

Ragtime Piano Days Beyond Recall Trebor Tichenor



COVER DESIGN BY RONALD CLYNE

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SIDE ONE

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2. Cotton Bolls (Charles Hunter)
3. Wine Room Rag (Trebor Tichenor)
4. Dixie Queen (Robert Hoffman)
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**Ragtime Piano
Days Beyond Recall
Trebor Tichenor**

DESCRIPTIVE NOTES ARE INSIDE POCKET

Ragtime Piano

DAYS BEYOND RECALL

Trebor Tichenor

The album title came to mind after re-reading a treasured letter that arrived from Eubie Blake about ten years ago. Eubie had graced one of our National Ragtime Festivals aboard the Goldenrod Showboat, and upon returning home sent me the comment that I "played the real stuff" and that my style reminded him of the oldtimers he heard when he was just starting out. Happily, the venerable Professor Blake can still take personal exception to the notion that this early style is beyond memory. The term has always been my favorite for suggesting the very early vintage material and my own style of writing rags which harks back in feeling to the original ragtime folk world.

The classic ragtime of Scott Joplin and most of the popular style rags were derived from early midwestern and southern folk roots. And though many reflect the faster pace of the urban centers where they were published, the rags still retain strong ties to the country. Some of the ragtime composers used floating folk strains, especially active performers like Les C. Copeland; most, grew up in rural areas, went on to formal music education and created original syncopated melodies. For these many, such as Percy Wenrich, growing up in a rustic atmosphere provided a fountainhead of inspiration later on. The early genuine folk spirit is instantly recognizable as a reflection of the country. Its character can be the stomping, ebullient one of a ribald ozark folk tale, or it can be a wistful, bittersweet longing, a poignant spirit that is honest and direct, but as evasive and mysterious as the eternal beauty of the rolling Mississippi Valley.

Trebor Tichenor

SIDE ONE

HICKORY-SMOKED RAG is a foot-stomper by Tichenor with echoes of bluegrass banjos and hoe-down fiddles. The title reflects the composer's love for country-cured Ozark Mountain delicacies which he feels possess remarkable soul-restorative properties.

COTTON BOLLS by Charles Hunter first appeared in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1901. Hunter was one of many ill-fated wastrel geniuses of ragtime, a composer of the Tennessee country who perished in the sporting life of St. Louis' Chestnut Valley district. He was a major composer of early folk-style rags which combine a bucolic march flavor with a delicate melodic flair.

WINE ROOM RAG is a Tichenor original, celebrating a tradition in ragtime in which syncopations abound. The "wine rooms" were special areas for ladies at the rear of the main barrooms where women were not allowed. Ragtime pianists were a fixture in these back rooms. In the early 1890's a Catholic priest whose parish was near Chestnut Valley became extremely vocal about the need for reforms, which included the removal of the pianos from the wine rooms. He was reassigned to another church.

DIXIE QUEEN - A SOUTHERN RAGTIME was written by New Orleans resident Robert Hoffman. The C section is a floating folk strain that even Jelly Roll Morton recalled in his last years. The rag was sold to Chicago publisher Victor Kremer in 1906.

COTTONWOOD RAG was named by Tichenor as the cottonwood tree was a vital staple in the history of America's growth: the lumber provided barns and smaller outbuildings on pioneer farms; steamboats burned the wood for fuel; and legend says that the Indians got the idea for shaping their teepees from the way the leaf curls. Two tall cottonwoods grew on the Tichenor home in Sappington, Missouri, and as a boy the composer loved to watch the spiraling leaves dance in the summer breezes. This Tichenor rag has a reflective, almost bittersweet aura.

SWAMPTOWN SHUFFLE is by the unknown H. W. Jones, who had a flair for folksy titles as well as melodies. This and his DAWSON CITY DUDE were published by the small Medberry Music Company of Chicago. Though SWAMPTOWN appeared in 1902, it harks back to the cakewalks of the 1890's, and ends with a flourish that recalls even earlier reels and breakdowns. "Swamptown" may have been a common name for the rough outlying settlements along the Mississippi River which had been notorious since the days of the flatboat bullys. One of the earliest and most dangerous was New Orleans' "Swamp"; the mayhem created here defies description. Denizens of such haunts as the Sure Enuf Hotel boasted that police had not set foot in the area in twenty years (see The French Quarter by Asbury, and Storyville by Al Rose).

DAYS BEYOND RECALL was one of Tichenor's first rags, a feeling for the 19th century folk-roots of ragtime; a journey into the Southern nether-world of plantation cakewalks under Spanish moss-covered oak trees - a sort of syncopated Gone With the Wind mythology.

