

MUSIC BY...
SCOTT JOPLIN
ROBERT HAMPTON
JOSEPH LAMB
and OTHERS

folkways records fg3563

essay in ragtime

ragtime piano classics
played by ann charters

DESIGN / MARC RICE

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*cataract rag wall street rag
solace, a mexican serenade
magnetic rag victory rag
ethiopia rag pastime rag 3
echoes from the snowball club-
rag time waltz harlem rag-
two step rag sentimental*

essay in ragtime

descriptive notes inside pocket

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ESSAY IN RAGTIME

ragtime piano classics



photo by Reinhard Sagemuller

played by Ann Charters



HARLEM

ARRANGED BY

D.S. De Lisle,

COMPOSED BY

TOM TURPIN.

Published by

ROB'T DE YONG & Co.
ST LOUIS, MO.

From the collection of Rudi Blesh

AN ESSAY IN RAGTIME

Samuel B. Charters

One night, late, a young ragtime enthusiast and I were standing on a wet street corner arguing about the relationship between the two musical styles, ragtime and jazz. He finally flung his arms up impatiently and dismissed the entire jazz style with the shout, "They were TRYING to play Ragtime - and COULDN'T!"

His statement was a little too sweeping, but it was as true as the statements that most jazz enthusiasts make about ragtime. Usually ragtime is discussed, and dismissed, as little more than an interesting step in the development of early jazz. Jazz, and the emotional attitudes that surround it, have had such an effect on the modern imagination that every form of the Afro-American musical culture is regarded as a factor in the development of jazz. For the first time there are signs that other musical forms, the blues and the gospel song, are receiving some attention, but ragtime, in many ways one of the most brilliant musical achievements of the Negro in America, has been sadly neglected. In part this is due to the nature of the music itself. Its grace and elegance are too restrained for an audience that is used to the melodrama of jazz. As a musical style it is in the Nineteenth, rather than the Twentieth Century. But in a larger part the neglect of ragtime has been due to unfamiliarity. Not only is it impossible to hear performers who play classic ragtime, it is even impossible to hear recordings of the music at anywhere near its best. Because ragtime's popularity came in the years before the phonograph was able to successfully reproduce the sound of a piano, ragtime was limited to performances on mechanical pianos. There have been modern recordings of these piano rolls, but they sound just like what they are, mechanical pianos. There is only one known recording which, despite the title, seems to catch the sound of classic ragtime as it was performed in the years before the first World War, Felix Arndt's 1915 recording of DESECRATION RAG (A CLASSIC NIGHTMARE) on Victor Record 17608. The label reads,

"Introducing ragtime perversions of 'Humoresque' (Dvorak)- '2nd Hungarian Rhapsody' (Liszt) - 'Rustle of Spring' (Sinding)- 'Impromptu' (Chopin) - 'Militaire Polonaise' (Chopin) and Chopin's 'Funeral March'".

The handful of other recordings by ragtime players of the period, Mike Bernard and Frank Banta Jr. the best known, are marred by a noisy tastelessness.

Even more distressing to the ragtime enthusiast is the lack of recordings of the finest rags. The compositions of Scott Joplin, James Scott, Joseph Lamb, and other creative ragtime composers were not recorded in any form, and there are not even piano roll versions of much of the music. As a result only a few people have even heard much classic ragtime.

In 1951 Rudi Blesh and Harriet Janis published their excellent study of the music, THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME, and it seemed for a time that there would be a serious revival of interest in it. But in the last nine years there has been very little accom-



Scott Joplin about 1911

photo from Rudi Blesh

plished in the field. Probably the most ambitious project was the documentation of the playing of the last of the great ragtime writers, Joseph Lamb, which was released by Folkways early in 1960. His playing represents the style at its most pure, despite some of the roughnesses that forty years of relative inactivity have left in his performances. He played, however, only his own compositions, and the music of Scott Joplin and James Scott is still not available to anyone interested in ragtime.



James
Scott

photo from Rudi Blesh

ECHOES FROM
THE

SNOWBALL CLUB



RAG
TIME
WALTZ

50

BY
HARRY P. GUY.

PUBLISHED FOR ORCHESTRA.

WILLARD BRYANT.

DETROIT MICH.

