousa has met with in introducing "Le Temp du Chiffon," commonly known in this country as "rag time," native bands have taken up this peculiar style of distinctly American music, even going so far as to play the "Marsellaise" in rag time. It is also reported that many of the most blase Parisians are practicing the delicate steps of the cake walk (see which), which is extremely difficult owing to the French fashion of wearing "with heels ex-Sousa has introduced many new melodies to the visitors at the Exposition, but which seems to have caught the popular imagination. "Bunch o' Blackberries," by the composer of the "Smoky Mokes," cake walk, which was so popular in this country. The principal strain from "Bunch o' Blackberries," over which the French men are going wild, is shown above, in almost every nook and corner of the French capital, seemingly having been introduced by the natives' being far and away the best thing of its kind ever heard there.

"Paris Has Gone Rag Time Wild" - The San Francisco Call, June 10, 1900

TO PLAY RAGTIME IN EUROPE



Director Alfred Ernst of the St. Louis Choral Symphony Society believes that he has discovered, in Scott Joplin of Sedalia, a negro, an extraordinary genius as a composer of ragtime music.

So deeply is Mr. Ernst impressed with the ability of the Sedalian that he intends to take with him to Germany next summer copies of Joplin's work, with a view to educating the dignified disciples of Wagner, Liszt, Mendelssohn and other European masters of music into an appreciation of the real American ragtime melodies. It is possible that the colored man may accompany the distinguished conductor.

When he returns from the storied Rhine Mr. Ernst will take Joplin under his care and instruct him in the theory and harmony of music.

Joplin has published two ragtime pieces, "Maple Leaf Rag" and "Swipesy Cake Walk," which will be introduced in Germany by the St. Louis musician.

"I am deeply interested in this man," said Mr. Ernst to the Post-Dispatch. "He is young and undoubtedly has a fine future. With proper cultivation, I believe, his tal-

ent will develop into positive genius. Being of African blood himself, Joplin has a keener insight into that peculiar branch of melody than white composers. His ear is particularly acute.

"Recently I played for him portions of 'Tannhauser.' He was enraptured. I could see that he comprehended and appreciated this class of music. It was the opening of a new world to him, and I believe he felt as Keats felt when he first read Chapman's Homer.

"The work Joplin has done in ragtime is so original, so distinctly individual, and so melodious withal, that I am led to believe he can do something fine in compositions of a higher class when he shall have been instructed in theory and harmony.

"Joplin's work, as yet, has a certain crudeness, due to his lack of musical education, but it shows that the soul of the composer is there and needs but to be set free by knowledge of technique. He is an unusually intelligent young man and fairly well educated."

Joplin is known in Sedalia as "The Ragtime King." A trip to Europe in company with Prof. Ernst is the dream of his life. It may be realized.

Fig.4 – "Joplin To Play Ragtime In Europe" from the St. Louis Post-Dispatch, Feb. 28, 1901.

Texas Colored Singers.

The Texas Colored Medley Quartet is giving the citizens of St. Louis an inkling of what the Southern singers can do. The quartet, composed of Rob and Scott Joplin, Richard Denson and James Rivers, visited the GLOBE-DEMOCRAT building last night and sent melodious strains echoing through the corridors. The four have been organized only eight months, but their vocal powers are superb. The four young men drilled in Texarkana, traveled through Tennessee and came to St. Louis last week. They leave shortly for Chicago, to sing at the World's Fair.

"Texas Colored Singers", St. Louis Globe-Democrat, Sun, Mar 26, 1893 Page 11

RAGTIME REVIEW 23

Stark Music Co.

ST. LOUIS, MO.

Rags That Never Die

We are the storm center of high-class instrumental rags. The whole rag fabric of this country was built around our "Maple Leaf" "Sunflower" "Cascades" "Entertainer" "Frog Legs" Etc.

We have advertised these as classic rags, and we mean just what we say. They are the perfection of type. "The glass of fashion and the mold of form." "Age cannot wither or custom stale their infinite variety." They have lifted ragtime from its low estate and lined it up with Beethoven and Bach.

Following up Maple Leaf in the blending of the popular and classic, kindly try out "American Beauty" "Billiken" "Cataract", "Corrugated" "Mande" "Mellinger" "Hot House" "Grace and Beauty" "Ragtime Oriole" "Ophelia" "Hilarity" and 100 others such as are published by no one on earth but the Stark Music Co.

Our free catalogs will tell all about it.

Read the following disinterested letter from a musician in far away Australia

Sydney, N. S. W. Australia

Trade advert from Stark Music Company

Appendix 2 Accompanying Audio

Title	Performer	Details
Maple Leaf Rag	Jelly Roll Morton	The Complete Library of Congress Recordings by Alan Lomax - Rounder Records – ROUNDER 11661-1898-2 (contains Missouri and New Orleans Versions with brief dialogue)
Maple Leaf Rag	Scott Joplin	MIDI playback from piano roll scan of Connorized 10265 https://midimusic.github.io/joplin/rolls/rolls.html
Maple Leaf Rag	Scott Joplin	MIDI playback from piano roll scan of Uni-Record 202705 https://midimusic.github.io/joplin/rolls/rolls.html
Scott Joplin's New Rag	Max Morath	The Best Of Scott Joplin and other rag classics – Vanguard Records
Weeping Willow	William Albright	Recorded December 16-19, 1989, Wright Music Hall, Middle Tennessee State University, Murfresboro, Tennessee
Gladiolus Rag	Daniel Flynn	Performed Friday 24 th May 2024
Maple Leaf Rag	Eubie Blake	The Eighty-Six Years of Eubie Blake – Columbia Records, 1969
Euphonic Sounds	James P. Johnson	Smithsonian Folkways Recordings SFW40812, 1996
Various	Royce Martin	Memories on Morgan Street: Scott Joplin Reimagined; 2023