ESSAY IN RAGTIME is based on Brun Campbell's recording issued on Euphonic Records, Volume 1. Brun stomped this one with a basic theme and variations approach, to which Tichenor adds his own touches. The finale is a fast 12 bar blues.

SIDE TWO

PINEYWOODS RAG is a romping bit of folk essence from the southern pine country, and the antithesis of such dark blues as IN THE PINES, which came from the same area. The composer, N. Weldon Cocroft, published this himself in Thomasville, Georgia in 1909. The rag has a much earlier cakewalk flavor, a spirit that persisted in rags written away from the urban centers.

BANTAM STEP followed in the wake of such tunes as the GRIZZLY BEAR, BUNNY HUG, TURKEY TROT, KANGAROO HOP, BABY BABOON BOUNCE. America went dance crazy in 1911; the early cakewalk and two-step were

replaced by the faster fox trot and one-step. This miniature masterpiece by New York composer Harry Jentes was published in 1916 and is a most imaginative Advanced rag from the years just before Novelty ragtime. It was initially rediscovered by Dave Jasen (Folkways FG-3561), who also included a band version on Ragtime Entertainment (Folkways RBF-22). Ragophiles were taken with this rag when The St. Louis Ragtimers introduced it at the Scott Joplin Festival in Sedalia, Missouri in 1974.

MISSOURI RAMBLER, A RUSTIC ODYSSEY is respectfully dedicated to Harold and Thelma, "The Swingin' Doerrs," who, in the early '60's, hosted many memorable ragtime get-togethers in the Collinsville, Illinois home where two pianos rocked with the syncopated pianistics of Charles Thompson, Knocky Parker, Bob Wright and Jerry Cammack, to mention just a few. The tune evokes a foot-loose wanderer of the Missouri countryside. It was composed in 1961.

CRAB APPLES was urbanite Percy Wenrich's fine rag of 1908. Wenrich lived much of his life in New York City where he turned out songs and rags for Tin Pan Alley which had an uncanny Missouri flavor. His inspiration was replenished by regular visits back to his boyhood home of Joplin, Missouri.

PIERCE CITY RAG was composed by Tichenor for the Theron Bennett Memorial Concert which was held in the composer's hometown in 1961. With Al Stricker and Don Franz, this was the St. Louis Ragtimers' first concert (just before Bill Mason and Glenn Meyer joined the group). The event, celebrating a fine Missouri ragtime composer-publisher, is still fondly recalled. Al returned with Trebor in a repeat performance at Pierce City in 1967. This recorded version has the final strain as later written out followed by the original conception as done in 1961.

FRENCH PASTRY RAG was written by Les C. Copeland, one of ragtime's most eccentric talents. The pate a choux suggested is really pure

ham hocks and cornbread from the Kansas plains. His rags combine popular features of the teens with a style and approach that harks back to ragtime's earliest days. The title reflects Copeland's quixotic venture of running his own ragtime nightclub in Paris, France! He was one of the few pianists to work in latter-day Minstrelsy, and was one of George Gershwin's favorites. Jerome H. Remick & Co. published this in 1914. The eight-measure B strain was a floating folk theme recalled as late as 1959 by veteran ragtimer Claude Williams at a Sedalia, Missouri concert.

MANDY'S BROADWAY STROLL was the first of the Nashville rags, published there in 1898. Thomas E. Broady, the composer, was from Springfield, Illinois and had a song published there in 1896. Little is known about him, but there is a Tom Broady listed as a guest at Tom Turpin's Rose Bud Club Ball and Piano Contest in 1904 (see RAGS AND RAGTIME, by Jasen and Tichenor, Seabury Press). This rousing ragtime march has a springlike freshness so characteristic of the finest early rags. The A section is astonishingly pianistic for 1898.

MARKET ST. RAG, A ROSE BUD CLUB REVELRY is Tichenor's homage to Tom Turpin and the "piano Kings of Market St." The rag begins a la Turpin, proceeds to even more funky pianistics and finishes with a strain that combines a late St. Louis ragtime break a la Charles Thompson with a favorite Brun Campbell lick from the early St. Louis ragtime style. A most ingenious combination by today's King of Folk Ragtime.

ABOUT THE PERFORMER

TREBOR JAY TICHENOR has the world's largest collection of Ragtime piano rolls. Famous as the pianist of the St. Louis Ragtimers which he helped form in 1961, he has performed all over the world. He founded The Ragtime Review, the first regular publication devoted exclusively to ragtime. A popular favorite with St. Louisans, his weekly radio program "Ragophile" is the oldest show of its kind in the nation. Among his other professional activities, he teaches Ragtime History at

Washington University. This is his third album of piano solos besides appearing on five additional albums with the St. Louis Ragtimers. He is a consultant to the Missouri Historical Society.

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