This "Essay in Ragtime" is intended as a study of the finest classic ragtime. The first published rag by a Negro composer, Tom Turpin's HARLEM RAG, is included in its original 1897 version, with the series of variations showing the difference between ordinary and "rag" rhythms. Three of Scott Joplin's most ambitious rags, WALL STREET RAG, MAGNETIC RAG, and the "Mexican Serenade" SOLACE, are included. There is the famous test piece, CATARACT RAG, by Robert Hampton, Joseph Lamb's difficult ETHIOPIA RAG, two late rags by the brilliant James Scott, VICTORY RAG and RAG SENTIMENTAL, and one of Artie Mathews' ragtime studies, PASTIME RAG NO. 3. The most creative ragtime writers thought of their music, not as noisily rhythmic, which is the usual feeling about it today, but as gracefully melodic. They wrote dance music of every type using the beautifully syncopated ragtime melodies. As an example of this the first ragtime waltz, ECHOES FROM THE SNOWBALL CLUB, written in 1898 by the young Detroit Negro, Harry P. Guy, is included as well as Joplin's SOLACE, a ragtime tango.

These rags, played from torn and faded old music sheets or from laboriously hand copied manuscripts, show more clearly than any descriptions could show, the brilliant musical achievement that is classic ragtime. These young writers took the dance music of their time and transformed it, using Negroid rhythmic concepts to give it a new vitality and excitement. In Scott Joplin, too, ragtime had one of the great melodists of Nineteenth Century popular music. His music sings, in the way that Foster's or Bland's music sings. The close relationship between ragtime and popular dance music limited it to a certain style of performance and to a brief period of popularity, but it is its variety and musicality within these limits that has given

it much of its charm. It is the charm of an older and quieter way of life, the life of the naive and sentimental America of the turn of the century.

WALL STREET "RAG"

NOTE: Do not play this piece fast
It is never right to play Ragtime fast
Complete

By SCOTT JOPLIN
Composer of "Maple Leaf Rag," "Tiger Rag," and "Pineapple Rag"

Very Slow March Time

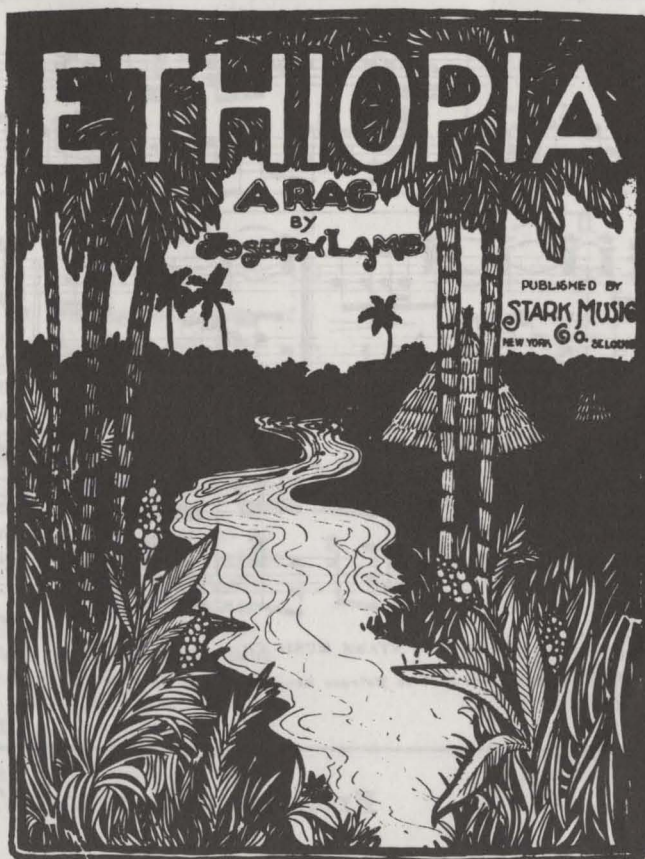
PIANO.

Piano as Wall Street, bankers looking nervously.

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From the collection of Ann Charters



From the
collection
of
Record
Research
Magazine

Victory Rag

Not fast

JAMES SCOTT

The musical score for "Victory Rag" is written for piano and bass. It consists of seven systems of two staves each. The key signature has one sharp (F#), and the time signature is 2/4. The tempo is marked "Not fast". The score includes various musical notations such as eighth notes, sixteenth notes, chords, and dynamic markings like "f" (forte) and "mf" (mezzo-forte). There are also repeat signs and first/second endings indicated by "1" and "2".

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First page of Victory Rag

From the collection of Trebor Tichnor

AN ESSAY IN RAGTIME

SIDE ONE

- Band 1. CATARACT RAG 3'48"
by Robert Hampton (John Stark and Son,
1914)
- Band 2. WALL STREET RAG 3'45"
by Scott Joplin (Seminary Music Co.,
1909)

This rag is in four sections:

1. Panic in Wall Street, Brokers feeling melancholy
2. Good times coming
3. Good times have come
4. Listening to the strains of genuine ragtime, brokers forget their cares.

- Band 3. SOLACE, A MEXICAN SERENADE 4'45"
by Scott Joplin (Seminary Music Co.,
1909)
- Band 4. MAGNETIC RAG - SYNCOPATIONS CLASSIQUES 4'35"
by Scott Joplin (Scott Joplin Music Co., 1914)

- Band 5. VICTORY RAG 3'15"
by James Scott (Stark Music Co.,
1921)

SIDE TWO

- Band 1. ETHIOPIA RAG 3'25"
by Joseph Lamb (Stark Music Co.,
1909)
- Band 2. PASTIME RAG NO. 3 - A SLOW DRAG 4'00"
by Artie Matthews (Stark Music Co.,
1916)
- Band 3. ECHOES FROM THE SNOWBALL CLUB - RAG TIME WALTZ 5'20"
by Harry P. Guy (Willard Bryant,
Detroit, Michigan,
1898)
- Band 4. HARLEM RAG - TWO STEP 3'20"
by Tom Turpin (Robert de Young
& Co., 1897)
- Band 5. RAG SENTIMENTAL 3'40"
by James Scott (Stark Music Co.,
1918)

Because of the difficulty of finding recordings of classic ragtime a number of collectors and enthusiasts have begun to play it themselves, and there is considerable friendly competition between the musicians. It is an awkward situation, in a sense as though a blues enthusiast would have to learn to play and sing the blues in order to hear the music, but ragtime is a written music and it is possible to play it in the older styles. The best of these younger pianists is the pianist on these recordings, Ann Charters. There is perhaps some reason to think this is a biased judgement; since she is my wife, but it was her enthusiasm and sensitivity to ragtime that was part of her charm. She was not only the technical assistant on the documentation of Joseph Lamb's playing, but she and Joe discussed the traditional playing style during several evenings. Mrs. Lamb, Joe's wife, listened to the two of them playing one evening and after a moment of thought said, "She comes the closest to Joe of anybody I've heard playing."

Joe Verges, a New Orleans pianist who cut piano rolls for Q.R.S. in 1916 and 1917, was another stylistic source. Usually during the course of a night at the barroom where he plays sentimental songs he could be talked into a performance of LOVIN' RAG or THAT TEASIN' RAG. There have been hours of listening to the early recordings and piano rolls, long talks with Rudi Blesh, the co-author of THEY ALL PLAYED RAGTIME. The result, after years of playing, is a highly individual style that is well within the idiom of the classic ragtime period. Since ragtime is a composed music rather than an improvised one these performances should not be thought of as "re-creations", any more than a performance of a Chopin mazurka is a re-creation. Here is an attempt to express the musical ideas of the great ragtime composers within the stylistic and emotional limits of their own period. It is this young pianist's musicianship and attention to the ragtime style that gives this "Essay In Ragtime" much of its validity.

Missouri Was the Birthplace of Ragtime

Widow of Music Publisher Recalls

Legendary Scott Joplin and How His Music Took Country by Storm

Miss Brockhoff is a free-lance writer who lives in Normandy. She is a former researcher for the Missouri Historical Society and a graduate of Washington University. She holds a master's degree in political science from Columbia University.

By Dorothy Brockhoff

FOR REASONS which currently bewitch, bother, and bewilder even the wisest social historians, Americans have suddenly developed a fondness for a by-gone era, the Victorian Age. Iron bedsteads and over-stuffed sofas, once the slowest selling items in the antique trade, are rapidly becoming as hard to find as Indian-head pennies. Strangely enough, this zest for the "good old days" includes not only an unexpected passion for claw-footed bath tubs and other turn-of-the-century furnishings, but also an avid interest in some of the music of that period.

Ironically, it is not the sentimental barbershop songs that are being revived, but the syncopated ragtime rhythms, many of which were created and first played in Missouri toward the end of Victoria's long reign. A few weeks ago, NBC-TV produced an hour-long tribute to ragtime featuring Hoagy Carmichael and Missouri's own Ralph Sutton, and currently KETC (Channel 9) is running a bi-weekly ragtime series.

For many of today's population, these ragtime compositions are completely new, but for some of the old-timers, this music brings back a flood of memories. One of those who remembers this era especially well is a spry, youthful-looking 79-year-old Kirkwood grandmother, Mrs. Carrie Bruggeman Stark.

It came as a surprise to many viewers to learn on the NBC show that Sedalia and St. Louis were once the ragtime capitals of this country, but it was not news to Mrs. Stark. For it was her late husband, Will, and his father, John, who first published many of the greatest rags including the immortal "Maple Leaf Rag" by the best of all of the ragtime composers, Scott Joplin.

Reminiscing about the firm of John Stark & Son and how it came to print this classic, Mrs. Stark recalled that it was back in 1899 that the meeting took place between Stark and the now legendary Joplin. "A good many stories have been published about this encounter," she emphasized, "but most of them have been fanciful. In fact until the day Will died in 1949 he never tired of laughing at some of the highly embroidered versions that he read, and of telling me exactly how he happened to meet Joplin.

"According to Will," Mrs. Stark explained, "Joplin wandered into the Stark store in Sedalia one day holding the 'Maple Leaf Rag' manuscript in one hand, and a little boy's hand with the other. Sitting down at the piano, Joplin began to play the now-famous tune while the youngster stepped it off. Grandpa (John Stark) thought nobody would play it because it was too difficult," she recalled, "but Will was so taken with the lad's dance, that he decided to buy it.

"That was the real beginning of the Stark publishing business," she declared. Prior to that time, the Starks had concentrated most of their energies on setting pianos and organs. "They used to drag an organ out to a farmer's house in an old wagon," she continued, "and leave it there for a week. When they came back, the farmer invariably had become so attached to the instrument, that he would buy it."

The original Sedalia issue of the "Maple Leaf Rag" is quite rare. Unlike later editions printed in St. Louis which featured a green maple leaf on the cover, the Sedalia composition carried a drawing of four figures on the opening page. Viewers of the NBC television show heard one of the best arrangements of this piece ever presented, Mrs. Stark believes. Four pianists including Carmichael and Sutton climaxed the coast-to-coast ragtime show with a special rendition of "Maple Leaf" which displayed all of the fiery brilliance which Joplin originally incorporated into his early masterpiece.

Sadly enough, Mrs. Stark doesn't own a copy of her most famous song. Published under the pseudonym of Cy Perkins, it was called "They Gotta Quick Kickin' My Dawg Around," and was intended as a campaign song for Champ Clark, Speaker of the House of Representatives, who was seeking the Democratic nomination in 1912.

"I got the idea from a hill-billy song," she related, "and created my own song. I chose to call myself Cy Perkins because that sounded like a good hillbilly name, and might make the music sell better," she added with a grin. The cover featured a drawing of an old hound-dog, and it became as popular as Lassie is today. Hound-dog buttons were sold all over the country, hound dogs appeared on vaudeville stages, and the newspapers ran stories about the song and its creator.

Some years ago, Walt Disney heard about the song and became so intrigued with it, that he wrote Mrs. Stark and asked for a copy. She searched frantic-

ally, but was unable to locate one. Recently, a perfect issue of the song turned up in the music collection of the Missouri Historical Society, and Mrs. Stark proudly autographed it for posterity.

Busy with her song-writing and housework, Mrs. Stark did not spend much time at her husband's publishing business, 3818 Laclede avenue, and so she doesn't remember much about Joplin personally. "But my husband often talked of him," she added. "He remembered that Joplin would often be walking down the street, when a melody would strike him, and he would take out a piece of paper and write it down. He was easy-going and didn't play rags like other people played them. He played slowly."

Piano rolls of Joplin's, still available, make this quite clear. Joplin played in a beautiful, lilting way, which most pianists find impossible to imitate exactly.

In St. Louis where he lived for some years, Joplin could be heard in the so-called Chestnut Valley section which began along the levee. Last year, a young student of music at Washington University, John C. Cotter, described this region and Joplin's appearances in a master's thesis called "Negro in Music in St. Louis." In his comprehensive study, Cotter devoted a large section of his work to the early ragtime pianists of this city.

He related that because of circumstances, most of the greats of the day were forced to earn their living playing in saloons and sporting houses. Perhaps the most famous ragtime center was Tom Turpin's Rosebud Cafe, still standing on Market street, but about to be destroyed by the "headache ball" to make way for the Mill Creek Valley redevelopment project. Turpin, a noted ragtime composer and pianist himself, attracted all of the early ragtime creators and pianists to his cafe. And it was here that Joplin played many of his early compositions including "Peachertine Rag"; "Swipsey Cake Walk" (written in collaboration with Arthur Marshall); and "Sunflower Slow Drag" (written in collaboration with Scott Hayden.) These pieces were all published by the Stark firm.

In 1903, Joplin abruptly stopped playing regularly in saloons, and made only occasional appearances. He devoted his time to composing "classic rags" for it was his ambition to make ragtime as good as the best of European music. During his period, he wrote "Weeping Willow," "Palm Leaf Rag—A Slow Drag," and "Somthing Doing" with Scott Hayden. Later came many others including "Heli-trope Bounce" with Louis

Chauvin; "Felicity Rag" with Hayden; "Euphonic Sounds," and "Pineapple Rag" to list just a few.

Joplin also wrote two operas in addition to his other works. In 1903 he published a ragtime opera called "A Guest of Honor." It was performed only once—in St. Louis.

Mrs. Stark mused that it was too bad that her husband and his father couldn't have lived to see it on television. For over the years, both of them came to love this piece which launched them on a new career. Shortly after the Starks bought Joplin's "Maple Leaf Rag," they moved to St. Louis "because they thought they would have a better chance of putting it over here," she said.

"They started turning out the song on a hand-press in a hotel room and printed about 10,000 copies by this crude process. Then they swapped them for a small printing plant in this city, and John Stark & Son were in business.

Unfortunately, the Stark family failed to foresee the eventual mechanization of music, and copyrighted only the sheet music, reserving no rights to either ragtime piano-rolls or records—all of which came later.

"Some people think 'Maple Leaf' and the other rags made us rich," Mrs. Stark said with a chuckle, "but unfortunately that just isn't so. Eventually, the copyrights ran out on the sheet music, and we never made a dime on the thousands of ragtime piano rolls which became so popular. Now, of course, it is obvious that Will and his father made a mistake in not protecting all the rights to this early music, but in those early days it was difficult to see just what lay around the corner—musically-speaking. And besides, the Starks had enough on their minds at the time, just trying to keep their struggling little firm going."

In addition to supervising the day-to-day operations of the new music publishing business, Will Stark became the star salesman for the new company and began making the rounds of all of the department stores in town trying to drum up interest in the new rags.

"In those days," Mrs. Stark explained, "many stores employed pianists or song pluggers to play compositions for sale in the music department. I was employed at the old Boston Department Store to do just that, and that's how I met Will. He wandered in one day and asked me if I would take 'Maple Leaf' home and learn it. I did and began pounding it out at work as often as I dared."

Will listened and must have liked what he heard, for he kept coming around to the Boston emporium, and a few years later

persuaded the vivacious Carrie Bruggeman to become his wife.

Sitting down at the piano in her daughter's living room at 337 Longview, Kirkwood, Mrs. Stark recreated the scene. Despite her years, she still plays a spirited ragtime, although she admits that she doesn't touch the piano much anymore. "I leave that to my grandsons," she explained. But music is a part of her, and always has been, apparently. "I didn't take many lessons, but I can read notes," she explained. "Mostly, however, I played and still play by ear."

A composer in her own right, Mrs. Stark has written so many songs that she can't remember them all. Rummaging through her piano bench and old packages of sheet-music, she located copies of many of her compositions including "Slumber Time," "Baby Blues," "Sunset Waltz," and "Daintyfoot."

"Til" (Ettilman Justus Stark, Sr.), my husband's brother, would listen to me play the songs," Mrs. Stark related, "and then he would set them down on paper. He was our arranger, and the real musician in the family." Now 92 years of age, "Til" lives at the Maplewood Nursing Home, and entertains the residents there with ragtime pieces, which he still plays with gusto on the piano.

Eight years after he wrote his first opera, Joplin composed another called "Treemonisha" which he copyrighted and published at his own expense. It runs some 230 pages and contains a score for 11 voices and piano accompaniment. It was performed in New York's Harlem, but attracted little attention.

Copies are rare, but recently John (Knocky) Parker, a Kentucky English professor who also plays ragtime and jazz professionally, permitted the Missouri Historical Society to reproduce his copy, and it has been placed in the archives at the Jefferson Memorial. This opera, and Joplin's earlier one, are considered to be milestones in musical composition, and foreshadowed Gershwin's "Porgy and Bess" by some 30 years.

But for Joplin they marked a turning point in his career. When "Treemonisha" failed to be accepted, he became increasingly melancholy and finally died in the Manhattan State Hospital on Ward's Island in 1916. That he was the greatest of all of the ragtime pianists few will deny. But strangely enough, very little has been written about him in this state where he won his early fame, and no marker has been erected in tribute to him here in Missouri.

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